

**Best Practices for Webpage Content and
Updated Online Content for the Career Center and Ecotopics
Webpages on the Ecoleaders Community Website**

Christine Burrill

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1. Summary

The National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) online EcoLeaders Program helps high school juniors and seniors, college students and young professionals make immediate, positive, environmentally-focused impacts in their communities and realize their sustainability career goals. The EcoLeaders Community website hosts a tremendous amount of information and resources for these students and young professionals, many which include links to external webpages. The challenge is maintaining and updating the content so that it remains relevant to users, helping them navigate their unique career journey in a constantly changing world. This report summarizes research efforts towards new and revised website content to support the growth and development of the EcoLeaders Community. One goal is making more of the content internal and a second goal is making the content follow best practices in web design to effectively and inclusively present the content with the capabilities of the platform hosting the website. The expectation is with these changes users will spend more time on the EcoLeaders Community website and engagement by and between members will increase. Also, content may remain more long-lived and easier to manage with more internally hosted information than trying to discover broken external links throughout the website. Recommendations for content and web design are included in this report as well as information sheets with content condensed and organized from external resources.

2. Background and Methods

The NWF has been assisting students in creating greener, wildlife-friendly campuses and communities for over 30 years. To further empower students to be advocates for change, the EcoLeaders Program was launched in 2014. The online Career and Leadership Development Center helps high school juniors and seniors, college students and young professionals explore trends and opportunities in green careers, map out their career paths, and develop key skills to achieve their sustainability career goals. This is achieved through resources such as articles, webinars, blogs, video clips, and opportunities such as live chats and a yearly virtual EcoCareers Conference. The EcoLeaders Program also offers project design and management resources to help students and early professionals achieve their project goal while building leadership skills. Resources include a project planning template with additional resources online for each of the four project phases and project descriptions written by EcoLeader community members.

The EcoLeaders Community website hosts an immense amount of information and resources for these students and young professionals. The challenge is maintaining and updating the content in a world that's constantly and quickly changing - socially, technologically and economically - so content remains relevant to users, helping them navigate their unique career paths. The other part of this challenge is presenting the information efficiently and effectively as well as inclusively. In fact, an outdated design is cited as a top reason why visitors leave a website. Currently, the average lifespan for a website is said to be 1.5 to 2.5 years.^{1,2} Beyond this, it is recommended that a website utilize new design trends and technologies to feel "fresh". Over one-third of people visiting a website for the first time pay attention to the layout or navigational links on a page.^{1,2} If the layout is confusing or the

navigation menu is not clearly presented, then visitors may leave the website.

Readability, how clear and easy content is to understand, is key to user interaction because millions of people struggle due to literacy difficulties. The reading level of the average American 16 to 65 years of age is equivalent to a 7th/8th grader (12 to 14 years old).³ Few websites are designed for high readability, an under investigated aspect of the User Experience.⁴ By addressing the readability of a website, the content will potentially reach a broader audience including users with reading or learning disabilities. Additionally, people read online content differently than printed text. Users typically scan the page for the information they need, not necessarily reading every word from the top down and might get impatient if content is too wordy.⁵

As a newcomer to the EcoLeaders Community and the website, I had a unique perspective at looking at the website with a fresh set of eyes. My first impression of how the information was presented and organized, was that I was slightly overwhelmed by all the content. The text is presented in several successive large blocks on many pages, particularly the Career Sector Outlook pages and there is a lack of graphics that might make content easier and quicker to digest. Also, there are many links to external webpages in places like the Career Planning Tool and the Additional Resources page of the Career Center which I thought too often lead people away from the EcoLeaders website so opportunities for further content exploration and interaction within the community were reduced. From these impressions and speaking with NWF staff, I came up with two main goals for the fellowship:

- Goal 1: Develop/revise content that encourage interaction and engagement as well as content that encourages exploration of the site (more than external sites) and encourages frequent returns to site.
- Goal 2: Organize existing/new content to make it easier and more pleasant to navigate and take in and come up with a list of best practices to follow for future content development and revision.

The five-month-long fellowship entailed:

1. Reviewing existing website content and organization as well as NWF goals for the Career Center and EcoTopics pages to guide research.
2. Deciding what content to focus on and could be reasonably completed in the fellowship time-frame.
3. Researching best practices for web content and design as well as current trends in internet usage for tying together with web design. Investigating some online web design tests to see where the current content on the EcoLeaders website stands.
4. Researching content for career planning worksheets and film screening guide.
5. Writing report, summarizing findings and making suggestions to webpages.

Research was conducted using academic literature and well-known job and career development resources such as government agencies (EPA, Bureau of Labor Statistics), university and college websites, other conservation and non-profit organizations, and employment websites such as Indeed and CareerBuilder.

3. Core Findings

3.1 Internet Usage & Web Design

Content development for the web is different than print and requires a different approach. People read differently online, regardless of literacy level. The average person scans information on a page to quickly look for answers as documented for the last twenty years by the Nielsen Norman Group eyetracking studies. As a result, users only read only about 20% of a webpage, making quick jumps from word to word, looking for keywords to point them to the information they are seeking. Only when users are very motivated to read and learn the content do they read most of the words on the page. On the other hand, people with learning disabilities read letter for letter, they do not scan and skip around.

The NWF EcoLeaders Community website targets a young audience, who, according to a survey of high school teachers, are believed to be conditioned by internet search engines to expect to find information they need quickly and easily.⁶ The patience and determination of a majority of these students to look for information that is hard to find is either fair or poor. Most teachers also agree that the amount of information available online today is overwhelming to most students.⁶ Therefore, website content should take into consideration the reading behavior of people to allow users to quickly find what they need without sacrificing readability for those with learning disabilities.

Studies show proper web design is critical for facilitating high user engagement, otherwise users may become frustrated or simply not explore a webpage far beyond the home or landing page.^{7,8} Garrett et al. (2016) determined the seven most effective website design elements linked to increase user engagement from a cursory review of 100 research studies. Those elements include purpose, navigation, simplicity, graphical representation, organization, content utility, and readability.⁷ For this report, I focus on the last six elements which could be used to improve the EcoLeaders website and are summarized in the table below. The purpose of the website and different programs is clearly stated on the website so I skip further discussion on this design element.

A common aim for these design elements is when they are implemented effectively, less time is needed for users to find the information they are looking for and the website becomes easy to use, especially for first-time users.⁷ By paying attention design elements with accessibility in mind, the content will be readily available to an even greater audience including people with disabilities or limitations that impact their browsing experience.⁸

Table 1. Design elements identified by Garrett et al. (2016) and ways to successfully implement them.

Design Element	How to Implement
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noticeable and consistent menu bars - Aids for navigation (e.g., visible links) - Search options - Multiple pathways to pages which limit clicks/backtracking - Effective and consistent use of internal and external links
Simplicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief subject headings - Consistent layout and color schemes for every page - Minimal redundant features - Simple, uncluttered layout – limit options presented to users - Strategic use of white space
Graphical presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic use of logos and icons - Multimedia and images of proper size and resolution - Images that engage and inform users - Attractive visual layout with white space, relevant and pleasing color schemes, and proper color, font, and size of text
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear, logical and hierarchical structure - Meaningful labels/headings/titles - Purposeful arrangement and categorization of information - Place information up front (“front-loading”)
Content utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content is kept up-to-date - Content keeps users interested and motivated to explore the site more and return regularly - Appropriate amount, quality and relevance of information
Readability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy to read and understand - Is well-written at the appropriate reading level (7th-8th grade level) - Information is scannable and presented in readable blocks of text - Write sentences that are 20 words or less - Use shorter words (4-6 letters) when possible - Use transition words and phrases, such as “overall,” “in fact,” “ultimately,” - Use formatting techniques like bulleted lists and bold text

3.1.1 External & Internal Links

An aspect of website content management is making sure all links are up-to-date and fixing or removing broken links. As I went through the EcoLeaders’ website, I noted any issues with links that I came across. I did try using a free online tool that looks through a website for broken links (<https://www.deadlinkchecker.com>) but found that it was unreliable, missing broken links I manually checked.

Another best practice in web design is that internal links, which take users to another page on the same website, should open in the same tab the user is on and never in new browser tabs. On the other hand, external links that take users to a different website should always open in new tabs.⁹ When external links open in the same tab it can negatively impact

the user experience in several ways. First it can interrupt or slow down a user's flow as they look and sort through information also creating 'back-button fatigue'. The more users explore the other pages on an external website, the more they have to click the back button to get back to the original site. This is a lot of unnecessary work for users and they may not go back to the site. Secondly, opening external links in the same tab overworks a website because the page has to load again every time the user comes back. This uses the site's resources to load the page, consuming bandwidth and slowing the user down. Third, when an external link is opened in the same tab, it appears that a user is leaving the website entirely, negatively impacting the website's analytics.⁹ Lastly, if the link is to an internal pdf or some kind of document that is to be downloaded or printed by the user, that should open in a new tab. This allows the user to easily and quickly to return to the exact spot on the web page where they left off and continue their exploration of the site. Website links are a low-cost element to manage but may help make a big difference in the experience of using the website.

3.1.2 Readability Tests

The website juicystudio.com allows testing of the readability of a website by entering in the website address. Readability tests are mathematical formulas developed in the 1920s to automate the process of determining which books were suitable for American students at a certain age, or grade level. The formulas are based on the average words to a sentence, and the average syllables used per word. Short sentences consisting of short words score higher. The tests cannot determine whether the writing is comprehensible, interesting, or enjoyable or if the writing style, layout and design are effective. The readability tests are simply a tool to attempt to quantifiably predict how easily content can be read and whether the content was written at the appropriate level for the intended audience.¹⁰

Gunning Fog, Flesch Reading Ease, and Flesch-Kincaid are the reading level algorithms that can be helpful in determining how readable content is and were used to test the EcoLeaders website content on the Careers Outlook and EcoTopic pages. The Gunning-Fog index is an estimate of how many years of schooling someone would need to understand the content. The lower the number, the more understandable the content. Both the Career Outlook and EcoTopic pages score about 13. The Flesch Reading Ease is an index number that rates the text on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. Authors are encouraged to aim for a score of approximately 60 to 70. The Career Outlook and EcoTopic pages score about 29 and 33 respectively. The Flesch-Kincaid grade level is another estimate of how many years of schooling it would take someone to understand the content. Both pages score around a 9 or 10. These tests suggest some of the content should be simplified if possible. Much of the content is written or at least drafted by former NWF EcoLeader Fellows who are graduate students, therefore it is very likely the content is written at a higher level than might be recommended for a general audience.

Table 2. Readability Test results. See Appendix A1 for individual EcoTopic pages.

	Career Outlook Pages	EcoTopic Pages (average)
Total sentences	791	672
Total words	1525	1634
Average words per Sentence	1.93	2.43
Words with 1 Syllable	728	786
Words with 2 Syllables	322	366
Words with 3 Syllables	95	129
Words with 4 or more Syllables	380	353
Percentage of word with 3 or more syllables	31.15%	29.49%
Average Syllables per Word	2.08	2.03
Gunning Fog Index	13.23	12.77
Flesch Reading Ease	28.63	32.58
Flesch-Kincaid Grade	9.74	9.32

3.1.3 Accessibility

Improving the readability of a website will allow the content to potentially reach a broader audience including users with reading or learning disabilities. Miniukovich et al (2017) developed a set of Web readability guidelines by reviewing and reducing many existing guidelines during workshops with dyslexia experts and designers. The study highlights 12 guidelines (Table 4) that affected reading for either dyslexic or non-dyslexic users, or for both of them. All of the guidelines can be implemented to improve readability for all users especially when combined with guidelines suggested by Garrett et al. (2016) above. Designers do not have to prioritize designing for one group over another because guidelines that helped dyslexics did not hinder average readers or vice-versa.

Table 3. From Miniukovich et al. (2017). Webpage aspects and corresponding guidelines that dyslexia experts chose as the most effective.

Design aspect	Guideline
Line Spacing	- <i>Line spacing of 1.5 point is preferable.</i>
Color combination	- <i>Use an off-white color for your background, like light gray or tan; use dark gray for text instead of pure black.</i>
Bold	- <i>Use bolding to highlight in order to emphasize keywords and concepts.</i>
Underline	- <i>Avoid underlining large blocks of text as it makes reading harder.</i>
Font Size	- <i>Use a minimum of text size 12pt or 14pt.</i>

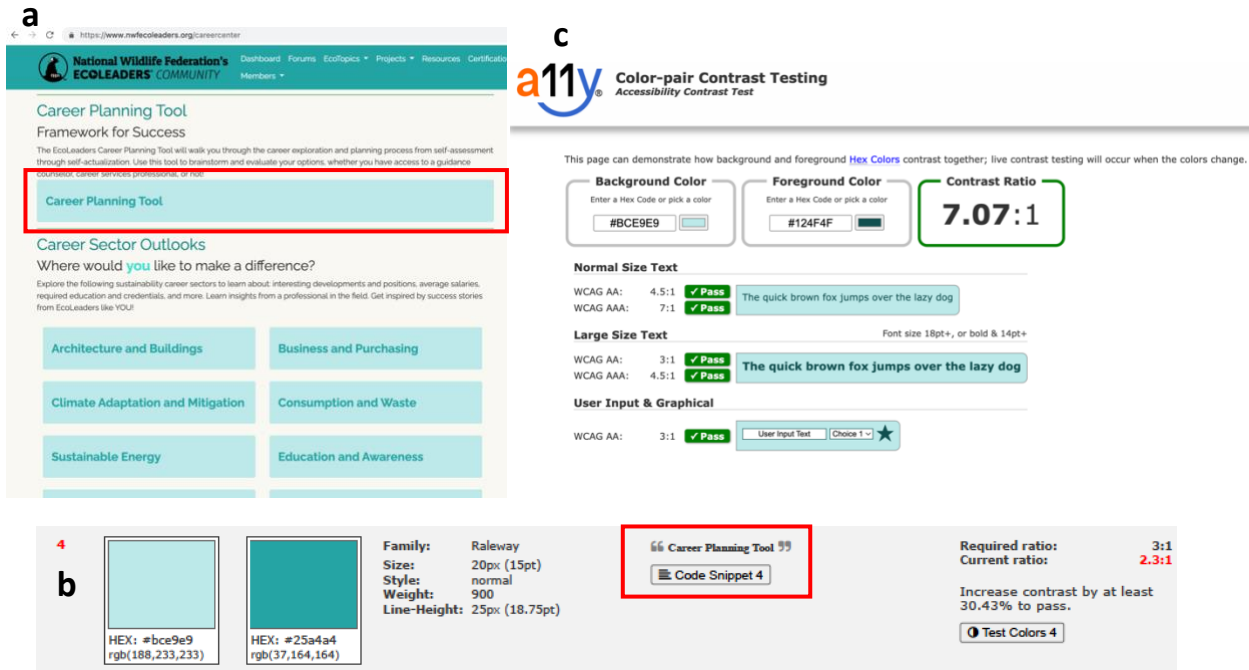
Table 4. From Miniukovich et al. (2017). Guidelines that received empirical support, based on experts' scores € or on automatic measures (A) or on both (B).

Guideline	Dyslexics	Avg Readers
- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.	x	x
- Avoid complex language and jargon.	x	x
E - Consider using short paragraphs.		x
- Put the main point of sentence or paragraph into the beginning of the sentence or paragraph.	x	
B - Use section headings to organize the content.	x	
- Limit the amount of content on a page to avoid scrolling.		x
- Avoid using italics in the main body of the text.	x	
- Avoid underlining large blocks of text as it makes reading harder.	x	
A - Use a minimum of text size 12pt or 14pt.	x	
- Avoid formatting texts in large-width columns.	x	
- Use an off-white color for your background, like light gray or tan; use dark gray for text instead of pure black.		x
- Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans.	x	

Color contrast is one aspect of a website that can easily be modified to make the site more accessible to people with visual impairments or color deficiencies and the content more legible. This is achieved simply by having good distinctions between text color and background color. Online tools are available to evaluate the level of contrast on websites and will score the site based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) guidelines and suggest changes if needed. I tested the Careers Center page with the A11Y Color Contrast Accessibility Validator and there were several areas where it found the contrast should be adjusted (see full report in Appendix A2). One website element that the tester picked up on was the buttons to navigate to the career planning tool which is designed just like the buttons for exploring the different career sectors (see Figure 1). These buttons can be found on other pages as well.

More online tools to test accessibility are available at <https://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/>

Next page: Figure 1. (a) Screenshot of the Career Center page tested with the A11Y Color Contrast Accessibility Validator showing the career planning tool button and the similar-looking career sector buttons. (b) Validator test results of the button indicating that the contrast needs to be increased to meeting accessibility guidelines. (c) When you click on the “Test Colors” button in the results, you can try out new colors to see what will meet the guidelines. By increasing the black in the text color, making it darker, the button can then meet the accessibility guidelines.



3.1.4 Social Media Feeds

Currently, the NWF has social media accounts on Facebook (1.1M followers), Instagram (184 followers), Twitter (595k followers), LinkedIn (81k followers), Pinterest (30k followers) and YouTube (7.3k subscribers). Currently the TikTok account is just being started (37 followers) and no video content is posted yet, however #nationalwildlifefederation has over 331,000 views. There is no social media feed embedded on the EcoLeaders Community website.

There are a number of benefits to embedding social media feeds on a website including more time spent on the website, more followers on social media channels and building engagement and reach on social media channels. Though the content on some of the EcoLeaders pages seems to be fairly dynamic and updated regularly, a lot of the content is static. New social media content is updated very frequently and displaying the feeds of a channel or several channels on a website keeps the site fresh and gives users a reason to visit again. A social media feed might also save staff and others time adding new content to the site. Not all of a website's visitors might follow associated social media channels so by embedding the feeds on the website, new opportunities are available to get new followers and potentially build the EcoLeaders community. Embedding a social media feed on a website also increases the number of likes, comments, shares, and other interactions which means more people will see the content. Social media algorithms push content with high engagement to the top of news feeds, and to new audiences that might like the content.¹¹ If this increase in visibility can get people back to the EcoLeaders community, that could potentially enliven the virtual community and increase networking and interactions. The social media feeds can also be used to showcase career success stories and projects.

3.2 Career Center

At the beginning of my fellowship, NWF staff had a meeting and decided to replace the current Career Planning Tool with worksheets that could be downloaded. The worksheets would build off of the current planning tool and what was used at the career conference. The page with the career planning form has resources for each section and I offered to make worksheets for these resources under the Realize section.

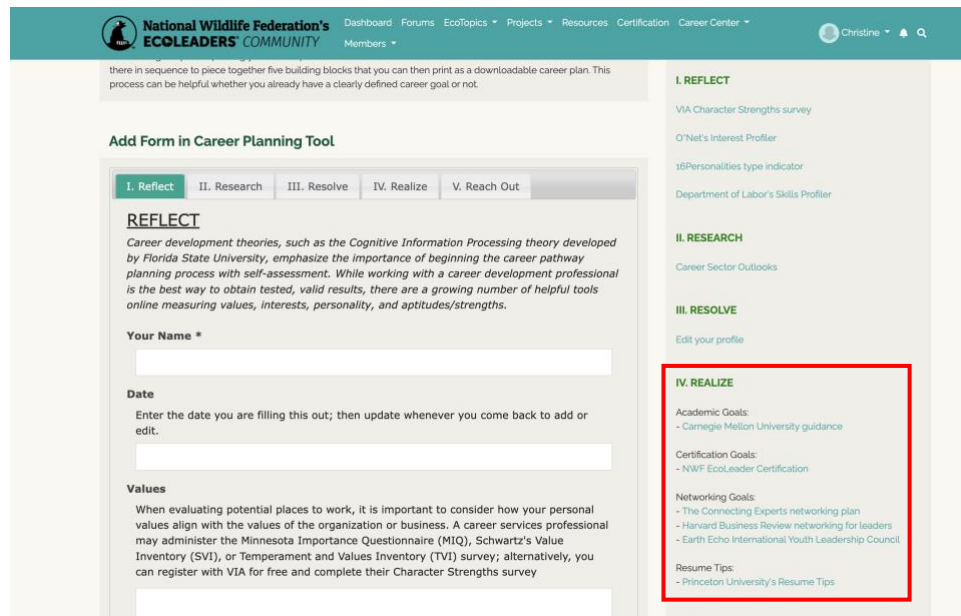


Figure 2. Screenshot of Career Planning Tool resources

Most of the links were broken or did not take you to the expected webpage. I researched new content for the worksheets including peer-reviewed articles and articles from well-known career sites such as Indeed, Monster, LinkedIn, Simply Hired and CareerAddict. I also combined content from several career coaching and advice sites in an attempt to present a broad overview and options for career seekers who likely have different needs. The main points for each career topic were chosen based on results from research articles or general consensus and what some of the most agreed upon actions were that would lead to successfully achieving steps towards a career. If there were differing opinions or approaches, these were acknowledged and it was mentioned in the worksheets that there is no one path to a career search that works for everyone.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Web Design

There are a lot of aspects to each web design element but not every aspect of an existing website has to be upgraded to see an impact. Sometimes simply making a few changes on

certain pages might be all that's required to see a noticeable impact. Based on research of how users read online content, look for information and best practices on web design, the following recommendations are suggested to update content and increase engagement on the EcoLeaders Community website:

1. Make content scannable

- a. Present information in smaller blocks of text
- b. Add more white space to help users find content and make content appear more legible.
- c. Use formatting techniques like bulleted lists and bold text to help the reader scan quickly

2. Edit and create content with a high degree of readability and accessibility. This means writing content that is easy to read and understand and is well-written at the appropriate reading level. Incorporate guidelines that benefit people with literacy difficulties and take advantage of free online tools to meet those guidelines.

3. Website links. Links are a low-cost element to manage but may help make a big difference in the experience of using the website.

- a. Reduce the number of external links presented to users because this encourages them to leave the site. Instead try to incorporate new information and host it directly on the website.
- b. Follow best practices for internal and external links

4. Add social media feed to Ecoleaders Community webpage, perhaps on the Dashboard forums page or members page. Options for embedding social media content for free include Curator.io, Social Media Stream and Easy Content.

5. Adding more graphics that can get information across more quickly than text. For example, in the career sector outlook pages, salary information might be more effectively displayed as graphs rather than text.

4.2 Content Updates

4.2.1 Career Center

Worksheets were created for Academic Goals, Networking, Switching Careers summarizing at least half a dozen articles for each. The worksheets ask users to check out other resources on the EcoLeaders website such as the EcoLeader and Project certifications or the other worksheets in order to encourage further time on the website and exploration. The worksheets are presented in Appendix B.

4.2.2 EcoTopics

When you click the button “Follow this Ecotopic” (Figure 3) on an Ecotopics page you are brought to a page where you have to find the topic again and click follow and then nothing happens. The page reloads but it doesn’t confirm that you are following the topic. Not sure if this second page is necessary or if it can be made so that users can follow an Ecotopic from the first page which may save time trying to maintain the second page.

If the second page is required, I suggest putting the explanation of following a topic at the top, rather the side, and increasing the font size of the text. Another suggestion is to decrease the size of topic boxes so they can fit in a smaller area which results in less scrolling for the user, making topics of interest easier to find. Also, to make each topic stand out more by increasing the size of the icon next to the topic. Lastly, consistent usage of ‘and’ or ‘&’ for the names of EcoTopics would be a good way to stay consistent in design.

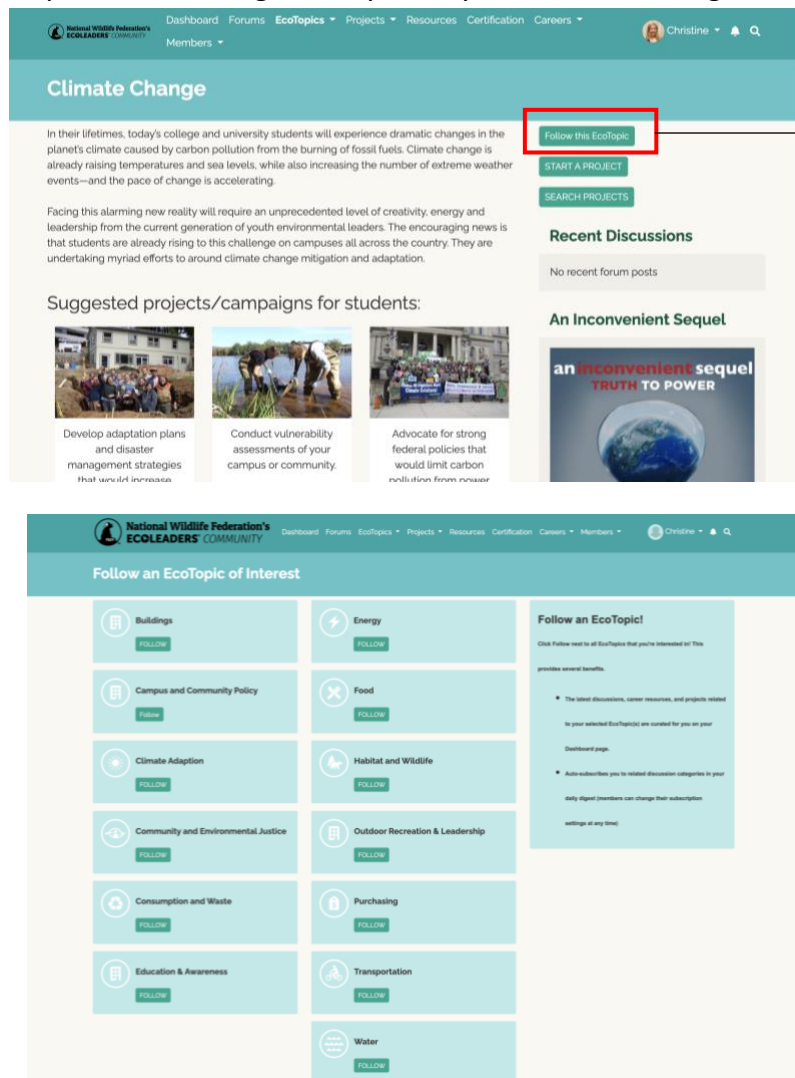


Figure 3. Screenshots of EcoTopics page and Following an EcoTopic page

4.2.3 EcoTopics: Climate

I think it would benefit students if the climate resources were more organized and other resources such as IPCC and NASA were listed because they contain the most up-to-date information on climate science.

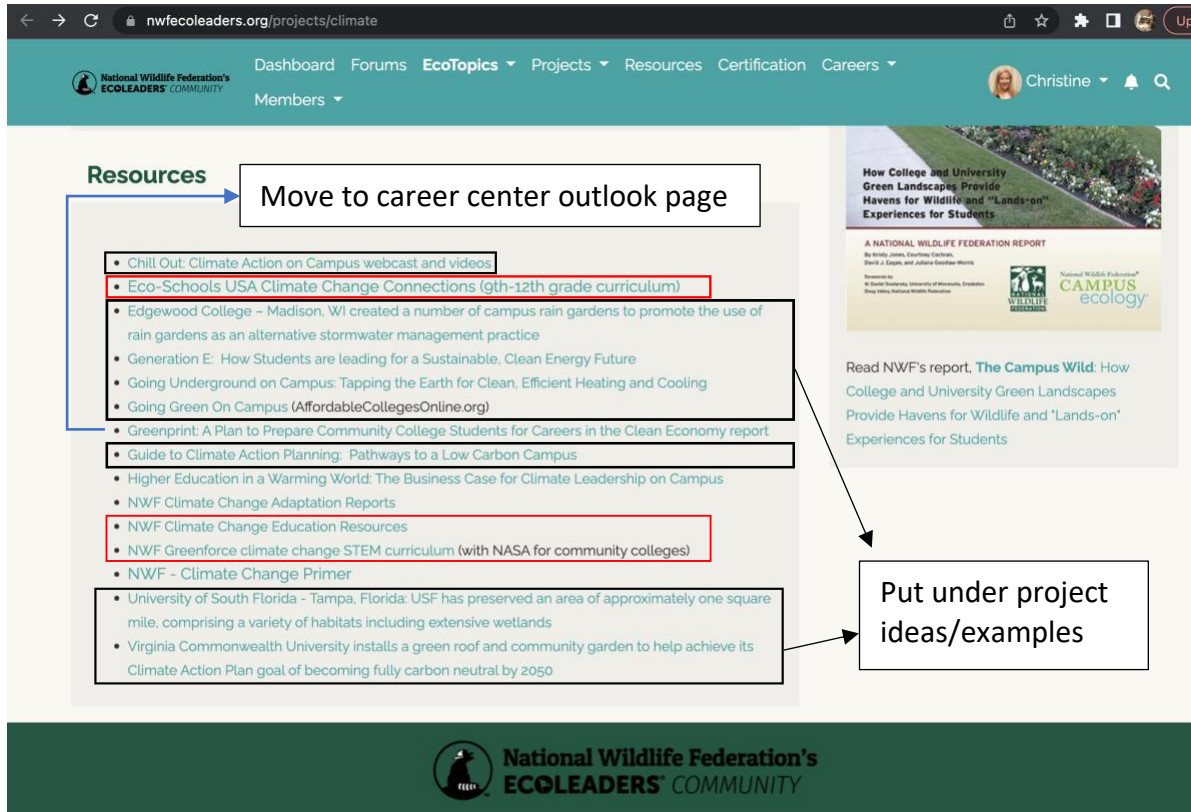


Figure 4. Screenshots of resources section of EcoTopics Climate page. Red box indicates broken links

Recommended organization:

Resources

- **Climate Science: The facts**
 - Higher Ed in a warming world
 - NWF Climate change primer
 - Add: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) <https://www.ipcc.ch/>
 - Add: The Nature Conservancy: The IPCC report and climate change <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/ipcc-report-climate-change/>
 - Add: NASA: Climate Change <https://climate.nasa.gov/>
 - Add: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Climate Change Science <https://www.epa.gov/climatechange-science>
 - Add: U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) <https://www.globalchange.gov/>
- **Project Ideas/Planning**
 - Links to case studies such as examples above/already listed

4.2.4 Film screening guide

I have experience putting together a film screening on campus and wanted to write a specific guide on how to organize one. There were steps that I had to learn as I went when I organized my own and I wanted to help others have an easier experience and have a successful event. The guide is written based mostly off of my experience with supplemental information from other sources. A suggested spot to host this document would be the 'Project planning resources' page (<https://www.nwfecoleaders.org/project-plan-resources>). The film screening guide is presented in Appendix C.

5. Conclusions

This report contains research on best practices for web design and accessibility and includes some recommendations for the EcoLeaders Community website to improve content and encourage users to stay on the website which will have the potential to generate more engagement on the site. New content for the Career Center and EcoTopics pages was created and hopefully benefits users who are looking for help navigating their career in sustainability or take on a project with a specific guide created for those interested in organizing a public film screening.

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Appendix A

Examples of web page design practices applied to Ecoleaders Community website

A1. Results from Readability Test hosted on juicystudio.com

EcoTopics page	climate	energy	habitat	water	policy	transport	waste	buildings	food	community	average
Total sentences	659	667	659	661	681	713	657	661	656	704	672
Total words	1577	1713	1597	1629	1763	1640	1571	1578	1527	1741	1634
Average words per Sentence	2.39	2.57	2.42	2.46	2.59	2.3	2.39	2.39	2.33	2.47	2
Words with 1 Syllable	745	842	759	774	849	797	773	750	734	832	786
Words with 2 Syllables	370	377	379	380	381	359	338	367	340	370	366
Words with 3 Syllables	118	149	118	131	165	117	117	114	111	147	129
Words with 4 or more Syllables	344	345	341	344	368	367	343	347	342	392	353
Percentage of word with three or more syllables	29.30%	28.84%	28.74%	29.16%	30.23%	29.51%	29.28%	29.21%	29.67%	30.96%	29.49%
Average Syllables per Word	2.04	2	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.03	2.02	2.04	2.04	2.06	2.03
Gunning Fog Index	12.68	12.56	12.47	12.65	13.13	12.72	12.67	12.64	12.8	13.37	12.77
Flesch Reading Ease	31.93	35.18	33	32.8	32.51	32.51	33.59	32.1	31.89	30.31	32.6
Flesch-Kincaid Grade	9.4	8.99	9.26	9.3	9.37	9.3	9.17	9.37	9.39	9.65	9.32

Career Outlook page	All pages
Total sentences	791
Total words	1525
Average words per Sentence	1.93
Words with 1 Syllable	728
Words with 2 Syllables	322
Words with 3 Syllables	95
Words with 4 or more Syllables	380
Percentage of word with three or more syllables	31.15%
Average Syllables per Word	2.08
Gunning Fog Index	13.23
Flesch Reading Ease	28.63
Flesch-Kincaid Grade	9.74

* All career sectors pages yielded the same values for the tests



Color Contrast Accessibility Validator
WCAG 2.1 AA SC 1.4.3 Test for Color Contrast

Get a **FREE** graded accessibility report of <https://www.nwfecoleaders.org/careercenter> and see how it compares to others in your industry.

Enter your Email address and we'll notify you when the report is ready.

christineburrill@gmail.com

Submit

[Test another page](#)






Automatic programs such as this cannot analyze text embedded in images and may misdiagnose or ignore certain critical issues. We recommend that you combine contrast testing results from this website with a manual test performed by a [trained accessibility expert](#).

Page Analyzed: <https://www.nwfecoleaders.org/careercenter>

Problems Detected!

Some color contrast issues were found on the webpage tested

Samples of FAILED contrast color-pairs.

Item	Background Color	Text Color	Font	Content	Ratio Failure
1	 HEX: #ffffff rgb(255,255,255)	 HEX: #ffffff rgb(255,255,255)	Family: Raleway Size: 21.2px (15.9pt) Style: normal Weight: 700 Line-Height: 25.44px (19.08pt)	☞ Career Center ☞ Code Snippet 1	Required ratio: 3:1 Current ratio: 1:1 Increase contrast by at least 200% to pass. Test Colors 1
2	 HEX: #faf8f3 rgb(250,248,243)	 HEX: #25a4a4 rgb(37,164,164)	Family: Raleway Size: 16px (12pt) Style: normal Weight: 400 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	☞ Career Services Toolkit ☞ Code Snippet 2	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 2.85:1 Increase contrast by at least 57.89% to pass. Test Colors 2
3	 HEX: #faf8f3 rgb(250,248,243)	 HEX: #008080 rgb(0,128,128)	Family: Raleway Size: 21.2px (15.9pt) Style: normal Weight: 500 Line-Height: 25.44px (19.08pt)	☞ Career Planning Tool ☞ Code Snippet 3	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 4.49:1 Increase contrast by at least 0.22% to pass. Test Colors 3
4	 HEX: #bce9e9 rgb(188,233,233)	 HEX: #25a4a4 rgb(37,164,164)	Family: Raleway Size: 20px (15pt) Style: normal Weight: 900 Line-Height: 25px (18.75pt)	☞ Career Planning Tool ☞ Code Snippet 4	Required ratio: 3:1 Current ratio: 2.3:1 Increase contrast by at least 30.43% to pass. Test Colors 4
5	 HEX: #faf8f3 rgb(250,248,243)	 HEX: #40e0d0 rgb(64,224,208)	Family: Raleway Size: 20.8px (15.6pt) Style: normal Weight: 700 Line-Height: 24.96px (18.72pt)	☞ you ☞ Code Snippet 5	Required ratio: 3:1 Current ratio: 1.54:1 Increase contrast by at least 94.81% to pass. Test Colors 5
6	 HEX: #f1eee7	 HEX: #25a4a4	Family: Raleway Size: 16px (12pt) Style: normal Weight: 700 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	☞ Great Opportunity to work with NWF! ☞ Code Snippet 6	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 2.61:1 Increase contrast by at least 72.41% to pass. Test Colors 6



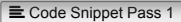



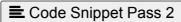

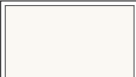



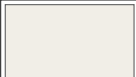

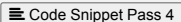



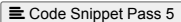

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Color Contrast Accessibility Validator

WCAG 2.1 AA SC 1.4.3 Test for Color Contrast

	 HEX: #ffffff rgb(255,255,255)	 HEX: #25a4a4 rgb(37,164,164)	Size: 28.8px (21.6pt) Style: normal Weight: 400 Line-Height: 43.2px (32.4pt)		Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 11.9:1 Contrast passes. 
2	 HEX: #faf8f3 rgb(250,248,243)	 HEX: #333333 rgb(51,51,51)	Family: Raleway Size: 16px (12pt) Style: normal Weight: 400 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	“ Welcome to our EcoLeader Career and Leadership Development Cen... ” 	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 11.9:1 Contrast passes. 
3	 HEX: #faf8f3 rgb(250,248,243)	 HEX: #00573d rgb(0,87,61)	Family: Raleway Size: 24px (18pt) Style: normal Weight: 700 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	“ Recent Job Listings ” 	Required ratio: 3:1 Current ratio: 8.14:1 Contrast passes. 
4	 HEX: #f1eee7 rgb(241,238,231)	 HEX: #333333 rgb(51,51,51)	Family: Raleway Size: 16px (12pt) Style: normal Weight: 700 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	“ 0 Replies ” 	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 10.9:1 Contrast passes. 
5	 HEX: #08573f rgb(8,87,63)	 HEX: #ffffff rgb(255,255,255)	Family: Raleway Size: 16px (12pt) Style: normal Weight: 400 Line-Height: 24px (18pt)	“ About ” 	Required ratio: 4.5:1 Current ratio: 8.58:1 Contrast passes. 

Test another webpage

Appendix B

Career Center documents: Academic Goals, Networking, Switching Careers

Academic Goals

What Are Academic Goals?

- Academic goals are educational objectives that you set for yourself – from assignments, to classes, to degrees, and beyond! ¹
- These goals should have a stated time frame and build upon each other. Often, long-term goals are set first, and then, short-term goals are identified by breaking down those long-term goals.
- Academic goals will help you define how you choose which classes to take, where to go to school, and what degrees or certifications you may wish to obtain in the weeks, months, and years ahead.¹
- These goals may change over time, depending on your interests, educational needs, or career changes.¹

Examples of Academic Goals:

Short-term: maintain an 85 average in my math class, have rough draft of paper done one week ahead of due date

Long-term: graduate with a Bachelors in 4 years, graduate cum laude, apply for summer internships during my junior year

Why Should I Set Academic goals?

“Setting academic goals is like creating a blueprint for how you’ll succeed in college and beyond and has the potential to increase academic performance over 20%.^{2,5}

Goal setting is a fundamental part of short-term and long-term success and is a strategic way to measure yourself your progress.¹

- Goals provide a clear plan and structure to use your time wisely, and they keep you focused on what you want to achieve.²
- Short-term goals are great for morale and can serve as motivation, purpose, and drive to continue moving forward.¹ They can give you a sense of accomplishment as you work towards a larger goal.
- With clear goals set, you can more easily make decisions that align with your goals.
- Goals are personal deadlines that can help you to overcome procrastination.

How Do I Set Academic Goals?

- Write your goals down and state your goals in positive terms.^{1,4}
- Writing solidifies your thoughts and making goals positive helps you take actions to achieve your goals.
- Make your goals personal. Aspiring to someone else’s goals may not be very meaningful or motivating to you. You may never accomplish a goal that you can’t truly make your own.⁴

No matter whether you are setting short-term goals or long-term goals, the best method for developing your goals is the **SMART** method.^{2,3}

S-Specific - Set goals that are clear and specific in what is to be accomplished. Try to make your goals as detailed as possible.

Not specific: I want to get better grades

Specific: I want to improve my grade from a C to a B

The clearer your goals are, the easier it will be to develop strategies for achieving them. Research shows simply listing your goals won't have the same impact on the outcome because the mental effort is minimal and you likely won't make the same level of commitment.⁵

M-Measurable - You need to have a way to know if you accomplished your goal. Did you earn the grade you planned to on an exam? Did you study for a certain amount of time?

A-Attainable – Make your goals realistic and achievable. Do you currently have the resources (mainly time) to achieve the goal? Based on an honest assessment of your background in each subject, lifestyle, and the amount of time and energy you're willing to spend? On the other hand, you might find that you need to change your behavior in some respects to attain an end you desire. For example, you don't want to set a goal to earn a 4-year degree in 2 years.

R-Relevant - When you set a goal, it should align with your long-term goals and objectives. This guarantees that the goal is important to you now, at this point in your life.

T-Timely or Time bound - Every goal must include a deadline or timeframe. Otherwise, why would you ever start it? You might procrastinate and just keep waiting and waiting and never take action.

To get started with some academic goal setting:

- ▶ You can use the **syllabus** of your classes to set goals to stay on top of course work and assignments (see example table below)
- ▶ You can also use the **degree requirements** for your school's program to create a list of what you need to achieve to graduate.
- ▶ Once you have some goals, **reflect in writing about anticipated obstacles**, and then develop specific plans for overcoming those obstacles.⁵

How Do I Keep Track of My Goals?

- **Post your goals** in a visible place. You don't want to lose sight of where you want to go.
- **Add your goals to a digital calendar** with reminders.
- **Update your goals** as you check things off the list and replace those goals with new ones. You may need to update or change your goals if something has caused you to course correct. Sometimes we set goals that don't end up being exactly what we thought they'd be and it's important to understand that we can and should change our goals if we need to.

- **Reward yourself** for successes along the way.
- **Make your goals public and/or Look for a mentor(s)** – parents, family, professors, peers, tutors, etc. – people who can help keep you accountable, you can discuss your goals with if you feel stuck and need ideas, and who can share in your successes.^{1,5}

What Happens if I Miss a Goal?

Trying and failing is better than doing nothing because you might be afraid to fail.

It's perfectly acceptable to fail sometimes. Failure is one way for us to learn how to become better and it will inevitably happen at some point. You may have to adjust your expectations, depending on what you have actually accomplished. For example, a lower-than-expected grade on an exam might mean you have to earn higher grades on later tests or you will have to modify your longer-term goal for the class. Grades higher than expected can be used as a cushion for the future or an invitation to set higher goals for yourself.

Don't beat yourself up if you wander off the path or fall behind. Everyone does from time to time—the important thing is to simply keep going! Tomorrow is a new day and this is your own personal journey.⁵

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1. GoPeer.org. "[How to Set Academic Goals](#)". Retrieved on September 12, 2022.
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Modify the examples below for your own academic goals!

Example of Setting Short-Term Academic Goals

Semester: Fall 2022

Class: Chemistry

Desired Grade: B

Activity	% of Final Grade	Due Date	What I Have To Do	Actual Grade or Avg Grade to date
Class Participation	5%	All semester	<input type="checkbox"/> Get copy of text book <input type="checkbox"/> Read ahead <input type="checkbox"/> Attend all classes	
Weekly Quizzes	20%	Fridays all semester	<input type="checkbox"/> Takes notes on weekly readings <input type="checkbox"/> Take notes in class <input type="checkbox"/> Review notes Thursdays	
Lab	25%	Tuesdays, all semester	<input type="checkbox"/> Attend all labs <input type="checkbox"/> Score 80-90 each lab	
Midterm	25%	October 12	<input type="checkbox"/> Score 80-90 <input type="checkbox"/> Study 30 mins every other day starting Oct 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Take practice test	
Final	25%	December 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Score 80-90 <input type="checkbox"/> Attend review session <input type="checkbox"/> Take practice test	

Modified from: Setting Academic Goals

https://www2.byui.edu/StudySkills/skills/tips%20documents/Setting%20Academic%20Goals_1.pdf

Example of Setting Long-Term Academic Goals

Long term goal: Obtain a Bachelor's Degree (a 5+ year goal)

Activity	Timeline / Deadline	What I Have To Do	Notes
Research schools	Summer before senior year	<input type="checkbox"/> Research schools with sustainability programs <input type="checkbox"/> Consider distance from home	

		<input type="checkbox"/> Compare costs, financial aid <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule visits/tours to top choices	
Take SATs	Aug/Sept of senior year	<input type="checkbox"/> Register <input type="checkbox"/> Study <input type="checkbox"/> Take test	
Apply to several schools	Application deadline(s) Dec-Feb	<input type="checkbox"/> Transcript <input type="checkbox"/> References <input type="checkbox"/> SAT scores required? <input type="checkbox"/> Application and essay	
Fill out FASFA	FASFA deadline (Spring)	<input type="checkbox"/> Parents still claim you as dependent? <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out online form	
Earn high school diploma	Spring of Senior year		
Pass all required classes for degree with no less than a 'B'	Semester by semester	<input type="checkbox"/> Study, utilize office hours and tutors <input type="checkbox"/> Turn in work on time <input type="checkbox"/> Attend all classes	
Graduate in 4 years	4 years from entrance	<input type="checkbox"/> Work with advisor to develop plan to complete degree <input type="checkbox"/> Pass all required classes <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out all required paperwork (e.g declaring major, graduation, etc.)	

Other useful resources:

<https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/other-resources/handouts/index.html>

Networking

What's covered:

- What is networking? Why is it important?
- Effective networking strategies
- Networking in Person
- Networking Online

1. What is networking? Why is it important?

Networking is considered by many to be **the most effective way** to find a job!

- The great thing is that you already have networking experience! Any time you meet someone you're engaged in a form of networking.

Networking is the process of **building and maintaining connections** with individuals that are **mutually beneficial** through **sharing resources and information** and **supporting each other**.⁵

A **closed network** is when you interact with people you already know and stay in the same industry, organization or culture. An **open network** is where you interact with people outside of your industry and with different points of views and cultures.⁵

The hidden job market is a term used to describe job openings that aren't advertised or posted. Companies might do this for a number of reasons such as saving money on advertising, saving time evaluating job applications or interviewing, or because they prefer hiring internally or getting candidates through employee referrals.^{3,7} There are wide range of estimates on how many people obtain jobs this way, but we know it's significant and important to keep in mind while you network and job search.

You can find these opportunities by:

- **expanding your network** and reaching out using as many avenues as possible.
- **contacting employers of interest**. If there are particular companies you're interested in working for, don't wait for them to post job openings. Reach

out by sending a message on LinkedIn, visiting the office in person, making a cold call, or sending a letter of interest.⁴

Remember! It takes time to build a network of professionals who trust and recognize you. At first, many of the connections you make might have nothing to offer but as long as you're offering value whenever you can, sticking to your values, and being genuine, eventually connections will happen. Also, when you follow up with your contacts, you'll be able to develop a strong relationship over time and the more likely they will think of you when opportunities arise.^{3,6}

Reflect: What can you offer new connections to build a mutually beneficial relationship?

2. Effective networking strategies

Every person will need to build their own network differently but here are some best practices and proven strategies to follow and make your own.

- a. **Find networking events and create a networking plan** including a goal(s) for each event, such as the number of people you want to talk to and the information you want to get (e.g. talk to two new people, find someone who can tell me about sustainable architecture).⁶
- b. **Business cards vs Resume.** Some events will tell you to bring hard copies of your resume, such as career fairs. For more casual events you can bring well-designed business cards that have your Name, Title, contact information and LinkedIn Profile/Website URL. Cards are a convenient for someone to look you up. If you're unsure whether to bring cards or copies of your resume, it might be wise to bring some of each. Always bring more than you think you need.⁶ Check out our [resume guide](#) if you need some help putting one together! Here is a simple template for your personal business card:

<p>Name</p> <p>Area of expertise/interest/degree</p> <p>Email@email.com (000)-000-0000</p> <p>www.linkedin.com/in/your-url</p>

- c. **Learn some industry lingo** in your field of interest so you don't get caught off guard when talking to professionals. For example, terms such as "life cycle" or "life cycle assessment (LCA)", "circular economy", "renewable", "sustainable", "carbon neutral", "best management practices", etc.
- d. **Have your elevator pitch ready.** During your job search you will certainly be asked to 'Tell me about yourself'. You will need a memorable and brief (roughly the duration of a short elevator ride, about 30–60 seconds or 75 words) answer that quickly summarizes **who you are, your experiences and skills**. It is helpful to have **two different versions** prepared, a general one for networking events and another for job interviews that specifically highlights how you'd be good fit for the job.

Elevator Pitch Template for Students

"I'm a [senior] at [XYZ University]. I'm majoring in [ABC Field] and involved in/working on [activity/group/club/research project].
[What you accomplished/improved, what skill(s) you used].
[How you plan to apply this experience going forward]."²

Consider your audience. If you are networking with people who may not be in your field avoid using jargon or industry-related words. An excellent elevator pitch is simple and understandable.

Try your best not to sound rehearsed and give your elevator pitch in a conversational tone. **Tip:** Try writing your pitch as bullet points, and practice saying the pitch out loud. By memorizing the ideas your presentation rather than the entire script, you might be able to sound more natural.⁹

Talk slowly. If you talk fast naturally or when you are nervous then your new contact might miss important parts of your pitch. Practice your speech and purposely try to give your elevator pitch at a slower, thoughtful pace so others can have time to process what you're saying.

- e. **Go alone or split up.** Some people go to networking events with another person and don't leave each other's sides for the entire event. This may scare off potential introductions and could intimidate introverts. By going alone or splitting up, you can challenge yourself and seek others on your own.⁵

- f. **Ask purposeful questions.** Have a list of questions to start conversations with new people that are designed to help you learn about the career you want to pursue.

How did you get started in your current career?

Would you take the same career path if you had to do it all over again?

What do you like most about your job?

g. **Keep track and keep in contact**

- **Keep track** of your interactions with people so you can effectively follow up and maintain contact. Have an organized system such as creating a spreadsheet with name, company, date, and important notes about them
- **Send a brief formal email.** Reach out first by thanking new contacts for the opportunity to speak with them. Keep your email as brief as possible mentioning where you met, the purpose of your email and extend an invitation for a future meeting. The point of this email is to suggest ways to reconnect – such as extending an invitation for a follow-up phone call or even coffee or lunch (**if you have the means to treat them**).⁵
- **Invite them to connect on LinkedIn.** Make sure your LinkedIn profile is complete and up-to-date. This puts your credentials right in front of them, and if you post regularly, it will keep you on their radar.

3. Networking in Person

- a. **Family and friends.** Reaching out to your existing network is a great way to start practicing your networking skills. Ask if they know of anyone you should meet as you begin to grow your network.³

b. **Types of networking events**¹

- Happy hour meetups
- Industry-specific seminars
- Career fairs
- Conferences/trade shows
- Breakfast or luncheon meetings
- Community service groups
- Speed networking
- Workshops

- Roundtable discussions
- c. **Sites like Meetup** to find events outside your industry
- d. **Your everyday networking functions** – Be social and introduce yourself to people you don't know. You never know when you'll meet the person who knows someone with an in.⁴
- A football game with your college roommate
 - Your cousin's baby shower or friend's wedding
 - Your neighbor's barbecue
 - The gym
 - The airplane

What if you are shy or nervous!?

- Approach people in groups of three or more, it's easy to start talking to one of those people and break away from the group into a one-on-one conversation without leaving someone stranded.
- Connect with the hosts, guests, or participants on LinkedIn or the event website, if possible, to see who is attending and ask to meet them at the event.

4. Networking Online

Not too long ago, networking had to be done in person or over the phone, but we now see online communities growing and thriving. Online networking gives you access to more people and opportunities on a global scale. However, you should combine it with in-person networking for better results.⁶

Time is still required to successfully network online but once you are a part of the online community, then people will go the extra mile for you.

Where do you network online?

- NWF EcoLeaders Community
- LinkedIn
- Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Alumni sites associated with your school
- Meetup

- Online networking events which can be part of virtual conferences,
- Virtual groups (anything from book clubs to presentations)

When it comes to social media, it's important to choose the right platforms to fit your goals. Facebook is good for getting to know people on more of a personal level. LinkedIn and Twitter are great for sharing your expertise and initiating conversations with like-minded professionals. Instagram is suited for creatives wanting to share their work.⁸

How do you network online?

- First, update your social network profiles** to reflect your latest skills and experiences and your new mission. If you're still employed but hoping to move on you may have to make these updates more thoughtfully and change details slowly to prevent jeopardizing your current position. With a strong professional brand online, you increase your chances of impressing someone in your network.

➤ Join the [Ecoleaders Community](#) and fill out your profile!

- Find the conversation and chime in!** Look for individuals or organizations posting content that you are interested in. Commenting on these posts is the easiest way to insert yourself.

➤ Use the EcoLeaders Community [Dashboard](#) to find individuals with similar interests to connect with. Post comments or start a conversation in the [Forums](#).

DON'T make superficial comments (e.g. "I agree", "Well said")

DO (respectfully) share your own insights, personal story, or ask questions.

For example: If there's a post of a list (e.g. "# of ways to go green") comment on what the next item in that list could be. If the post is about actionable advice, comment if you tried it and how it worked out.⁷

- Post your own content on your profile.** Post life updates, share articles but always add your own thoughts to the post. By making frequent posts you keep coming up in the news feed of your followers and potential followers.⁷

Remember

- Consider your aim and audience.
- Your content will be a long-lasting searchable record.

Final thoughts:

One lunch is worth a dozen emails. If you can turn an online connection to an in-person meeting, do it!⁷

Start networking sooner rather than later. The more time you put into building meaningful connections, the better results you'll have. Don't start networking only when you need something (like a referral for a job) because you might try to rush the relationships. This will result in lower quality connections, and might put off potential connections.⁸

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Switching Careers

to Conservation / Sustainability / Environment

“The scale of the climate challenge is so massive — we need all hands—on deck. We need every potential skill set.” – Katie Kross, author of the book “Profession and Purpose: A Resource Guide for MBA Careers in Sustainability”; ³

A growing trend shows people switching to jobs more in line with their values^{4,7}, and that can often mean work that has a positive impact on the environment. The key skills that a sustainability company may need in their next employee could very likely be outside of the conservation community and may be the skills you could offer.

This guide offers steps and advice to help you successfully switch careers into the conservation and sustainability community.

1. Assess your existing transferable skills

You’ve also almost certainly picked up skills that could serve you in a second career focused on the environment. The quickest way to make the switch is use your existing skill set. Consider which skills you’d be interested in using to help the planet in your new career.

Sample list of soft skills and hard skills frequently requested by employers

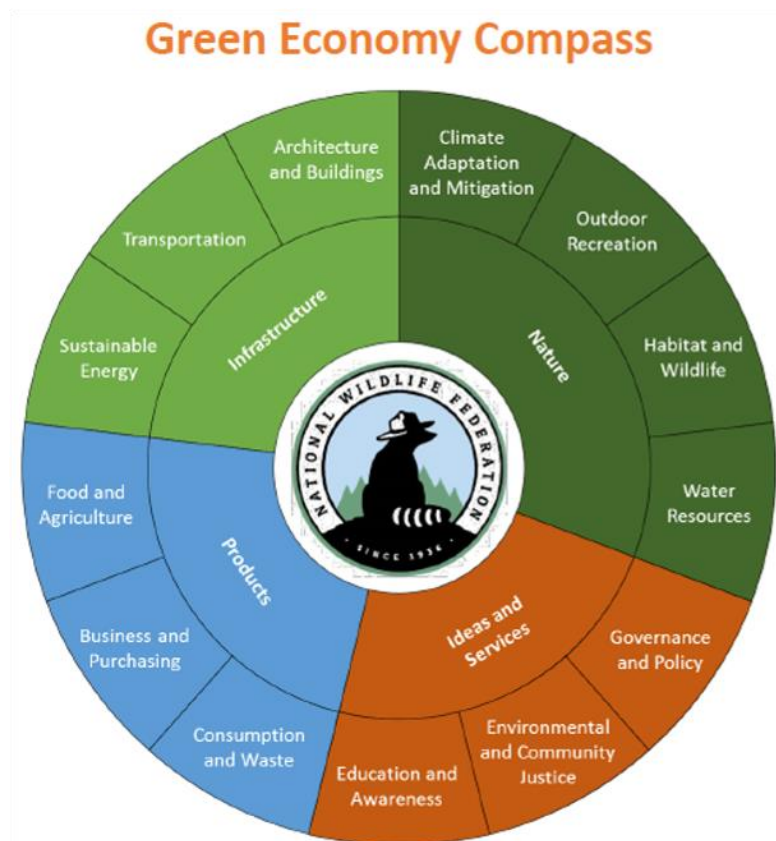
Note that hard skills depend on the specific field or position, so the ones listed below are examples from a variety of jobs while the soft skills are applicable to most jobs.

Soft skills valued by employers:	Hard skills valued by employers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Verbal communication● Written communication● Teamwork● Analyzing & investigating● Problem solving● Initiative/self-motivation● Flexibility● Time management● Project Management● Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Life Cycle Analysis● Supply Chain Analysis● Carbon or Greenhouse Gas Accounting● Water, Waste, Energy Reporting● Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

2. Visualize the job you want

There are so many ways to get involved and make a difference – even with your existing skill set. It will help to narrow things down to what is most important to you then you can dive into the tools and the resources that are out there to help you find your next career.

- Decide the sustainability issue you want to focus on and make a difference in.
 - Explore the [EcoTopics](#) page to find out more about specific issues in the areas referenced in the Green Economy Compass



- It might help to start by **reflecting on your previous jobs** and write down what you liked and didn't like, and use this to create a "new career wish list" (e.g. regular versus flexible schedules, in-office, hybrid, or remote work, etc.). **Identify which aspects of your dream career you absolutely require**, since you may not be able to find a job offering all of them – especially at first.

- **Think about the type of organization where you'd like to work.** Find a company that shares your values: global view, collaborative team, resilient leadership, intellectual challenge, etc.⁴

One way to get an idea for a company's values is by reading their social responsibility report on their website, but don't stop your research there. The report may not necessarily reflect the full reality on the inside of the organization.

Look up the companies on LinkedIn (while you are at it, follow the National Wildlife Federation on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-wildlife-federation>). See who is working at those companies and what they are talking about and the issues and organizations they follow.

- **Consider whether you would like to pursue sustainability in your job duties, your employer, or both – see diagram for explanation.**
 - **Sustainability-oriented roles** focus on conservation as part of their day-to-day duties and may be situated within a sustainability-oriented employer or a traditional employer that wants to become more sustainable.
 - **“Traditional” roles** are those that perform day-to-day activities (e.g. payroll and finance, fundraising, raising awareness), and may be situated within a sustainability-oriented employer or a traditional employer.³

Aiming for a traditional role at a sustainability-oriented business or organization is often the easiest transition because you're going to be the most marketable using the skills you already have. You are just changing the context in which you work to be aligned with your purpose.

Look at what jobs can you move into more easily as a stepping stone to get towards the ultimate dream conservation job you want. You might have to take a pay cut if you want to avoid going back to school and starting all over again. These are important decisions that everyone has to make for themselves on their unique career path.

		Company / Organization	
		Traditional	Sustainability-Oriented
Job / Position	Traditional	<p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing Assistant at a Consumer Brand Company • Customer Service Representative at a Major Commercial Bank • Field Operations Manager at a Telecommunications Company 	<p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Manager at a Sustainability Consulting Firm • Social Media Coordinator at an Environmental Non-Profit • Food Safety Scientist at a Plant-Based Food Benefit Corporation
	Sustainability-Oriented	<p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Officer at a Technical College • ESG Reporting Specialist at a Global Logistics Provider • Social Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Expert at a Construction Multinational 	<p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable Energy Analyst at a Cleantech Accelerator • Community Impact Coordinator at a National Parks Department • Environmental Engineer at a Sustainable Transportation Start-Up

Typology adapted from *Profession and Purpose*, Katie Kross, Greenleaf Publishing, 2009

3. Review job listings and conduct informational interviews

Start zeroing in on jobs that are most relevant to your existing or potential skillset and passions. Many environmental career paths are accessible through entry-level job positions.³

- Using a sample of 5–10 job listings that sound appealing, note the most frequently required requirements and what gaps exist in your background. Which skills, subject-area knowledge, certifications or degrees are typically necessary for successful candidates — and how well do those requirements align with your qualifications?³
- Informational interviews are a great tool to gather information about what it's like to work in these jobs and about the qualifications required.

Tip: Try talking to people who used to work for the organization instead of, or in addition to, current employees. Previous employees

may be more honest about what it feels like to work there every day. Current employees may not want to give informational interviews due to a concern that the job seeker may actually be trying to land a job rather than gather information, or they may not feel comfortable telling you the whole truth about their company brand that they're working for now.⁴

- Explore [interviews](#) on the EcoLeaders Community website conducted by NWF
- Follow industry professionals on social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and even Tik Tok) who frequently share job postings. Some of our favorites include, X, Y, and Z.

Suggestions, found by Christine

Green Jobs Board (from BrownGirlGreen) – <https://www.browngirlgreen.com/greenjobs>

Green Jobs Network – <https://greenjobs.net/>

Green Jobs Online

Environmental Career – <https://environmentalcareer.com/>

ISSP – <https://sustainabilityprofessionals.careerwebsite.com/>

4. Create a plan to address gaps

Many green careers require both technical skills and subject-area knowledge. For example, solar firms prefer to hire financial analysts who can both work with financial models and have knowledge of the renewable-energy sector.³

If you've decided on a career where you do not have all of the necessary skills that the employer is looking for, create a plan to acquire as many of the vital skills for that career as possible before sending out applications. This may delay your career change for several weeks or months, but it may be worth it for better career satisfaction, pay, or benefits.

- **Over half of conservation professionals have a Master's degree or higher.**⁵ Obtaining a postgraduate degree takes time and money but can make you more desirable employee
- **Beware of scams** which are just expensive, educational certifications that are unlikely to lead to employment! Instead, pursue certifications that are highlighted in job listings or that have been recommended in informational interviews.

- Consider taking **self-paced online courses or virtual classes** if you need a certain skill set or area of knowledge. They might be offered through your local community college or university.

Two top learning platforms to look into:

[Coursera](#) – Over 250 "sustainability" related courses and programs

- Enroll in most courses for FREE or Audit the course, pay for the course certificate if you choose (average cost \$49)
- Earn professional certificates and online degrees from accredited universities (e.g. Yale, Stanford, John Hopkins, University at Buffalo, Rice University)

[edX](#) – Over 330 "sustainability" related courses and programs

- Enroll in most courses for FREE, pay for course certificate if you choose
- Earn professional certificates and online degrees from accredited universities (e.g. MIT, Harvard, Berkeley, Caltech, Dartmouth, Stanford)

- If you do not have a degree and do not want to go to school, you will have to focus on **gaining experience, credibility and networking**. **Volunteering** at organizations that align with your passion is a great way to acquire all three.
- Obtain an [EcoLeaders Certification](#)! Receive recognition for your sustainability and environmental efforts and use it to build your resume.

5. Build your professional network

Put yourself out there! Attend events, volunteer, have an online presence so you can build relationships. This takes time to get started right away. Check out our [networking guide](#) to help you with the process.

6. Update your resume

For positions you may already be qualified for with your existing skills, emphasize the hard and soft skills important to those positions.

Tailor your resume to each position using the job ads for keywords to highlight the relevant skills, experience and qualities the employer is looking for.

For more resume help, check out our [resume guide](#)

7. Apply with a well-written cover letter to explain your story.

The format of a career change cover letter is the same format as a standard cover letter but you may need to put some extra effort into your cover letter to explain why you're a great candidate. Clearly explain why you made the switch, give a genuine example, and how your existing skills and experiences will make you a good fit for the job. Your cover letter should demonstrate how your skills and background have equipped you with a unique and valuable perspective that would be beneficial to the organization.

Also be sure to express that you are genuinely excited about and interested in the job opportunity, even if you might be taking a pay cut and starting in an entry- or lower-level position.

- **Introduce yourself**

Begin your cover letter by stating who you are, what you want and why you'd be a good fit for the job. Highlight your most impressive, valuable and relevant achievements without oversharing your lack of experience.

- **Give 1–2 examples of performance in previous jobs**

Your cover letter should highlight your successes during past employment so the employer can see how you would add value to the company, even if you're lacking specific, job-related experience. Always be specific in your examples by including numbers that measure and/or show your impact.

- **Show you've done your research**

Use details about the company's mission, values or product that you admire or aligns with your own standards. This will show you've done your homework about the company and to demonstrate you'll be a good fit.

Cover letter template

[Name
Address/Contact Info]

[Date]

To whom it may concern / Dear Hiring Manager (Ideal if you can get someone's name)

[Introduction]

My name is [Full Name] and I'm excited to be applying for the [Title of job] position at [Organization]. The last [number] years I have been developing [types of skills] skills as [previous job] working with/on [group, project, etc] and I believe my background will bring a valuable perspective to your team. It has been a long-term goal of mine to pursue a career in [field], and your organization is my top choice to open the next chapter of my career.

[Demonstrate your past performance and potential value to the company]

During my previous role as [title/job] I [highlight 1-2 accomplishments, what skills (relevant to the job you are applying for) you used to achieve it and what the outcome was, in quantitative terms if possible].

[Show you've done your research]

I was attracted to the role / your company by your [values, things they do you admire and want to be a part of]. I believe my skills and background would be valuable to supporting your mission and my unique perspective could bring new and creative ways of achieving the company's goals.

[Thank them]

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and learning more about the position and company.

Sincerely,
[Name]

For an even more comprehensive guide on Switching Careers, check out the free Ebook from Ecotopian Careers: <https://www.ecotopiancareers.com/ebook/>

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5. Conservation Careers. '[How to switch careers into conservation. Top ten questions answered](#)'. Retrieved September 13, 2022.
6. Indeed.com. '[How To Write a Career Change Cover Letter \(With Examples\)](#)'. Retrieved October 18, 2022.
7. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. '[New year, new career: 5 tips for changing occupations](#)'. Retrieved October 17, 2022.

Appendix C

Project Planning Resource: Film Screening Guide

Project Planning Guide: Film Screening

Benefits of hosting a film viewing event

FOR YOU

Skill-building and recognition – The organization of an event such as a film screening will demonstrate and develop your skills to plan events, bring people together and lead. And you will have a project that you can certify with the National Wildlife Federation and that counts towards becoming a certified Ecoleader.

Find out more about the various [Ecoleader Certifications](#)

FOR EVERYONE

Create dialogue – Films are informative and powerful tools that initiate conversation about important topics. With a diverse audience — the young and old, the engaged and disconnected, the believers and nonbelievers — the dialogue will be richer, creating an opportunity for others to learn from the perspectives of others.

Awareness – Documentaries are an effective way to educate ourselves about important issues. They provide an opportunity to understand and connect with the world by showcasing stories of real people and putting a human face on global issues that might otherwise seem distant or unrelatable.

Community and relationship building – Science shows that people feel closer to others in the audience after watching a film together, in a distraction-free environment with a shared focus and emotional experience.⁴ The film screening will bring people with a shared interest together, encourage relationships and may open up possibilities for future events around the issue. There may be people who come to your event who have never supported the cause/organization before and now is your time to engage them!

Important Steps for Organizing a Screening:

1. **Decide on a film and find out licensing/showing requirements.** Public screening rights are approximately \$300–\$950 for popular titles from major movie distributors.¹

2. **What is your budget?** If you don't think you can cover all of the costs, where you can get additional funding from? Can the library, a department or another organization help with the cost?
3. **Virtual or in-person screening??** This choice may not be entirely up to you depending on circumstances (eg. health concerns for large gatherings due to COVID-19, or just lack of available or affordable physical locations to hold the screening in), but if you do have the choice here are some things to consider:

Benefits of a Virtual Screening

1. **Potential to reach more people.** Without the hurdles of having to make plans or spend money to get to the event, more people may be able to attend the film screening
2. **Cost savings.** If you don't have to book a venue and the necessary technical equipment then you can potentially save a lot of money.
3. **Accessibility.** Virtual screenings can allow people with visual or aural impairments better access because audio description and closed captioning are common options included in online platforms.

A virtual screening may be easier to manage logistically than hosting people in person but it will likely require more preparation and effort in order to get people engaged with discussion and being ready to solve technical issues on the fly.

Benefits of an In-Person Screening

1. **Sense of togetherness and community is stronger**
2. **The chance to interact with new people**

Whether you decide to show the film in person or virtually, may influence your decision to open the event to just the campus or the whole community (potential size of audience will determine venue needs).

4. **Choosing a venue (for in-person screening)** – on campus or in community? Is there a fee? Can the school or another organization on campus help out or a business be a sponsor? Sometimes a campus organization or faculty member can reserve a campus venue at no cost

or a discounted price. Do you want to serve popcorn or other light refreshments? Certain venues may not allow food, so this would be something to keep in mind.

5. Deciding on a date. Timing the event is crucial. You want as many people to be have the opportunity to attend your event, so some things you may want to consider:

- The schedules and availability of your intended audience. An early weekday morning, a day during midterms or finals week, or right before spring break or holidays will not be the best time. Aim for an evening towards the first half of the semester or in between midterms and finals.
- Other events that are already scheduled that could cause conflict for others. Check your school's online calendar of events and try to avoid days that are already busy. However, if there is a set of events dedicated to your film's topic, the film showing might be incorporated into a larger event on campus or in the community.
- Special days like Earth Day that you can use to further promote your screening.

6. Promote your event! Use every possible media available to reach the widest audience. Print and post fliers around campus and at local off-campus businesses. Start a Facebook event and send out invitations. Add the screening to the school's calendar and your own Google calendar and invite guests that way. Ask your institution's newspaper and/or email newsletter to let the community know about your event.

7. Keep the momentum going post-screening. Thank attendees on social media. Share photos of the event. Submit an article or short summary to your institution's newspaper and/or email newsletter and include what was talked about during the Q&A/discussion after the film. Get your community to continue the conversation!

Potential Resources to help you:

- **NWF Ecoleaders.** Reach out to people in the Ecoleaders community who may have organized a film screening before
- **Individual film websites or film production company websites** may have guides to help you

On Campus

- **Your library and librarian** are great resources that can help you plan a film screening. Check their website to see if they have a helpful guide with specific information for your school or community.
- **Student Union/Association/Government** – check your student organization’s website to see if they offer information to guide you

Resources

1. [Film Screening Guidelines](#) – Laws and copyright info you should be aware of. Terms that may be used when you speak with a film company. Ask questions of those who would be knowledgeable, like your librarian
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