

LUSH Grant Narrative

Mission and Purpose: Providing science based education and resources on wildlife rehabilitation to promote wildlife conservation and welfare worldwide.

As a grassroots organization, the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) is the leader in offering wildlife rehabilitators as well other wildlife professionals worldwide access to affordable, peer reviewed, current information and interactive training. IWRC strongly feels that continuing education plays a crucial role in providing individuals with the appropriate skill set and knowledge to contribute to wildlife conservation as well as ensure that wildlife is ethically treated and its welfare needs are met while in captivity.

Activities: Traditional Classroom Training, Online On Demand Training, Membership, Professional Certification, Peer Reviewed Publications

The services we provide to individual wildlife rehabilitators and wildlife rehabilitation centers are instrumental in ensuring that they have successful outcomes and that the injured, displaced, and orphaned animals are given humane care. In 2017, we taught 24 classes in Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation, Pain & Wound Management, Oil Spill Volunteering, Parasitology, and Zoonoses to 750 wildlife rehabilitators in six countries. We featured online courses in oil spill volunteering, pain management, wound management, and parasitology as well as a series of webinars strengthening necessary skills. Our website has features indispensable to practicing wildlife professionals, including rehabilitators, such as dosage calculators, webinars, a member directory to encourage networking, job listings, and information about regulations.

Org Background: The IWRC was founded in 1972 in California by a group of individuals concerned about the care and conservation of native wildlife. Due in part to the intense urban growth and loss of native habitat the United States experienced in the 1970's, more people were coming into contact with wild animals in distress.

In response, the number of wildlife rehabilitation facilities in the United States grew, but a lack of clear, professional standards of care and support networks resulted in these programs operating in an isolated manner, with methods based primarily on trial and error.

IWRC founders created a professional association where wildlife rehabilitators could access reliable, science based, current information and share resources to help improve the quality of care provided to injured wild animals. Since the organization was created, IWRC has travelled internationally, and has supported an estimated 18,000 wildlife rehabilitators with training and resources.

By providing unique insights into issues affecting wildlife populations, species and habitats, wildlife rehabilitation contributes to wildlife conservation and protection worldwide. Well trained wildlife rehabilitators are instrumental in maintaining balance in ecosystems, instilling stewardship principles in our communities, and protecting animal populations from losing critical members.

Recent Org Challenges: Our recent challenges have primarily been positive, forward facing issues of organizational success and growth. Sadly, we are seeing the need for wildlife care services increase; fortunately concerned citizens are looking for reliable, science based sources of education on wildlife rehabilitation so they can aid wild animals. We are seeing an increase in course attendance and a subsequent expectation that we will produce new courses. We are working to best utilize our small staff and volunteer force, improving our people management skills and task prioritization and organization. While we do charge for our classes, we keep the costs minimal, covering travel, shipping, and instructor costs. As a result we do not have much left over capital to fund new courses and revise outdated material. This LUSH grant will help us with this final challenge, keeping our fees low while providing students with up to date content.

Program and Activities for funding consideration: IWRC's Revised Wildlife Feeding & Nutrition online course and manual project includes a multistep revision of the online course presentation, student course materials, teaching documents, new course and reference manual as well as peer review and RACE accreditation review. This project will cater to our growing international audience.

Measurement & Impact: We will measure our success by comparing the number of courses and participants in the 2020's with previous years. We will track course grade results and survey the purchasers of the manual to review changes in participant knowledge and understanding of nutrition and feeding.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a young profession with little access to formal education opportunities. People working in the field are in need of clear, science based knowledge at accessible prices and formats to rehabilitators worldwide. Nutrition plays an integral part in ensuring that wildlife receives professional care while in captivity. Providing an improper diet can have devastating effects on an animal's growth, healing and quality of life.