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# ALIGNMENT OF PROJECT LEARNING TREE TO THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

# THE ALIGNMENT

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) cover a wide range of environmental, social, and economic call to actions for countries, governments, and organizations.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) has identified five goals where it is having the greatest impact: Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life on Land (SDG 15), and Partnerships For The Goals (SDG 17).

In 2017, SFI brought on the award-winning environmental education initiative, Project Learning Tree (PLT). Through PLT, in addition to the five goals above, SFI's impact now reaches SDG 4: Quality Education.

PLT advances environmental literacy, stewardship, and career pathways using trees and forests as windows on the world. PLT provides high-quality curriculum and professional development for teachers, other educators, parents, and community leaders, working with youth from preschool to grade 12. Through hands-on lessons, PLT teaches **how to think and not what to think** about complex environmental issues and the skills required to achieve sustainability today.

The alignment displayed on the following pages focuses on PLT organizational principles as well as examples of several curriculum activities. The alignment offers analysis of PLT's impact towards advancing quality education within the global context of achieving sustainable development.

## SDG 4

QUALITY  
EDUCATION



From the 10 targets listed for Sustainable Development Goal #4, PLT aligns with three of them through its goal, vision, student goals, and three overarching components.

**“**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

## SDG Target 4.6

By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

### GOAL

Project Learning Tree's goal is to advance environmental literacy, stewardship, and career pathways through excellence in environmental education, professional development, and curriculum resources using trees and forests as the windows on the world.

### Alignment

PLT's goal aligns with SDG Target 4.6 by advancing environmental literacy through education for both youth and adults through curriculum resources and professional development. PLT's content is made available both online and in-person through workshops and printed activity guides.

An external Survey of Use conducted in 2018 by PEER Associates, found that PLT meets the following four student outcomes:

1. Increased knowledge about the environment
2. Increased engagement in learning
3. Better performance on science standards
4. Increased knowledge about forest management

These survey results not only demonstrate that students exposed to PLT curriculum resources are becoming proficient in environmental subjects, especially forestry, but also serves as an indicator that PLT is actively meeting their goal as well as Target 4.6 – advancing environmental literacy for all.

## SDG Target 4.7 – Part 1

Ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development

### VISION

A world that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests.

### Alignment

PLT's vision aligns with Target 4.7 by creating a future where learners have the knowledge and skills, acquired from various curriculum resources, to not only promote sustainable development but also value and appreciate forests.

PEER's 2018 Survey of Use quantified this SDG target. The survey found that through PLT's hands-on teaching and learning, students are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable forest management and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) which indicates PLT's ongoing achievement of their vision as well as Target 4.7 – creating a future based in environmental stewardship.

## SDG Target 4.7 – Part 2

Education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of a culture's contribution to sustainable development.

## PLT STUDENT GOALS

1. Provide students with the awareness, appreciation, skills, and commitment to address environmental issues.
2. Enable students to apply scientific process and higher order thinking skills to resolve environmental problems
3. Help students acquire appreciation for and tolerance of diverse viewpoints on environmental issues and develop attitudes and actions based on analysis and evaluation of the available information.
4. Encourage creativity, originality, and flexibility to resolve environmental problems and issues.
5. Inspire and empower students to become responsible, productive, and participatory members of society.

### Alignment

PLT student goals #1, #2, and #3 align with Target 4.7 by ensuring students receive education tailored and adapted to investigating and solving real-world issues, which can encompass sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, and peace, while acquiring an appreciation and tolerance of diverse viewpoints on environmental issues – shaping the next generation of forest leaders.

## SDG Target 4.7.1 Indicator

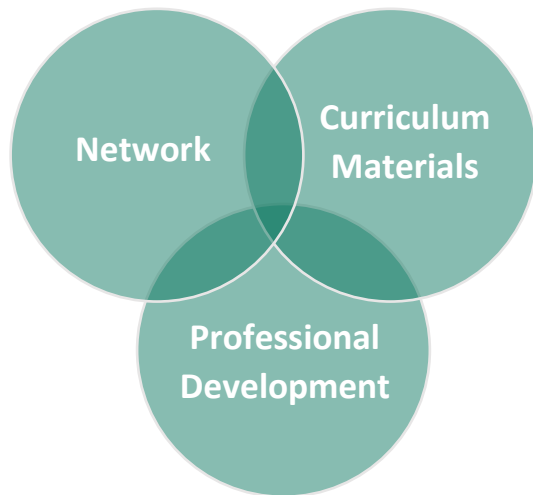
Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (iii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.

## SDG Target 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

## PLT'S THREE MAIN COMPONENTS

PLT is characterized by three equally important components: Curriculum Materials, Professional Development, and Network. All three components ensure quality education is developed, distributed, and supported for various audiences, needs, and interests.



### Curriculum:

PLT offers high-quality educator guides, units and lesson plans designed to supplement and enhance existing curriculum and education programming in formal and non-formal teaching settings. Additionally, PLT's curriculum activities align with state and national academic standards in the United States.

### Professional Development (PD):

PLT offers in-person & online trainings, one-day workshops, in-service days, and other types of PD – all conducted by trained facilitators and that can be customized for specific grade levels, topics, and teaching situations.

### Network:

PLT materials and resources are delivered in all 50 states and 4 countries: Uruguay, Chile, Mexico, and Canada, through a large and diverse network of partners, sponsors, and state coordinators.

## Alignment

Considering PLT's goal, vision, and student goals, PLT's components serve as concrete, tangible indicators of PLT's alignment with Target 4.7. Specifically, PLT's professional development aligns with Target 4.4.

PLT's curriculum materials and resources – PreK-8 Environmental Education Guide, Green Jobs: Exploring Forest Careers Unit, 3 E-units, Secondary Modules, and GreenSchools Investigations – support the promotion and implementation of education for sustainable development-related subjects in schools and nonformal settings, improving *“the extent to which education for sustainable development is mainstreamed at the ‘curricula’ level.”*

PLT's professional development aligns with Target 4.4 and Target 4.7 by offering workshops and online trainings that teaches and provides educators with the necessary skills and resources to be successful within their field as well as in ensuring that their students acquire the knowledge (and subsequent skills) to understand and promote sustainable development. By offering PD in various forms for preservice teachers and educators, it *“improves the extent to which education for sustainable development is mainstreamed at the ‘teacher education’ level.”*

PLT's partners and sponsors create a network of reliable communication, materials, and support that increases the number of educators reached as well as ensures that those educators and students acquire the knowledge and skills to promote *sustainable development through environmental education.*

## CONCLUSION

PLT brings SDG #4: Quality Education to life by creating and providing the necessary resources, PD, and network for educators and students to achieve literacy, acquire specific knowledge and skillsets, and receive education about sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles in a global sense.

In addition to an organizational alignment with Quality Education (4), PLT intersects with three other SDGs that have a direct reference to education.

## ORGANIZATIONAL INTERSECTION

Alongside SDG 4: Target 4.4, Target 4.6, Target 4.7, PLT's environmental education-driven goal, vision, student goals, and components intersect with the following three SDGs:

- **Decent Work & Growth (8)**  
PLT PD fosters personal and professional growth for participants, especially youth, in its connection with 21<sup>st</sup> century and STEM skills.
- **Responsible Consumption & Production (12)**  
PLT's activities and PD provide both relevant information for improving learners' awareness about sustainable development and methods to become more sustainability-conscious in everyday life.
- **Climate Action (13)**  
PLT's development strategy seeks to create a larger supporting network of partners and sponsors dedicated to casting a larger net of impact in improving education and awareness-raising about sustainability and climate science for their specific audiences.

### SDG 8

DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



“Decent Work &  
Sustainable Growth

Target 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training

### SDG 12

RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION



“Ensure sustainable consumption  
& production patterns

Target 12.8: By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

### SDG 13

CLIMATE  
ACTION



“Take urgent action to combat  
climate change and its impacts

Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning





**PART 1: *Green Jobs: Exploring Forest Careers Unit***

PLT’s *Green Jobs: Exploring Forest Careers Unit* includes four hands-on instructional activities that help youth explore forest-related careers and get excited about green jobs. Given the content, these activities align with 3 SDGs and several specific targets – some of which overlap for the activities.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACTIVITY 1: WHO WORKS IN THIS FOREST?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduction to the variety of forestry-related jobs available in the forestry sector</p>			
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL		ACTIVITY ALIGNMENT	
SDG NUMBER	DESCRIPTION		
Target 4.4	Increase the number of people with relevant skills for employment success	<p><b>STEM SKILLS:</b> Communication, Investigation, Organization</p>	
Target 8.6	Promote youth employment, education, and training	<p>Provides student worksheets and quizzes that raise awareness of the opportunities and possibilities with a green career.</p> <p>Includes Career Connections section that connects the activity and student pages to specific careers in the forestry field.</p> <p>Utilizes “career cards” to educate and engage youth in various green careers as well as exposes them to the necessary personality traits, stem skills, training, and educational background needed to perform these jobs and succeed in a certain career.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACTIVITY 2: IF YOU WERE THE BOSS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Students make various decisions about how to sustainably manage a forest while addressing different needs</p>			
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL		ACTIVITY ALIGNMENT	
SDG NUMBER	DESCRIPTION		
Target 4.4	Increase the number of people with relevant skills for employment success	<p><b>STEM SKILLS:</b> Collaboration Communication Creativity Leadership Problem-Solving Data Analysis</p>	<p><b>Other Relevant Skills:</b> ArcGIS Scribblemaps Animaps ZeeMaps</p>

Target 8.6	Promote youth employment, education, and training	<p>Includes a Career Connections section that connects the activity and student pages to specific careers in the forestry field.</p> <p>Students can identify and write about the different jobs needed to carry out their forest management plan, including the required education, experience, and skills for it.</p> <p>For instance, students discuss whether or not a physical, financial, or data modeling specialist job interests them.</p>
Target 15.2	By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests	Develop a 400-acre forest management plan, where students utilize STEM skills to analyze the positive and negative environmental, social, and economic effects of their chosen forest uses.

### ACTIVITY 3: MONITORING FOREST HEALTH

Students assess the health of a forest stand and review how various forest professionals monitor trees and forests

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL		ACTIVITY ALIGNMENT	
SDG NUMBER	DESCRIPTION		
Target 4.4	Increase the number of people with relevant skills for employment success	<b>STEM SKILLS:</b> Collaboration Data Analysis Investigation Technology Use	<b>Other Relevant Skills:</b> i-Tree software Tree Identification
Target 8.6	Promote youth employment, education, and training	<p>Includes Career Connections section that connects the activity and student pages to specific careers in the forestry field.</p> <p>Educates students on forest health and the different indicators, allowing them to use their observational skills beyond the activity.</p> <p>Trains students on standard tree and forest inventory methods of measuring health indicators, utilizing tree identification guides and other inventory tools.</p> <p>Advises students to add forest monitoring assessments to their resume to indicate hands-on experience in the field.</p>	

Target 15.2	By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests	Promotes sharing results of inventory with local forestry professionals to develop an action plan for improving the management and subsequent health of the forest.
Target 15.8	By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems	If students decide to share inventory results with a forester, their action plan can include removing invasive species to increase forest diversity.

#### ACTIVITY 4: SEEKING SUSTAINABILITY

Students explore the concept of sustainability by examining the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals as well as jobs involved in ensuring forest sustainability

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL		ACTIVITY ALIGNMENT
SDG NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	
Target 4.4	Increase the number of people with relevant skills for employment success	<b>STEM SKILLS:</b> Collaboration, Communication, Leadership Nature-Based Design
Target 8.6	Promote youth employment, education, and training	Includes Career Connections section that connects the activity and student pages to specific careers in the forestry field.  Identify methods to measure, monitor, and assess a certain SDG and the different technology tools required for that measurement and analysis.  Promotes exploration of the United Nations career page as well as identify job opportunities inherent in the SDGs