Training for Biological Assessment authors

Consultants who meet the education and training requirements and have two full years of experience writing BAs qualify as senior authors. Consultants who meet the education and training requirement but do not have the required experience can qualify as junior authors.

All BAs prepared for WSDOT must be written by a senior author, who may be assisted by a junior author.

Upcoming training dates

The next Biological Assessment Preparation course is scheduled for March 2028. Attendance at this seminar is one of the requirements needed to qualify or maintain your status as a junior or senior BA author for WSDOT.

See the Preliminary design tab for the BA Preparation Manual and templates.

You can sign up for email alerts and register at the WSDOT Local Technical Assistance Program webpage. Registration will open in January 2028. Contact Jeff Dreier, Jeff.Dreier@wsdot.wa.gov, with any BA training questions.

Qualification requirements

Consultants must meet the four criteria listed below to qualify as a senior author: education, training, testing, and experience. To qualify as a junior author, candidates must meet the education, training, and testing criteria.

1. Education

Consultants must have a bachelors or graduate degree in fisheries, wildlife, biology, zoology, botany, environmental science, or closely related field (a degree in a closely related field may still qualify – see Proof of education below).

Substituting experience for education requirements – Consultants may substitute a minimum of five years' relevant biological experience for the degree requirement. For senior authors substituting experience for education, the minimum of five years' experience is in addition to the 2-year experience requirement for senior authors (see **Experience** below). See **Proof of experience** below for information on how to document your experience. Submit your substitution request to Jeff Dreier, Jeff.Dreier@wsdot.wa.gov, along with your other application materials.

Proof of education – Provide a photocopy of your degree (bachelors or graduate degree in fisheries, wildlife, biology, zoology, botany, environmental science) or a signed and dated statement listing:

- Degree
- Year obtained
- Name of the college or university that issued the degree

If you have an unusual degree or a degree in a closely related field, provide rationale for why the degree is comparable to the degrees listed above. You can use a list of courses completed to acquire the degree for the rationale.

2. Training requirements

To qualify, you must attend all days of a WSDOT Biological Assessment Preparation course. To remain qualified, you must take the course and pass the qualification exam every six years.

To remain qualified, you must also attend mandatory seminars that introduce new analytical methods or policies. WSDOT provides seminars as needed, announcing them three months in advance.

3. Testing requirements

After attending the Biological Assessment Preparation course, authors are required to pass an exam on the last day of the course with a score of 80% or higher. One additional exam date may be available after each course. You may attempt to pass the exam twice before being required to retake the course. Course fees apply each time the course is taken.

4. Experience

We expect qualified BA authors to actually work in positions that require them to prepare BAs. To qualify as a senior author, you must have at least two full years of experience in preparing BAs (preferably on Northwest species and habitats).

Proof of experience – Provide a **customized, detailed résumé** summarizing your experience, including:

- Name, address and phone number of employer.
- Title of positions held.
- Dates of employment.
- Average hours worked per week.
- Detailed list of duties performed for each position.

Note: The standard consultant company résumé listing only high-level summaries of projects is not sufficient information to conduct a detailed evaluation of your experience.

Provide a detailed **list of all BAs authored to date**, including the time spent per assessment. State if you were a junior or senior (supporting or primary) author.

Consider this important information:

- If you have not met the minimum requirement of at least two years of experience writing BAs, you will still qualify as a junior author, if you meet the education, training and testing criteria.
- WSDOT will evaluate your experience based on the amount of time you have actually spent preparing BAs. Writing one BA in a two-year period will not qualify you as a senior author.
- Junior authors should not expect that they automatically qualify as senior authors after having spent two years as a junior author. A senior author qualifies based on having two solid years' experience writing BAs.

- Any time a qualified junior author feels they have met the requirements to change status to senior author, WSDOT will review submitted documentation and upgrade their author status if the requirements are met.

How to provide proof of education and experience

You can provide proof of education to WSDOT during the training course or send it to:

Washington State Department of Transportation
Attn: Jeff Dreier
Environmental Services Office
310 Maple Park Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98504-7331
Jeff.Dreier@wsdot.wa.gov

Notification of results

Two weeks after the date of the last exam held for that training course, we send out a letter with your exam score and let you know if you qualify for the BA authors list. In addition, you can check our on-line lists of qualified authors, which we update approximately two weeks after the course.

If you took and passed the exam but still did not qualify, did you forget to provide proof of education and/or experience? If so, send or email the documentation along with the dates you attended the training.

Maintaining your qualification

If you are currently qualified as a senior or junior BA author, you will need to maintain your qualification status in the following ways:

- Senior authors must ensure that BAs adhere to strict quality control standards to maintain their status as qualified WSDOT BA authors.
- Attend mandatory seminars that introduce new analytical methods or policies.
- Attend the Biological Assessment Preparation course every six years and pass the exam with a score of 80% or higher. If you are unable to take the course and/or pass the exam, your qualification will expire.

Requalification schedule

- If you qualified in 2022, you must requalify in 2028
- 2024, requalify in 2030
- 2026, requalify in 2032

How we maintain quality control standards

All documents submitted by qualified authors must meet WSDOT standards.

Senior authors are responsible for authoring all BAs; junior authors may assist. The senior author(s) maintain document quality and face removal from the roster if BAs don't meet quality control criteria. If more than one senior author prepares the BA, both are responsible for maintaining standards.

Qualified authors submitting BAs through Local Programs must meet the same quality control standards. Since Local Programs does not require senior authors to prepare BAs, WSDOT holds the lead author or authors (regardless of junior or senior status) responsible for BA quality.

Regional or headquarters staff review submitted BAs for completion and compliance with WSDOT quality control criteria. WSDOT returns BAs requiring corrections to the author(s).

Reasons for returning BAs include:

- Changes in project description, setting, timing, etc.
- Changes to improve the BA content.
- Deficiencies in meeting the guidelines in Biological Assessment preparation manual. For example, incorrectly identifying the action area, incorrectly calculating the zone of noise influence, failure to use the latest guidance, lack of quality control review (e.g., cut and paste errors, spelling and grammatical errors) or overall inconsistency in the BA.

Almost all BAs reviewed by WSDOT will have comments and suggestions from the reviewer. However, if the initial WSDOT reviewer identifies policy or quality deficiencies, such as those outlined above, the BA will be referred to the BA Qualification Program for review.

If there is agreement that the BA does not meet WSDOT policies and quality standards, the responsible author(s) will be notified of deficiencies and asked to correct the BA. After submitting two deficient BAs, WSDOT removes the responsible author(s) from the list of qualified BA authors.

At a minimum, requalification requires consultants to retake the course and pass the exam.

All authors should regularly review the Biological Assessment preparation manual. It provides the latest information on BA policy and guidance.