

Ecologist Development Program Users Guide

The Ecologist Development Program (EDP) is a program designed to help new and prospective transportation ecologists track their learning goals as they become familiar with the principles of transportation ecology and the GDOT project delivery process.

The EDP is composed of a series of checklists that include various tasks for new ecologists to complete. These tasks range from reading educational materials and watching videos to conducting specific tasks during fieldwork and discussing topics with a mentor or manager.

EDP ORGANIZATION

Content within the program is organized into four main subject areas and each subject area is further differentiated into levels of complexity (tiers).

Main Subject Areas:

Ecology Resources: Covers describing and delineating resources, fieldwork/field skills, and relevant environmental laws.

Construction & Maintenance: Covers transportation construction and maintenance techniques, processes, principles, and terminology. Plan reading is also included in this topic.

GDOT Project Delivery: Covers general GDOT organization, and project delivery basics such as project team members, delivery types, project types, funding, and schedules.

Environmental Process: Covers GDOT ecology processes according to the project schedule. Topics include programmatic agreements, report writing, processing survey data, ecology deliverables, agency coordination, and permitting. This also includes internal GDOT processes.

Tier Descriptions

Tier 1 is designed for entry-level ecologists, Tier 2 is for mid-level ecologists, and Tier 3 is for senior-level ecologists or managers. Checklists for each subject and tier level will become available for download as they are developed.

Table 1. Checklist Availability as of publication.

		Tier		
		1 - Entry Level	2 - Mid-Level	3 - Senior
Subject Area	Ecology Resources	Available	Later	Later
	Construction & Maintenance	Available	Later	Later
	GDOT Project Delivery	Available	Later	Later
	Environmental Process	Available	Later	Later

HOW TO USE THE EDP

To get started, download the available checklists. These can be printed or kept as digital files. Checklists do not need to be completed consecutively, and you may find benefits to completing some tasks concurrently. Each checklist contains a table with three columns. In the left column, you'll find the overall knowledge goal; the center column lists several tasks that an ecologist can complete to gain or demonstrate their understanding of each knowledge goal; and the third column can be used to track your progress. A checkmark or date may be useful to denote progress. Use what works best for you!

Some checklist items involve in-person tasks (such as fieldwork, discussion with a mentor or manager, or attending a training course), while others (such as reading or watching videos) can be completed independently. Most resources are publicly available online but some are only available to those with GDOT accounts (see note below). For in-person trainings, a list of recommended courses can be found in the companion document "GDOT Recommended Training Courses."

It is recommended that users take some time to look over the companion resources provided alongside the checklists. These resources are referenced in the checklists and provide a broad context within which the checklists reside. Keep the master outline handy as you work through the checklists to see how each knowledge goal and associated tasks fit within the broader context of the EDP. The master outline covers all topics at all levels; some topics are only discussed at more advanced tiers.

Some items in the checklists have additional designations associated with them. These are described below:

Internal Only: These items are specific to GDOT OES or other entities that have been delegated as representatives of GDOT OES. Most ecologists completing the checklists should skip these tasks.

Read: These should be read thoroughly as they provided needed information.

Review: These do not need to be read in entirety but rather should be reviewed to ascertain the content covered in the document and overall organization. These are sometimes dense and should be referenced as needed in the future.

Alternative: Some checklist items will not be possible to complete without a GDOT contractor or vendor account, which can only be obtained when working on a GDOT project directly. Some resources provided in the checklists may not be publicly or readily available. To provide new ecologists with as many learning materials as possible, alternative tasks may be provided. These do not need to be completed but are recommended.

Recommended/Optional: Tasks are not required but can be completed to supplement and provide a greater understanding if completed.

With Assistance: A new ecologist is not expected to complete certain checklist items independently as they require help from a mentor or manager. These are listed as “with assistance.” Some ecologists may begin the EDP with enough experience to complete these without assistance but that is not the expectation.

With a Mentor or Manager: Some topics do not have a readily available resource or guidance document. These topics should be discussed with a knowledgeable senior level (or higher) ecologist familiar with GDOT work.

ADVANCEMENT & PROGRESSION

Learning is not a linear process, and many of the topics within the program can be covered concurrently. Checklists and individual items in the checklists can be completed in any order, though it is recommended to begin with (and complete most of) Tier 1 checklists before moving on to any Tier 2 content. Additionally, *opportunities* to complete certain checklist items may come more readily to some ecologists than others. Exposure to certain ecoregions, deliverables, and project types may be difficult to achieve depending on a firm’s contract(s) and project load. Exceptions to accommodate these constraints are expected.

There is no deadline for checklist completion, however it is anticipated that an entry-level ecologist should complete most of Tier 1 content in 1-2 years to advance to Tier 2. Advancement from Tier 2 to Tier 3 is variable between 2-5 years.

Completion of the program is optional, self-paced, and self-guided. Some tasks may not be able to be completed due to opportunity availability or project constraints. This program does not replace traditional hands-on training provided by an employer. This program is NOT related to GDOT pre-qualifications or promotional milestones, nor are the learning materials all-inclusive.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Content in the EDP may need to be updated over time. If you encounter any errors or have suggestions for improvement, please submit your comments to the GDOT Ecology Submittals Inbox (Ecology_submittals@dot.ga.gov) where it can be passed on to the EDP Team.