



## Guidance for Committees and Getting Ready to Plan

*Supporting information for Section IV.A of the 1W1P Operating Procedures*

The [One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures](#) require that planning partnerships (groups of local governments who have come together to write a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan through the One Watershed, One Plan program) establish a policy committee and an advisory committee. Partnerships may also establish a steering team (a.k.a. planning work group). This document provides more information about the nature and function of the various One Watershed, One Plan committees/teams/groups and provides suggestions and considerations for partnerships as they begin working together.

A significant learning from partnerships that have been through or are currently in the One Watershed, One Plan process is the importance of communication and preparation. Some overarching principles and processes apply to work with planning groups:

- Establish a schedule with meeting dates and milestones
- Provide meeting agendas and materials in advance, with sufficient time for attendees to prepare
- Clearly establish meeting objectives and action items in meeting agendas
- Take meeting notes that accurately reflect discussion points, decisions made, and follow-up actions including responsible parties and deadlines
- Keep meeting records and materials organized
- Appoint chairs for the steering team (planning work group) and for the Advisory Committee (can be rotating)
- Create a shared understanding / expectations about what processes your group(s) will use for gathering input and making decisions

### Steering Team

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The steering team (known in earlier 1W1P efforts as the planning work group) consists primarily of local government staff and should include the planning consultant(s) (when hired, if applicable) and the main contact from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The steering team is responsible for logistical organization (not policy) of the planning process and associated meetings (e.g., setting agendas and coordinating meeting logistics). This team (rather than a single water planner or project manager) may also distill feedback from the Advisory and Policy Committees and provide specific direction to the plan writer.

In the pre-planning phase, this team should include at least one representative from each local government. During this time, the team will develop the grant work plan, memorandum of agreement, processes for selecting consultants, and any other actions associated with getting ready to plan.

The plan development process starts after the grant agreement has been executed. During the planning phase the overall composition of the steering team, as well as meeting frequency and format, will vary depending on the planning approach (e.g. how many LGUs are directly involved with carrying out work plan tasks and how fully the steering team is integrated into the Advisory Committee). Staff from some local governments may choose to opt out of the steering team as the process starts moving forward and the consultant becomes more involved.

The steering team is generally responsible for logistical organization (not policy or plan development) of the planning process and associated meetings.

## Advisory Committee

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The purpose of an advisory committee is to **make recommendations** on the plan to the Policy Committee. The bulk of input in the development of the plan will come from this group. Similar to the current county water planning process, the Advisory Committee is the original forum for vetting ideas and providing feedback on the plan to the plan writer. The Advisory Committee **must** include staff representatives from each local government in the partnership and state water agencies (including the Metropolitan Council for watersheds that are part of the seven county metro area). The Advisory Committee **should** include representatives from other groups such as (but not limited to): county highway and zoning staff, cities, local non-profit groups organized around water, tribal governments, drainage authorities, lake or river associations, citizen-based environmental groups, sporting organizations, and farm organizations/agricultural groups. Depending on size and scope, more than one advisory committee (or a subcommittee structure) may be appropriate.

Regularly scheduled meetings (approximately monthly) maintain the momentum of the project, keeping members engaged in the planning process. Advisory Committee members can anticipate approximately eight to twelve meetings throughout plan development, depending on committee structure(s) and other factors, with the potential for more total meetings if subcommittees are used or multiple meetings are held in different watershed locations.

The potential size of the Advisory Committee can be a challenge. In order to get enough meaningful stakeholder input, you may want to consider holding separate citizen and technical advisory committees, using creative meeting formats to gather input (e.g. world café), or engaging existing local government committees outside of the Advisory Committee (e.g. county water plan task force). This latter solution requires additional commitment from lead staff from each local government unit to engage their local committees at appropriate times.

## Policy Committee

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The Policy Committee consists of one Board member from each local water planning authority (County, SWCD, and Watershed District or Watershed Management Organization) participating in the partnership, which is formalized through the partnership's Memorandum of Agreement or other formal agreement. The purpose of this group is to review recommendations of the Advisory Committee and **make final decisions** about the content of the plan and its submittal. Members are also responsible for representing their respective local government in the development of the plan and to report back to their respective boards about the progress and direction of the plan.

Bringing the policy committee - a new group without established relationships – together for the first time and asking them to appoint a chair and make decisions could be tricky. The policy committee may wish to consider holding their first meeting as an informal gathering where they can get to one another, learn about the different

organizations involved in plan development, ask questions about the planning process, and begin hearing about the watershed's characteristics and the available science.

Policy Committee members can be invited to Advisory Committee meetings and should be encouraged to do so, as long as their role as a policy member is made clear.

## Best Practices for Committee and Team Work

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- Provide a **three-ring binder** with background materials and for storing meeting information for all participants.
- Hold **weekly conference calls or web meetings with the steering team** (generally lead staff and project consultants) to report on progress and keep on task.
- Consider using **web-based collaboration tools** that allow for document sharing with project team and Advisory Committee (e.g. Google Docs, Dropbox, SharePoint)
- Have **respectful and open communication** and be thoughtful of input provided by others.
- It is the responsibility of all the partners to **keep track of how project is progressing** relative to the budget and making changes when necessary.
- It is the responsibility of the project managers/coordinators (consultant and/or local lead) to be **very organized and makes sure everyone is comfortable** with the direction project is moving in. Disorganization (e.g. poor meeting preparation, not meeting deadlines, not being responsive, not keeping track of budget) of project coordinators is a red flag for both the grant work plan and the consultant contract.
- **Good facilitation skills** are critical to keeping Advisory Committee meetings focused and achieving the goals established for the meeting. BWSR may provide training and skill-building for planning work group members in facilitation and other best practices for effective partnerships.
- Don't be afraid to **speak up** if there are questions or concerns. The BWSR Board Conservationist is there to support the planning work group and help work through issues that arise during the process.

## Getting Ready to Plan

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The required steps for developing a comprehensive watershed management plan through the One Watershed, One Plan process are outlined in the [One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures](#). The following are some additional considerations for the pre-planning process outlined in section V.1.

- The steering team (planning work group) is established first in the planning process (prior to hiring a consultant). The Policy Committee should be established soon after the steering team starts meeting, during the development of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The Policy Committee may wish to invite/appoint members of the Advisory Committee.
- If you are hiring a consultant, BWSR can provide a template Request for Qualifications and other project management resources.
- For pre-planning step 2, please refer to the "State Review Agencies Plan Routing List" on the BWSR website: [www.bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/1W1P/index.html](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/1W1P/index.html).

- See *Compiling a Land and Water Resources Inventory* for ideas about sources of data and information to get you started on pre-planning step 3.
- The initial planning meeting (“kickoff meeting”) referenced in Step 4 is an important opportunity to notify the public about the planning process and start gathering feedback to inform the plan priorities. See *Identifying and Prioritizing Resources and Issues* for more information, and talk with your BWSR lead staff about how to make this meeting as effective and productive as possible.
- Anticipate approximately 8-13 meetings during the pre-planning phase:
  - Steering team: 3-6 meeting to prepare the MOA and work plan and hire consultant(s)
  - Policy Committee: 2-3 to get oriented, approve the work plan and discuss Advisory Committee membership
  - Advisory Committee: 1-2 to review/discuss data and plan the public kickoff meeting
  - Public kickoff meeting: 1

