

LEAVE NO TRACE ASSESSMENT

youth program

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Staff	No staff have received Leave No Trace training	At least one full-time staff member has completed a Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff members have completed Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 1 staff member is certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor *	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 2 staff members are certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors *
Training Opportunities	No Leave No Trace training is offered to staff	Program encourages staff to take the 101 Course or other Leave No Trace workshop	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff onboarding	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff annually	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff during onboarding and annually
Operations & Policies	No internal policies, procedures, or formal guidance related to Leave No Trace.	Basic sustainability practices are included in operations, but no specific reference to Leave No Trace in policies or procedures.	Leave No Trace is included in some policies or procedures, but guidance is general and not tailored to the local environment.	Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices that are tailored to the local environment and are sometimes implemented.	Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices that are tailored to the local environment and are consistently implemented across operations.
Communications	No communications related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact messaging included in communications	Communications sometimes include Leave No Trace messaging, but it is not tailored to the program	Communications sometimes include Leave No Trace messaging that is tailored to the program	Communications consistently include Leave No Trace messaging that is tailored to the program
Program Curriculum	No program curriculum related to Leave No Trace utilized	Program integrates minimum impact information into curriculum but not Leave No Trace educational materials	Program integrates at least one Leave No Trace educational material into curriculum	Program integrates at least two Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum	Program integrates at least three Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum
Youth Engagement	Program participants are not engaged in the interpretation or expression of Leave No Trace	Program participants are rarely given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are sometimes given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are consistently given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are consistently given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program AND their daily lives
Additional Sustainability Measures	Program does not currently incorporate sustainability measures	Program incorporates at least one sustainability practice such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation during meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Program incorporates at least two sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation during meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Program incorporates at least three sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation during meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Program incorporates at least four sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation during meals, renewable energy use, etc.

LEAVE NO TRACE ASSESSMENT

About the Assessment

This instrument is designed for youth serving programs that wish to assess how they are implementing Leave No Trace, at what level it is being implemented, and to identify opportunities for increasing or improving specific aspects of their Leave No Trace efforts. It can be utilized to track progress over time.



This assessment is also utilized as a foundation for Leave No Trace Gold Standard designation. Programs that score **25** and above on the assessment and **meet the minimum score requirement for certain sections** are eligible to apply for Gold Standard designation. Please contact Leave No Trace directly to work through this process. Programs also must maintain a Leave No Trace partnership or equivalent agreement to be eligible for designation. Please contact GoldStandard@LNT.org for more information on how to apply for designation.

Using the Assessment

To use this assessment, go through each section and determine which scoring level best describes your program's current efforts. The Staff section scoring is weighted double (x2) because this section is so critical in allowing for implementation elsewhere.

The following provides specific information about each section of the Leave No Trace Assessment and examples for each criteria. Please review the information before proceeding with the assessment, as it will help ensure an understanding of each of the assessment criteria.

CRITERIA 1-2: STAFF & TRAINING

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Staff	No staff have received Leave No Trace training	At least one full-time staff member has completed a Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff members have completed Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 1 staff member is certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor 	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 2 staff members are certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors 
Training Opportunities	No Leave No Trace training is offered to staff	Program encourages staff to take the 101 Course or other Leave No Trace workshop	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff onboarding	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff annually	Program facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff during onboarding and annually

The presence of Leave No Trace training is an important factor in implementation. It is critical to have a foundational knowledge of Leave No Trace from which to build all other aspects. This includes having staff that are trained in Leave No Trace, as well as having regular opportunities available for staff to participate in formal Leave No Trace training. This section examines the number of staff who have completed Leave No Trace training at various levels. It also looks at the type and frequency of Leave No Trace training opportunities available to staff.

Regular and consistent training is important to keep current on changes and updates and keep the information front of mind.

In order to achieve Gold Standard designation, the organization must score at least 3 in the Staff criteria. Because staff training is so critical to all aspects of Leave No Trace implementation, the score for this criteria is weighted x2.

1

Staff: At least 1 full-time staff member has received Leave No Trace training at any level. This could be from an online Leave No Trace course, a Subaru Leave No Trace Team workshop, a workshop by other program staff or partners, etc.

Training Opportunities: Staff are encouraged to learn Leave No Trace, but no trainings are facilitated or made available.



2

Staff: Multiple staff members have received Leave No Trace training at any level.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training at any level is made available as part of onboarding for staff. This could be through providing time for training, funding for training, or facilitating the training internally or through partners.



4

Staff: Multiple staff have received Leave No Trace training at any level AND 2 staff members are certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors. The certification must be current.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training is made available annually and during onboarding for staff.



3

Staff: Multiple staff have received Leave No Trace training at any level AND 1 staff member is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor. The certification must be current.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training is made available annually for staff.

CRITERIA 3: OPERATIONS & POLICIES

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Operations & Policies	No internal policies, procedures, or formal guidance related to Leave No Trace.	Basic sustainability practices are included in operations, but no specific reference to Leave No Trace in policies or procedures.	Leave No Trace is included in some policies or procedures, but guidance is general and not tailored to the local environment.	Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices that are tailored to the local environment and are sometimes implemented.	Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices that are tailored to the local environment and are consistently implemented across operations.

Practicing Leave No Trace is not limited to parks and protected areas. It is a critical part of how youth programs teach responsibility, stewardship, and outdoor ethics. When Leave No Trace is integrated into program structure and daily activities, it helps young people build lifelong habits and a deeper connection to the outdoors.

This section of the assessment evaluates how Leave No Trace is incorporated into a youth program's operations through policies, procedures, and internal guidance. This may include trip planning, staff protocols, risk management practices, or other formal commitments that outline how to minimize impacts in both program settings and outdoor environments.

Examples may include procedures for teaching and reinforcing Leave No Trace principles, managing group behavior outdoors, handling food and waste, and preparing youth for outdoor experiences.

1

Basic sustainability or outdoor responsibility practices are present, but there is no specific reference to Leave No Trace in policies or procedures.

For example, the program may encourage respect for nature or general stewardship behaviors, but these are not connected to Leave No Trace principles or formally defined in program operations.

2

Some policies or procedures reference Leave No Trace, but guidance is general and not tailored to the environments where programming occurs.

For example, Leave No Trace may be mentioned in curriculum or staff guidance, but it is not adapted to be reflective of the specific settings where youth are learning and recreating.

4

Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices tailored to environments where programming occurs and are consistently implemented across the program.

These practices are embedded in program design and staff facilitation through policies or standard operating procedures.

3

Policies and procedures include Leave No Trace practices tailored to the environments where programming occurs, but they are only sometimes implemented.

For example, locally relevant practices may exist for certain programs, staff, or activities, but are not consistently applied across all program areas or participant experiences.

CRITERIA 4: COMMUNICATION

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Communications	No communications related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact messaging included in communications	Communications sometimes include Leave No Trace messaging, but it is not tailored to the program	Communications sometimes include Leave No Trace messaging that is tailored to the program	Communications consistently include Leave No Trace messaging that is tailored to the program

Youth programs create a unique opportunity for not only reaching youth, but parents, guardians, and teachers as well. Including Leave No Trace in communications with parents, guardians, and teachers will further spread this information and makes it possible for youth to continue their learning even after they leave your program.

This section examines the information that is provided within program communications. Communications could include emails to parents, guardians, or teachers, newsletters, websites, packing lists, social media posts, etc. By including Leave No Trace in these communications, we can equip parents, guardians, and teachers to continue the learning even after the program is complete.

1

The information provided is minimum impact but not Leave No Trace. As an example, parents, guardians, teachers are told to "Pack It In, Pack It Out," but not about Leave No Trace or the 7 Principles.

Part of the effectiveness of the Leave No Trace message is consistency. Youth may see similar messages and concepts at various parks and protected areas around the country. We encourage using Leave No Trace specifically to tap into this broader message.

2

The information or educational message sometimes include Leave No Trace, but it is not tailored to the program. As an example, communication includes Leave No Trace, but not how or why it is relevant to the specific local area, activity, or ecosystem where the program takes place.

It is always best to tailor the message to the local area or specific activity. This makes the information relevant.

4

The information includes Leave No Trace and how it applies to the local area, specific activity, or ecosystem where the program takes place, and it is consistently provided across multiple outlets.

3

The information includes Leave No Trace and how it applies to the local area, specific activity, or ecosystem where the program takes place, but it is not consistently provided across multiple outlets.

For example, it is on the website but not sent to parents, guardians, or teachers.

CRITERIA 5: PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Program Curriculum	No program curriculum related to Leave No Trace utilized	Program integrates minimum impact information into curriculum but not Leave No Trace educational materials	Program integrates at least one Leave No Trace educational material into curriculum	Program integrates at least two Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum	Program integrates at least three Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum

Educational resources, tools, and teaching aides allow program staff to better relate Leave No Trace to participants within the context of their program, the environment, or individuals' personal lives. For some, Leave No Trace can be a big idea that is difficult to relate to in certain circumstances. It is important to embrace using educational resources, tools, and teaching aides to help make Leave No Trace more relevant to the lives of youth participants, both through your program and in their everyday lives.

This section examines what Leave No Trace education resources are actively used in an organization's youth programs. These educational materials could include: Bigfoot's Playbook, PEAK, 101 Ways to Teach Leave No Trace, Skills & Ethics booklets, Reference Cards, or other resources from Leave No Trace's Youth Educator Library.

These educational materials have been evaluated and shown to be effective tools in experiential youth education.

In order to achieve Gold Standard designation, the organization must score at least 3 in the Program Curriculum criteria.

1

The program integrates minimum impact information into curriculum but not Leave No Trace educational materials. As an example, youth learn about local wildlife and how to protect them, but not in the context of Leave No Trace or with the use of any Leave No Trace educational materials.

2

The program integrates at least one Leave No Trace educational material into curriculum. For example, youth complete activities from Bigfoot's Playbook.

Using Leave No Trace educational materials provides access to our extensive research in recreation ecology and effective tools for experiential youth education.



4

The program integrates at least three Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum. For example, youth complete activities from Bigfoot's Playbook, learn information about the local ecosystem from the corresponding Skills & Ethics booklet, and watch videos from the video library, are given Reference Cards, or complete the Social Media Discussion Guide, etc.

3

The program integrates at least two Leave No Trace educational materials into curriculum. For example, youth complete activities from Bigfoot's Playbook, and learn information about the local ecosystem from the corresponding Skills & Ethics booklet.



CRITERIA 6: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Youth Engagement	Program participants are not engaged in the interpretation or expression of Leave No Trace	Program participants are rarely given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are sometimes given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are consistently given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives	Program participants are consistently given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program AND their daily lives

Creative expression and interpretation is one method for youth to demonstrate their understanding of Leave No Trace and deepen their connection to the material. Giving youth participants the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of responsibility in the outdoors helps to solidify their understanding of the concepts surrounding outdoor ethics.

This section examines what opportunities for interpretation and expression are provided to youth. These opportunities could include the chance for them to teach Leave No Trace concepts themselves, to create their own 7 Principles for the program, to create skits, songs, posters, drawings, or other expressions of Leave No Trace, etc.

These interpretations and expressions can relate to how Leave No Trace applies during the program or how it will apply to their daily lives after the program is complete. The most effective way for youth to engage with Leave No Trace is to have the opportunity to interpret and express BOTH how it applies to the program and their daily lives.

1

The program participants are rarely given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives. For example, after youth learn about Leave No Trace they are occasionally given the opportunity to create a poster about how they will practice it in the daily life, but this is not a regular part of the program.

2

The program participants are sometimes given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives. For example, after youth learn about Leave No Trace, they are sometimes given the chance to teach their own activity on one of the principles, but this is not consistently part of the program.

4

The program participants are sometimes given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives. For example, after youth learn about Leave No Trace, they are consistently given the chance to create their own principles for how they will practice Leave No Trace during the program AND create a poster about how they will practice it at home.

3

The program participants are sometimes given opportunities to interpret Leave No Trace in their own way and express how it applies to the program OR their daily lives. For example, after youth learn about Leave No Trace, they are consistently given the chance to create their own principles for how they will practice Leave No Trace during the program, but they do not express how they practice it at home.

CRITERIA 7: SUSTAINABILITY

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Additional Sustainability Measures	Organization does not currently incorporate sustainability measures.	Organization incorporates at least one sustainability practice such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation for trip meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Organization incorporates at least two sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation for trip meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Organization incorporates at least three sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation for trip meals, renewable energy use, etc.	Organization incorporates at least four sustainability practices such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation for trip meals, renewable energy use, etc.

While Leave No Trace focuses on outdoor recreation, other sustainable and planet-friendly practices are important components of protecting and preserving our natural world. This criteria examines any additional sustainability measures that might be in place at the organization.

These include the practices listed on the assessment, but if your organization is incorporating planet-friendly practices that are not listed, please still include them in your assessment, as this is not an exhaustive list.

We recognize that these practices are not accessible to all sites, and there may be barriers related to cost, infrastructure, or other resources that make a practice out of reach. The assessment is designed for a program to still achieve designation without needing to incorporate these additional practices, but we encourage it where feasible.

1

The organization has implemented at least one sustainability measure. This could include recycling or composting for clients, renewable energy use in trip logistics, single-use plastic mitigation in meals, etc.

2

The organization has implemented at least two sustainability measures. This could include recycling or composting for clients, renewable energy use in trip logistics, single-use plastic mitigation in meals, etc.



4

The organization has implemented at least four sustainability measures. This could include recycling or composting for clients, renewable energy use in trip logistics, single-use plastic mitigation in meals, etc.

3

The organization has implemented at least three sustainability measures. This could include recycling or composting for clients, renewable energy use in trip logistics, single-use plastic mitigation in meals, etc.

