

## Guidance for Committees and Getting Ready to Plan



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

The One Watershed, One Plan [Operating Procedures](#) require that 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 (planning work group). This document lays out expectations for One Watershed, One Plan Partnerships, and provides suggestions as they begin working together.

Communication and preparation have proven to be key elements of successful partnerships. 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 (a website is a great way to do this)
- Appoint chairs for the steering team and for the advisory committee (can be rotating)
- Create a shared understanding/expectation about what processes your group(s) will use for gathering input and making decisions

### Who Participates?

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“Participation” in a planning effort could be in the form of membership on the policy or advisory committee (see below for more information on committee roles) or via formal or informal public input.

*For the purposes of this section, “participation” refers to having signed the formal planning agreement (a member of the policy committee).*

Any local government {SWCD, county, watershed district/watershed management organization, and municipality (city or township)} or Minnesota Tribal Nation\* with reserved lands or rights in the watershed boundary have the right to participate in One Watershed, One Plan. The Operating Procedures lays out participation requirements based on entity type, location (metro vs. non-metro) and land area. Organizers of new planning efforts are expected to extend invitations to optional participants (see caveats for municipalities and special considerations for tribal participation below) and can’t exclude a local government with land area or a Minnesota Tribal Nation with interest in the planning boundary that wishes to participate. Partnerships should

consider and reach out to municipalities and Minnesota Tribal Nations early in the process of deciding if/when to move forward with a planning effort.

### **Optional Participation: Municipalities**

There may be dozens of **municipalities** in a planning boundary. BWSR recognizes participation by all (or even some) municipalities may result in a policy committee size that's not manageable. However, there may be cases where municipal participation is very appropriate and will strengthen the overall process and resulting plan. Likely municipal participants will be those in the planning boundary that:

- Are a public water supplier and/or have drinking water quantity and quality concerns that could be addressed by the plan (e.g., part of their drinking water supply management area is outside their boundary and impacted by land use in the watershed)
- Are concerned about issues such as flooding or recreation that are impacted by upstream activities
- Are concerned about public health and infrastructure and mitigating hazards and risks such as those associated with increased frequency and intensity of precipitation events
- Are managing pollution associated with urban stormwater runoff and/or TMDL compliance
- Are (considering) using water quality trading to meet requirements of a permit or TMDL
- Want to work with upstream and downstream partners on outreach or other efforts

If municipalities choose not to participate via the policy committee they can request appointment to the advisory committee or they may simply request to be informed of the process and provide input through the public input processes during planning.

### **Optional Participation: Minnesota Tribal Nations**

Minnesota Tribal Nations\* have natural resource management authorities (including those delegated under the Clean Water Act), responsibilities, programs and information for lands within reservation boundaries and ceded territories. They may have similar concerns to those listed for municipalities above and/or interest in culturally significant resources in the planning boundary.

The One Watershed, One Plan process is an excellent opportunity for local, state, and tribal governments to build or strengthen government-to-government relationships. Inviting tribal governments to participate is consistent with state policy under the Governor's Executive Order 19-24, affirming the government to government relationship between the state of Minnesota and Minnesota Tribal Nations and it is required by the One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures (v.2.1).

Tribal governments each have a unique structure and can choose whether to participate and in what capacity (policy, advisory or informational, or via the public comment process). Note that cultural considerations might dictate the need for specialized outreach and accommodations for invitation and for participation as well as ongoing communication throughout the planning process. BWSR can help with extending the invitation\*\* and adapting the planning structure accommodate tribal participation. Regardless of the level of tribal participation, planning groups should make every effort to acknowledge tribal concerns and identify tribal lands on maps in their plans.

For approved plans that did not involve tribes in developing their plan, the mid-point (~5-year) review process is another opportunity to invite tribal participation and incorporate tribal concerns.

\*In this document, “Minnesota Tribal Nations” refers to federally recognized entities (an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States) that are sovereign nations meaning they possess certain inherent rights of self-government (including the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe). There may also be interest in land and water resources in a planning area by a tribal nation whose reservation or community is not located within a planning area, or by federally recognized tribes outside of Minnesota.

\*\*Invitations should be directed to the tribal council and include tribal natural resource program staff. [The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#), MPCA’s [list of tribal contacts](#) and Mn/DoT’s map of [tribal lands](#), and the Minnesota Humanities Center’s [Why Treaties Matter](#) are good resources for background, tribal contacts, and maps of tribal lands and ceded territories.

## Considerations for Joint Powers Entities

The planning process can be executed by **existing joint powers entities** provided that their members include all required participants.

- Adding a JPE member to the policy committee is not recommended because the JPE is already participating via individual members. Furthermore, doing so gives one entity type over-representation in the process.
- In cases where a JPE only includes a subset of participants or does not match the planning boundary, the partnership can include the JPE via (JPE) staff at the advisory committee and/or steering team.
- If a JPE represents all *required* participants and one or more *optional* participants wants to join the policy committee, the JPE and each new participant would enter into a planning agreement.

## 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) and one representative from each municipality and/or Minnesota tribal nation participating in the partnership. The policy committee is formalized through the partnership’s memorandum of 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 and Minnesota tribal nation in the development of the plan and to report back to their respective boards or councils about the progress and direction of the plan.

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.

## Advisory Committee

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The purpose of the advisory committee is to **make recommendations** to the policy committee. The bulk of input in the development of the plan will come from this group. Like 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 and tribe or tribal community 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, community water suppliers, municipalities, local non-profit groups organized around water, tribal nations, tribal communities, or tribal people, relevant tribal consortiums (1854 Treaty Authority and Great Lakes Indian Fish

and Wildlife Commission), 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 (monthly to quarterly) 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 (e.g., county water plan task force) or tribal commissions outside of the advisory committee. This latter solution requires additional commitment from lead staff from each local government unit and tribal representative to engage their local committees and commissions at appropriate times.

## Steering Team

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The steering team (a.k.a. planning work group) consists primarily of local government staff and staff or representatives of each Minnesota tribal nation (collectively referred to as “government units”) and should include the planning consultant(s) (when hired, if applicable) and the main contacts 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 government unit. During this time, the team will develop the grant work plan, memorandum of agreement, processes for selecting consultants, plan notification and planning the kick-off meeting, and initial data gathering.

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

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 government units are directly involved with carrying out work plan tasks and how fully the steering team is integrated into the advisory committee). Staff from some government units may choose to opt out of the steering team as the process starts moving forward.

## Best Practices for Committee and Team Work

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One Watershed, One Plan participants have identified a number of best practices that lead to a successful planning effort:

- Provide a **three-ring binder** with background materials and for storing meeting information for all participants.
- Hold **weekly conference calls or web meetings with project team** (generally lead staff/representatives and project consultants) to report on progress and keep on task (frequency can also be as needed).
- Policy committee members are responsible for keeping their respective boards and councils updated on the process. **Providing periodic updates** for policy members to share with their boards and councils is helpful (we suggest one page with images and bullet points, provided quarterly).
- Use **web-based collaboration tools** that allow for document sharing with project team and advisory committee (e.g. Google Docs, Dropbox, SharePoint, Microsoft Teams) and consider whether some meetings could be held via remote technology.
- 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.
- **Assign a note taker** who can focus on accurately recording the discussion and doesn't need to worry about other tasks.
- 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](#). BWSR has also developed a [planning checklist](#) that lays out the process in more detail. The following are some additional considerations for the pre-planning process.

- The **steering team** is established first. The **policy committee** should be established soon after the steering team starts meeting, during the development of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Each participating entity appoints one of its board or council members and tribal representative(s) as a representative on the policy committee. The policy committee may wish to invite/appoint members of the **advisory committee** prior to the kickoff meeting.
- 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: <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/one-watershed-one-plan-resources>.
- See “Creating a Land and Water Resources Narrative” in the [One Watershed, One Plan guidebook](#) for ideas about sources of data and information to get started.

The initial planning meeting (“kickoff meeting”) 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” in the [One Watershed, One Plan Guidebook](#) 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 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

