

Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Association Roles and Functions Input

Opened for submissions Feb. 28 - Mar. 4, 2022. Invitations were sent to 77 SEAFWA agency members.

Introduction

Following is a brief questionnaire regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

We seek feedback only from SEAFWA member-agency [directors](#), [fisheries administrators](#), [wildlife administrators](#), [law enforcement administrators](#), and [committee chairs](#).

Please complete this questionnaire by Friday, March 4, so that we can compile and present results at the [Spring Directors Meeting](#) on March 9.

What is your role with your agency and SEAFWA?

- Director
- Fisheries administrator
- Law enforcement administrator
- Wildlife administrator
- Committee chair
- Other . . .

Following are a range of roles, duties, and responsibilities that an organization like SEAFWA might serve. These are jobs that the association may strive to do — currently and/or in the future.

For each role listed, please indicate

- How important it is to your agency and to conservation in the Southeast region.
- If and how well SEAFWA currently performs this role or achieves success in this area.

[Response options for each of the roles listed]

Importance

Importance to your agency and to conservation in the Southeast

- Not at all Important
- Somewhat Important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very Important

Performance / achievement

How well does SEAFWA perform this role or achieve success in this area today?

- Performs highly
- Performs adequately
- Performs somewhat
- Performs very little
- Does not perform this

Convening

Bringing agency members and others in the field of conservation together for meetings and activities. Organizing conferences, meetings, and outings where conservation professionals can confer and consult with each other.

Communicating with members

Imparting or exchanging of information or news important to agency members and to fish and wildlife conservation in the Southeast with and among agency members.

Communicating to external audiences

Coordinate multi-jurisdictional and regional message development and delivery to audiences and stakeholders outside of SEAFWA-membership.

Advancing professional and leadership development

Organize professional training and leadership development efforts.

Advocating

Serve as a champion and promoter of policies and investment in fish and wildlife conservation. Advocate for actions and solutions that member agencies agree are beneficial and align with SEAFWA's objectives. Scrutinize state and federal wildlife legislation and regulations and offer support or opposition to legislative proposals or federal regulations in accordance with the best interests of SEAFWA-member states.

Fundraising, development

Pursue and develop diverse revenue streams to reduce reliance on state wildlife agency funding and advance SEAFWA members' shared objectives.

Publishing, archiving

Maintaining conference proceedings and journal articles.

Relationship building

Build and foster relationships with federal agencies, universities, and other fish and wildlife conservation stakeholders.

Trustee, fund management

Manage agreements and distribute funding in support of efforts as agreed to by SEAFWA leadership.

Data stewardship

Scientific data normalization, collection, and aggregation among member agencies to facilitate data sharing and regional analysis. Facilitate SEAFWA information and data use by outside entities to meet SEAFWA's objectives.

Reporting and record keeping

Coordination, communication, reporting, and archiving of committee and work team outputs.

Program/project development and delivery

Facilitate programs and projects that address the highest priority challenges as agreed to by SEAFWA leadership. Fund and administer regional programs and deliver on-the-ground projects.

Defending jurisdiction

Promote and protect the right of jurisdiction of SEAFWA-member states over wildlife resources on public and private lands.

Promoting diversity and inclusiveness

Promote diversity and inclusiveness in the SEAFWA community and SEAFWA operations.

Collaborating

Maintain committees consisting of fish and wildlife professionals who explore and analyze issues and factors affecting fish and wildlife resources and make recommendations as appropriate.

Results

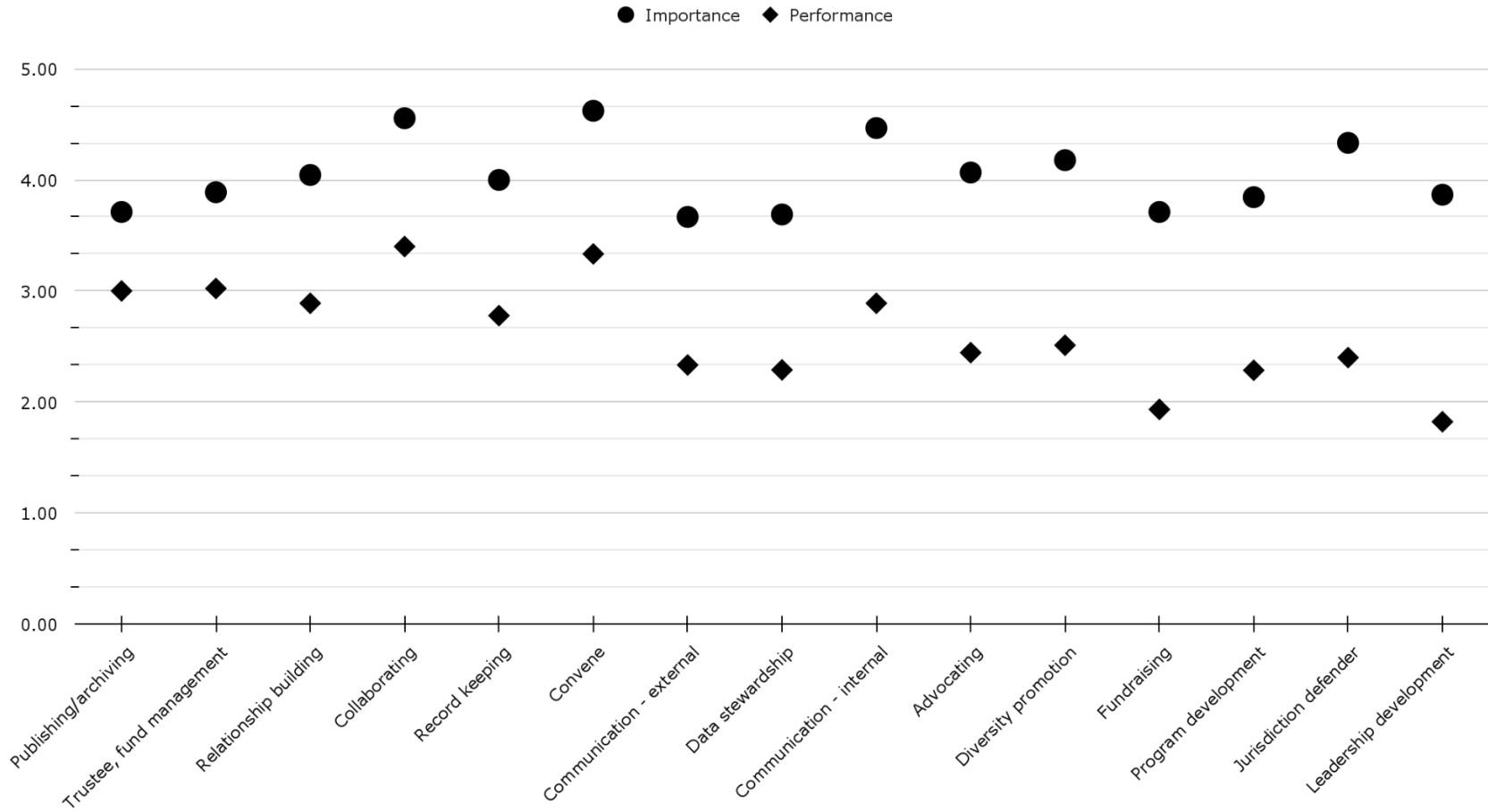
Respondents

| Role | Count |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Director | 14 |
| Fisheries administrator | 9 |
| Law enforcement administrator | 5 |
| Wildlife administrator | 11 |
| Committee chair | 6 |
| Total | 45 |

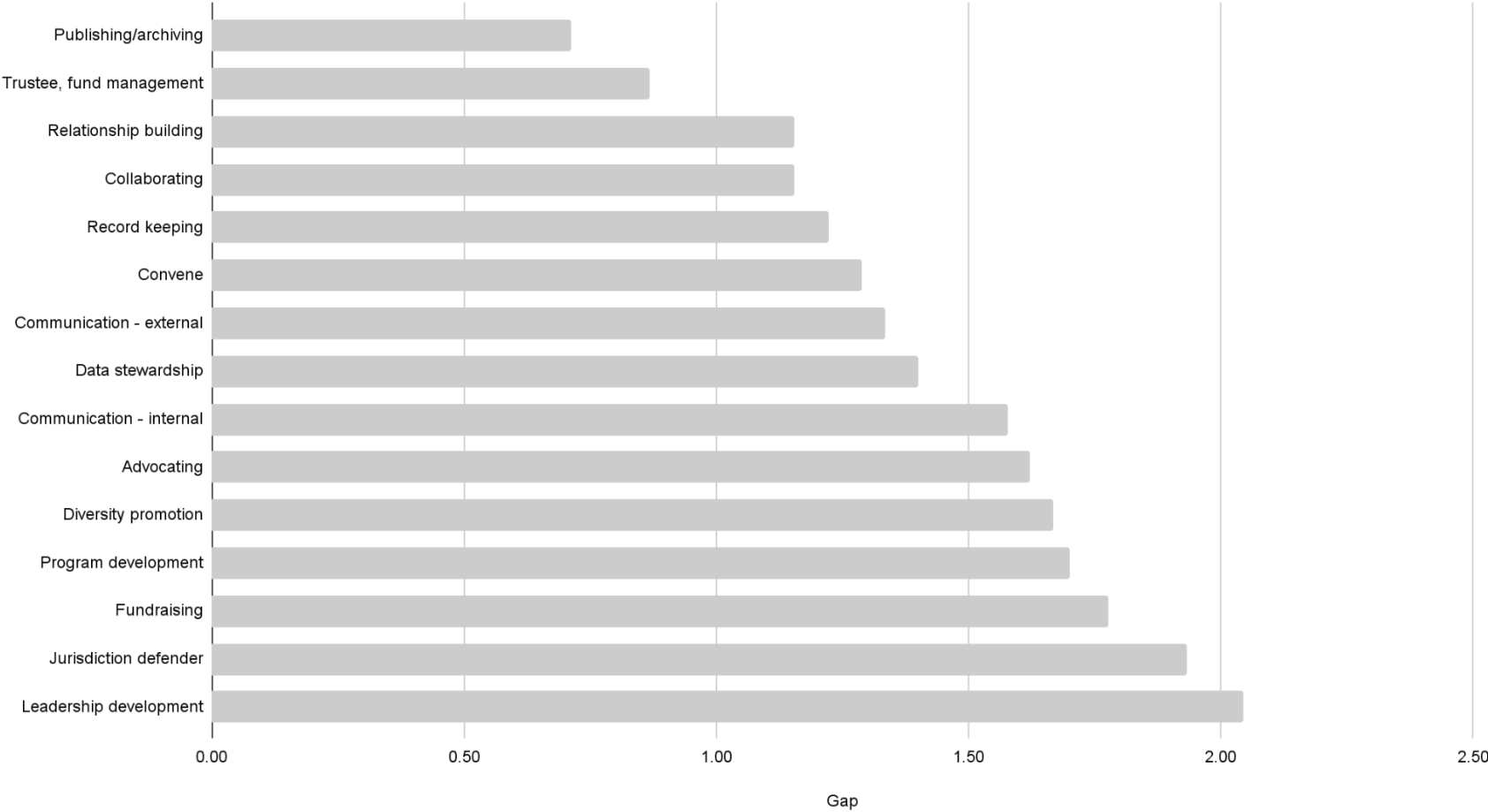
Average Likert scale response for all respondents:

| | Importance | Performance | Gap |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Publishing/archiving | 3.71 | 3.00 | 0.71 |
| Trustee, fund management | 3.89 | 3.02 | 0.87 |
| Relationship building | 4.04 | 2.89 | 1.16 |
| Collaborating | 4.56 | 3.40 | 1.16 |
| Record keeping | 4.00 | 2.78 | 1.22 |
| Convene | 4.62 | 3.33 | 1.29 |
| Communication - external | 3.67 | 2.33 | 1.33 |
| Data stewardship | 3.69 | 2.29 | 1.40 |
| Communication - internal | 4.47 | 2.89 | 1.58 |
| Advocating | 4.07 | 2.44 | 1.62 |
| Diversity promotion | 4.18 | 2.51 | 1.67 |
| Program development | 3.84 | 2.14 | 1.70 |
| Fundraising | 3.71 | 1.93 | 1.78 |
| Jurisdiction defender | 4.33 | 2.40 | 1.93 |
| Leadership development | 3.87 | 1.82 | 2.04 |

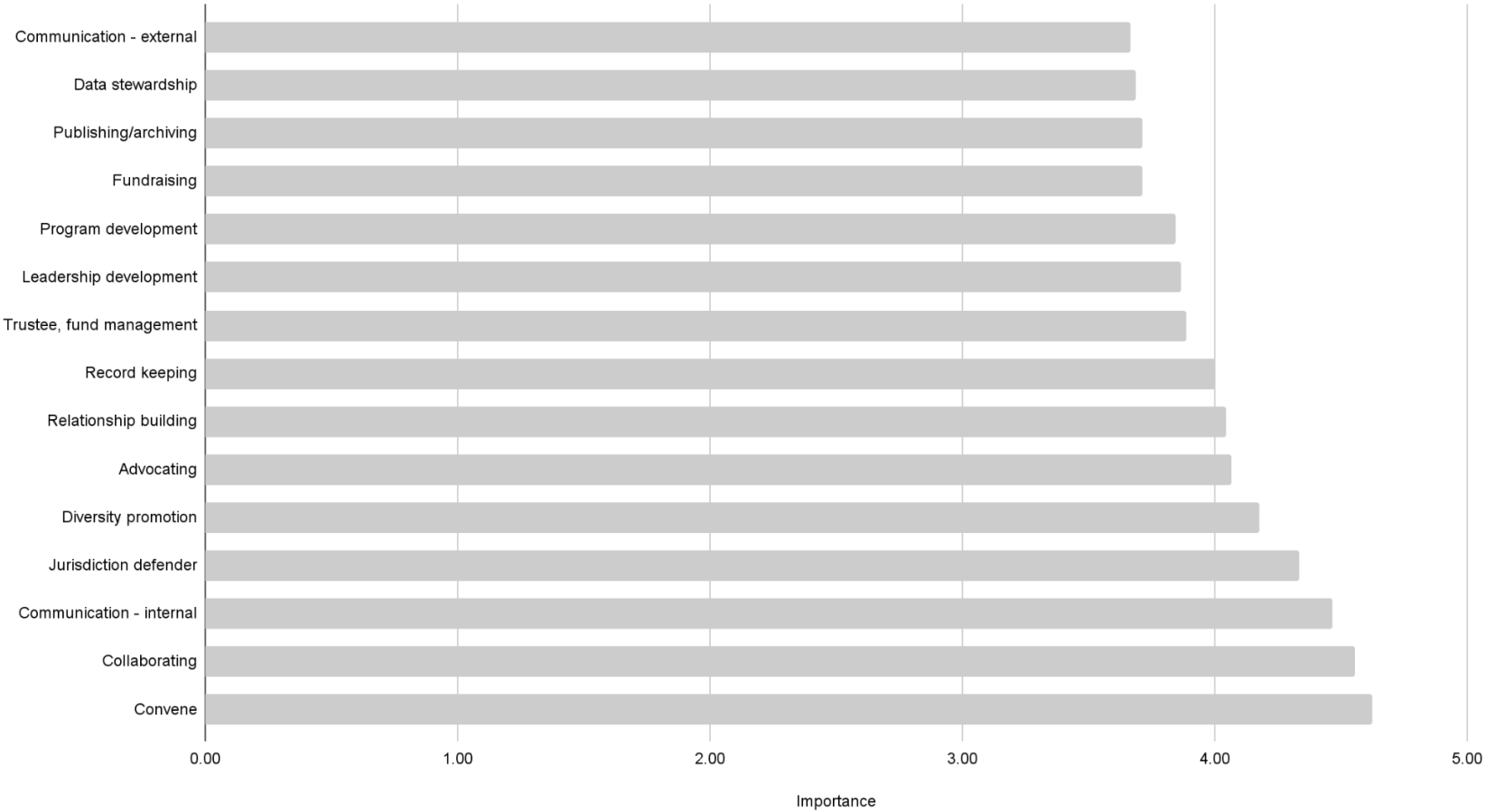
Importance vs. Performance - All Respondents



Gap between importance and performance | Opportunity - All Respondents



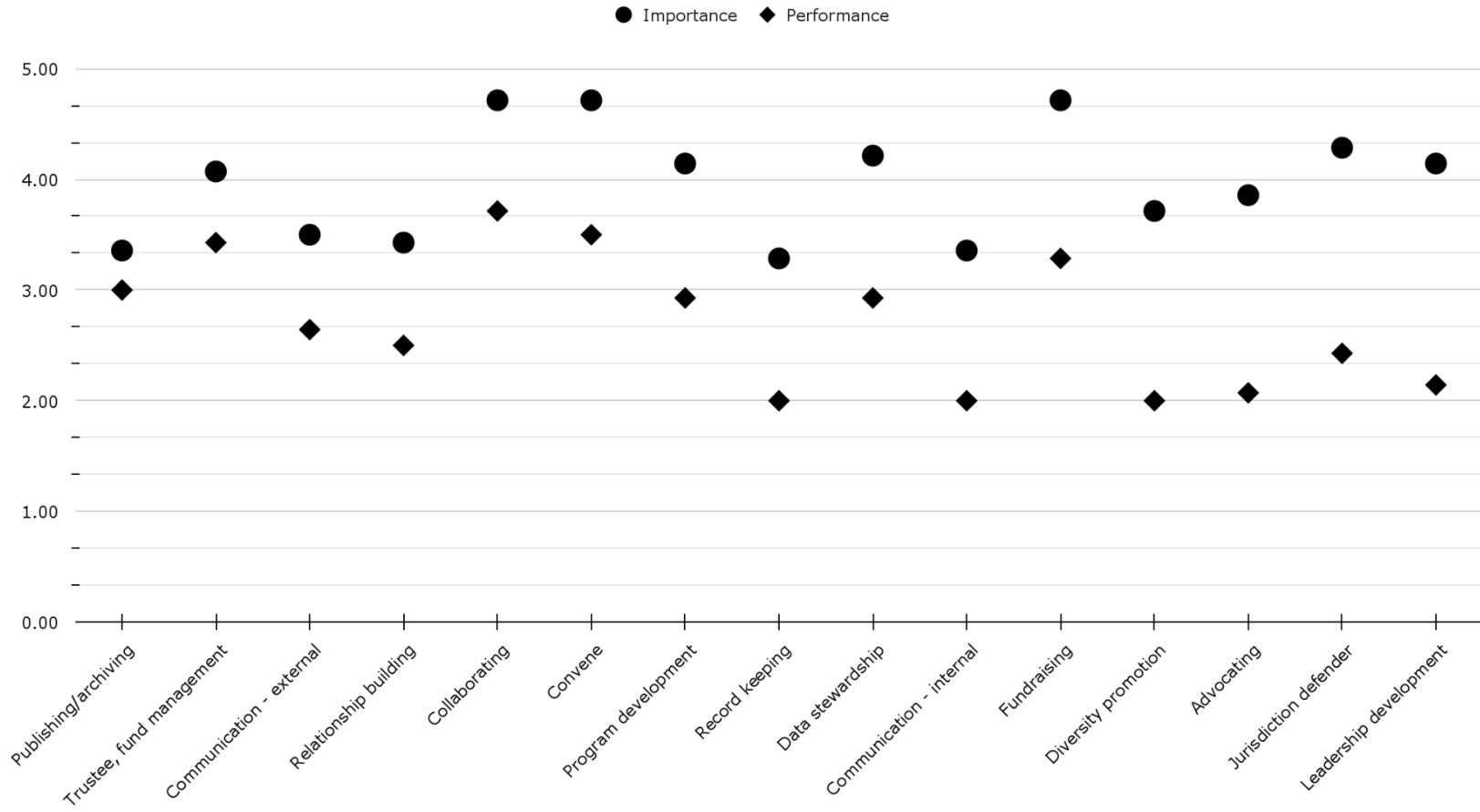
Importance - All respondents



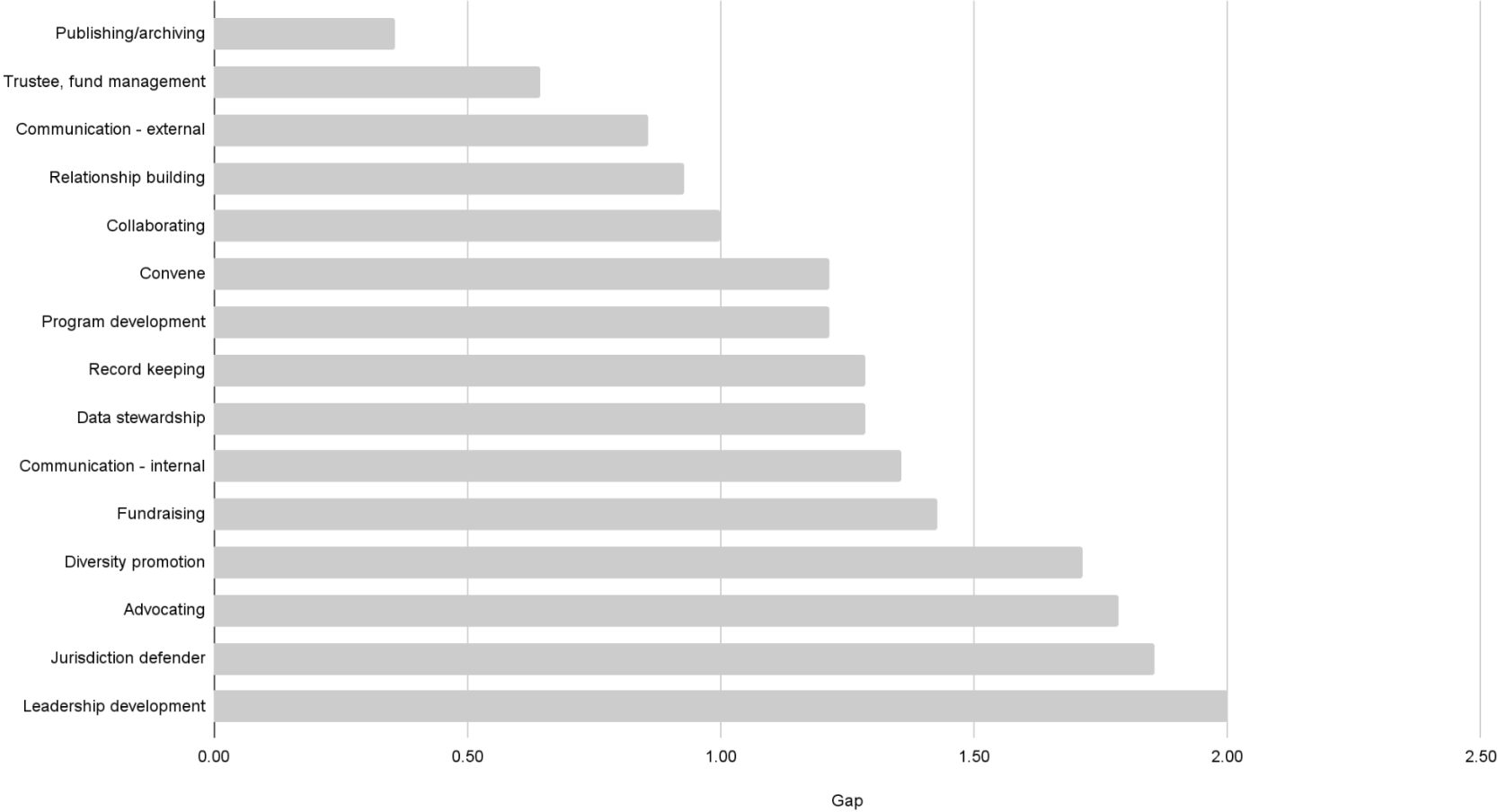
Average Likert scale response for director responses:

| | Importance | Performance | Gap |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Publishing/archiving | 3.36 | 3.00 | 0.36 |
| Trustee, fund management | 4.07 | 3.43 | 0.64 |
| Communication - external | 3.50 | 2.64 | 0.86 |
| Relationship building | 3.43 | 2.50 | 0.93 |
| Collaborating | 4.71 | 3.71 | 1.00 |
| Convene | 4.71 | 3.50 | 1.21 |
| Program development | 4.14 | 2.93 | 1.21 |
| Record keeping | 3.29 | 2.00 | 1.29 |
| Data stewardship | 4.21 | 2.93 | 1.29 |
| Communication - internal | 3.36 | 2.00 | 1.36 |
| Fundraising | 4.71 | 3.29 | 1.43 |
| Diversity promotion | 3.71 | 2.00 | 1.71 |
| Advocating | 3.86 | 2.07 | 1.79 |
| Jurisdiction defender | 4.29 | 2.43 | 1.86 |
| Leadership development | 4.14 | 2.14 | 2.00 |

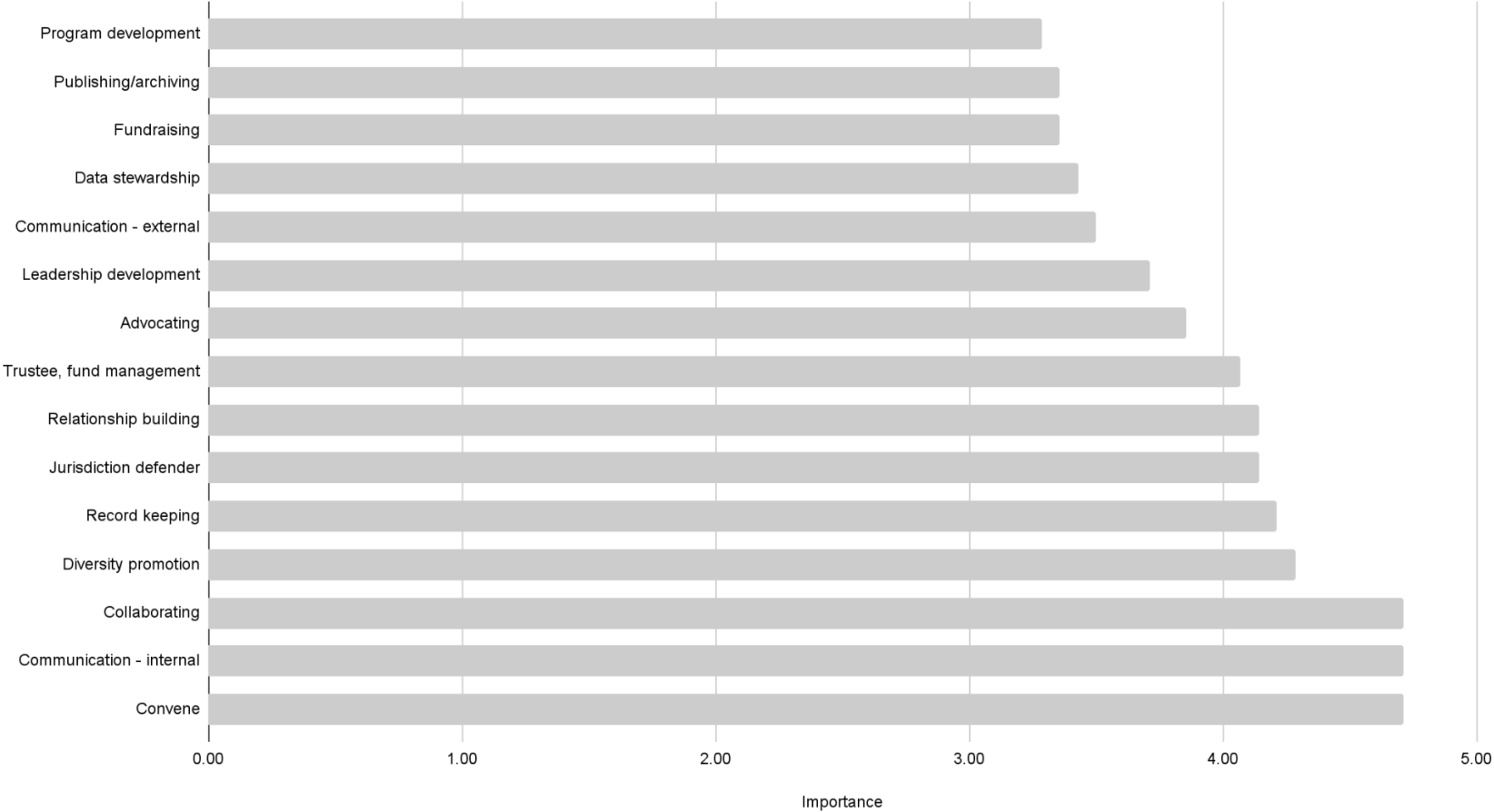
Importance vs. Performance - Directors only



Gap between importance and performance | Opportunity - Directors Only



Importance - Directors Only



Open ended comment

You're almost done! Optionally, include additional thoughts or ideas you may have. Do you have any further insights on the roles detailed above? Are there other roles/responsibilities that SEAFWA currently performs or should consider performing?

Comments from Directors

Appreciate the organization for its role in relationship-building

Fisheries presentations have improved over the past 20 years but are still lacking. Conflicts with the Spring SD AFS presentations I suppose.

Much of how a person would respond to the survey questions depends on their high-level vision for SEAFWA--whether it is to be primarily a forum for discussion among the members (organizing conferences and meetings, etc.), or whether it should be a "mini-AFWA"; meaning a conservation entity unto itself that engages in grander activities. Although thinking about the possibilities of growing the Association to far beyond what it has been is invigorating, that requires funding that doesn't currently exist and also begs the question as to what problem we would be trying to solve (i.e., is there a true need for an Association that has a much greater role and responsibilities than it has currently).

SEAFWA does an outstanding job promoting conservation efforts across State lines, coordinating and collaborating technical working groups, planning and coordinating in person conferences/meetings to build relationships to promote conservation, and up to date/on time communication to the directors.

SEAFWA should continue to focus its efforts in four primary areas:

1. Serves as a convener for the SEAFWA Directors, Wildlife Chiefs and Fisheries Chiefs, so they may engage in effective communication, information exchange and policy actions among state fish and wildlife agencies operating within the SEAFWA footprint.
2. Facilitates, guides and supports the work of the SEAFWA Technical Committees.
3. Supports the efforts of host states to conduct the Annual SEAFWA Conference.
4. Supports the publication of both the SEAFWA Journal and Proceedings.

SECAS is a great example of SEAFWA collaborative leadership.

Comments from Fisheries Administrators

For many of the topics above, I am unaware of the work that SEAFWA does with respect to the topic. Therefore, several of my answers are from an uneducated point of view.

I think that overall SEAFWA does a solid job. I look forward to the conference and information sharing among my colleagues. I think there is room to continue to develop in large scale coordination of regional conservation issues and research topics, and in advocacy to say things that single agencies cannot say.

Overall, I think SEAFWA does a great job getting professionals together to discuss issues of importance and share management related findings that are applicable to management concerns. I contend that SEAFWA is more important than the meeting of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society for me and my staff. However, I think some of the other efforts are diluted by the number of professional societies that are out there, and that complicates the ability of SEAFWA to find a clear voice when advocating for items of interest.

Role of Convening - SEAFWA serves a valuable role for convening administrators and agency leaders, but there are other organizations (e.g., Southern Division AFS) that more effectively serves a convening role for biologists and other technical experts. SEAFWA could continue providing the journal (which has value), but could move to more a NAWNRC or AFWA conference model that brings together agency leaders to discuss higher level priorities, policies, and direction. There is some disconnect between biologist/technical committees that meet at professional society meetings (e.g., AFS) and SEAFWA administrators. SEAFWA could serve a role that collates and elevates recommendations and regional/national priorities from technical meetings and serving those up through AFWA channels at a national level. One example would be facilitating applications for MSCGs.

We seek out professional training and development opportunities through other avenues.

Fundraising is important for joint-party committees (e.g., SARP), but not necessarily for SEAFWA. If SARP remains connected to SEAFWA, then the ability to fundraise will remain important. If SARP is disconnected in the future, then the importance for SEAFWA to actively fundraise diminishes.

SEAFWA Journal didn't have a DOI number, meaning it doesn't show up using publication searches on the internet. Now that it is a journal (not a proceedings), SEAFWA could make the journal more of an outlet for publishing articles that aren't required to present at the meeting. It does provide a useful outlet for topics of regional interest or species endemic to the region.

Jurisdictional defense occurs primarily at the AFWA level and not at the regional level.

SEAFWA is and should continue to be a strong advocate for regional fish and wildlife issues from the states viewpoint. Technical Committees are a valuable way to identify the issues and develop positions. Coordination and support of regional activities common to all the states is valuable, like SARP and the R3 effort. Providing management and administration of regional grant or

operating funds for regional projects is valuable because that is a service that no one else provides, and gives state agencies the opportunity to collaborate on a variety of efforts.

Comment from a Law Enforcement Administrator

Looking forward to continuing to work on the implementation of a Law Enforcement Accreditation Program with the SEAFWA Chiefs

Comments from Wildlife Administrators

As the SEAFWA Annual Conference is the primary avenue for information exchange among members, reducing the concurrent sessions that the conference has developed into will allow more time for exchange by all attendees. Increasing the length of the conference may also be necessary, but at a cost that is worth bearing for collaborative efforts among states to develop and mature.

Data archiving and access needs to be an enhanced focus. Hopefully doing so would increase communication and collaboration.

I am brand-new to the SEAFWA Administrators role, as well as the Wildlife Resources Committee role, and thus answered the questions from a general bases. I will be greatly expanding my knowledge and involvement in the operations of both roles as I move forward.

Need to continue to provide appropriate guidance and oversight when PR is utilized on multi-state grant opportunities, similar projects, or long term funding needs.

Comments from Committee Chairs

I am unfamiliar with some of the SEAFWA's role in some of the categories. I would appreciate SEAFWA taking more of a leadership role in the challenges and projects each of the states face on a daily basis (i.e. CWD, illegal movement of animals, invasive species, incorporating social science, large-scale research, etc.). From my perspective, it seems as though the SE states communicate amongst themselves and will coordinate regional meetings to discuss and share information (i.e. regional CWD meetings), but there is no umbrella leadership coordinating the events or distributing information. Just focusing on CWD, this is a growing issue within the SE where some states have been managing the disease longer than others (i.e. MO, VA, WV, AR) and can share their victories and defeats with the states who are just now entering the game (i.e. AL). Thank you for taking a proactive approach and seeking state's input!

I think it would have been good to have a choice "I am not aware of this occurring" because several of the items were just that for me. I don't really know what SEAFWA is actually doing in regards to some of those roles so I answered "Performs Somewhat" for those. Also, because I am

a committee chair I feel like I am a little more plugged into SEAFWA happenings but if I was not a committee chair then I would have no clue what was going on with SEAFWA. Additionally, I see lack of support by administrators (and it's mainly travel funding) is one huge impediment to more participation/engagement with staff below high level managers and administrators with SEAFWA. I'd even bet that most staff below those high level managers and administrators have no idea what SEAFWA is, does, or why it is relevant.

SEAFWA has done an adequate job of being a liaison between the state and Federal government and other NGO. While the focus has been predominantly on the habitat, our growing and changing population need a better understanding of their role in managing our environment. That requires SEAFWA members to have better more people skills and a better understanding of how to communicate with this growing and changing population. More professional development is needed at all levels and there is a need to include social science as a part of our committees.