

Part 1 The Watershed Management
Facilitation Tool

1.0 Introduction: What Is Facilitation and Why Is It Being Used?

Growth of Statewide Watershed Management Frameworks in the United States

Over the last decade, more than 20 states have embarked on statewide watershed management. Watershed management is not a new regulatory program, but rather a way of coordinating existing programs and building new partnerships to better achieve shared water resource management goals and objectives (Figure 1). Success is measured in terms of improving and maintaining environmental quality and protecting public health (i.e., watershed ecosystem integrity). The term *watershed*, in this context, is broadly defined as the geographic delineation of an entire water body

system and the land that drains into it. The topographical ridge lines that define the boundaries of a watershed provide a natural basis for organizing stakeholders, tying the people to the resource, and helping them focus on solving common problems. As a result, a watershed serves as a convenient tool for integrating water resource protection and restoration activities.

Integrated management doesn't just happen. Because watershed management activities frequently involve many public and private efforts, significant coordination is

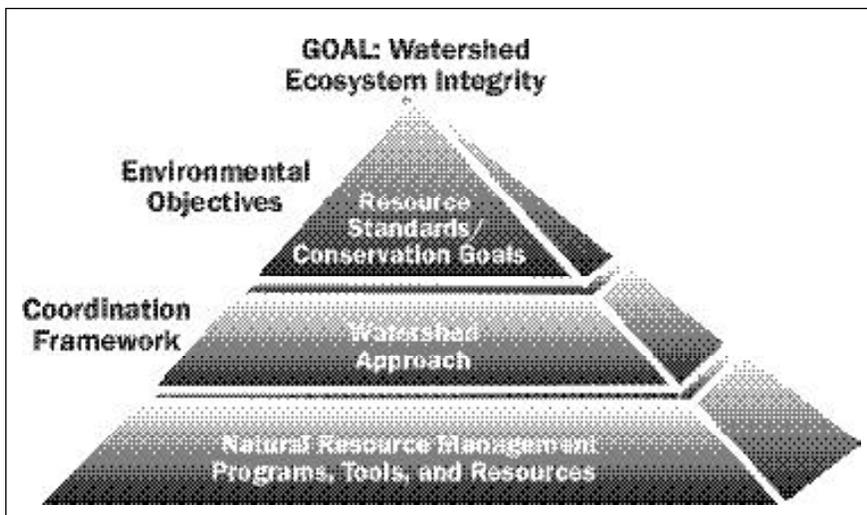


Figure 1. The Emerging Watershed Management Framework

essential to sound decision making and management. To make coordination easier and more effective many states have designed and documented management frameworks, or a lasting process for partners working together (Figure 2). These frameworks provide a support structure for coordinating efforts, including operating procedures, time lines, and ways to communicate.

Just What Are These States Coordinating?

Generally, the statewide frameworks have three common elements (Figure 3):

(1) geographic management units, (2) stakeholder involvement, and (3) a repeating, 5-year watershed management cycle. Although each state has designed a unique management cycle, typically partners agree to key watershed management activities and an operational time line for carrying out these activities statewide. Activities usually include:

- Strategic data collection and monitoring
- Assessment by watershed
- A priority ranking and resource targeting system

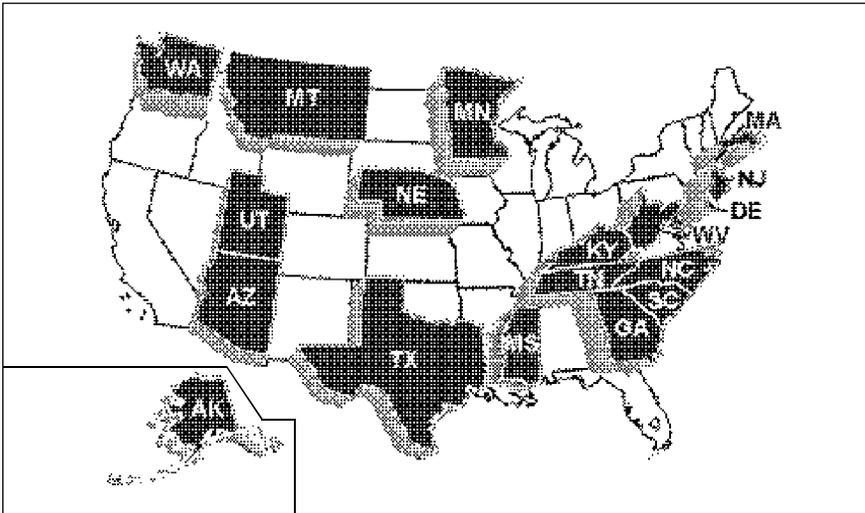


Figure 2. States Developing and Implementing Statewide Watershed Management Frameworks

- Development of management strategies
- Management plan documentation
- Plan implementation

These agreed-upon or common management units, management activities, and time lines make it easier for watershed management partners to work together on common problems. Figure 4 illustrates how watershed management activities can be scheduled and sequenced throughout an entire state using a 5-year cycle. For illustration, activities have been simplified into five categories,

shown in the legend at the bottom of the figure. Activities are sequenced through five watershed groupings, shown on the left.

The management cycle is a planning tool that improves the ability of participating organizations to collaborate on complementary water quality objectives. The cycle steps do not restrict participants from undertaking activities other than those listed in an individual step. Rather, each cycle step places an emphasis on a particular activity. For example, implementation of selected projects that do not require monitoring or assessment can be initiated early in the management cycle before the focused implementation step. In addition, there are many circumstances where monitoring and assessment activities will occur outside the intensive monitoring and assessment periods. The statewide cycle can be especially accommodating to local organizations that have completed steps ahead of the statewide schedule. However, experience from statewide watershed states indicates that local and state schedules often converge over time due to the improved opportunities for coordination that are supported by the schedule.

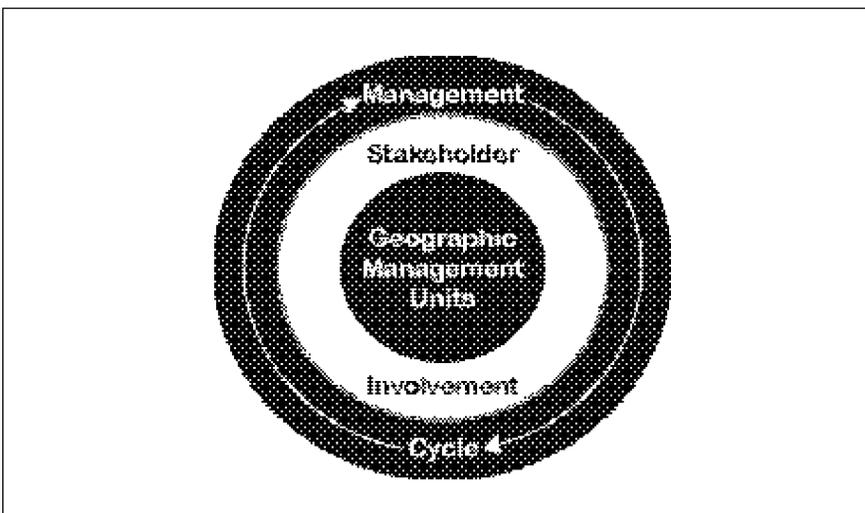


Figure 3. Common Elements of Statewide Frameworks

Designing a watershed management framework is hard work and requires careful up-front planning. For example, the management cycle illustrates the interdependence of these management activities and the importance and complexity of timing and coordination even within a single program. Adding to the complexity of framework design is the number of watershed partners at the table. Although often initiated by state water quality agencies, many existing statewide watershed management frameworks (particularly those designed in recent

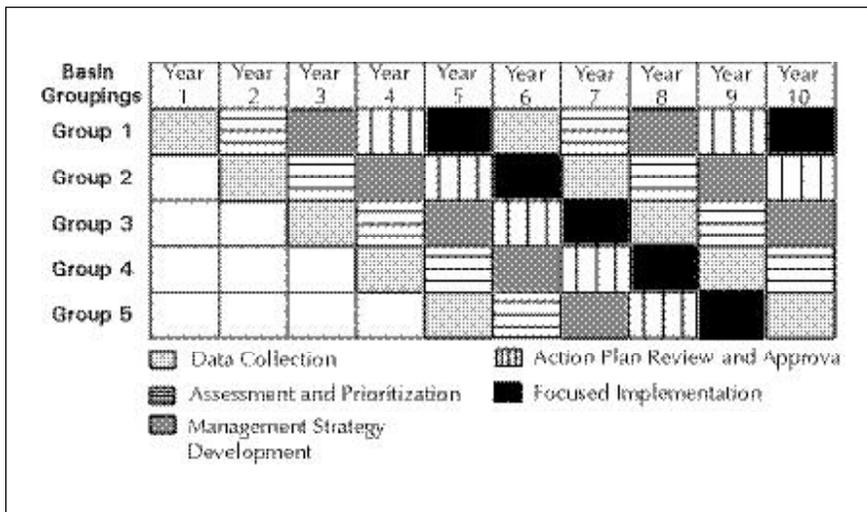


Figure 4. Example Statewide Watershed Management Schedule

years) include partnerships between multiple agencies covering local, state, and federal scales.

For more specifics on elements of a statewide watershed management approach, refer to Watershed Academy Information Transfer Series Document No. 2, *Watershed Protection: A Statewide Approach*, (EPA841-R-95-004). Also, two courses on this topic are available through the Academy: the 2-day *Watersheds 102: The Statewide Approach to Watershed Management* and the half-day *Watersheds 104: Executive Overview of the Watershed Approach*. For more

information on these courses, check EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/wacademy.htm>.

The Role of Facilitation

What Is a Facilitated Approach?

Many states want to design and build a strong, durable, yet flexible watershed management framework. However, just getting started can be overwhelming for some because of the complexity of issues and number of interested partners. Once the design process begins, keeping partners involved, focused, productive, and unified requires substantial time and skill. *Facilitation* can be used to organize and guide states through this challenging process.

Many of us are familiar with the narrow definition of facilitation where a neutral party focuses entirely on the process of a meeting and serves as a moderator of discussion. In this document, however, the term *facilitate* is used broadly to mean "to make things easy or easier" (Webster's), and it includes a wide range of assistance and support. For example, a facilitated approach often includes a portion or all of the following:

- Education on statewide watershed management and experiences in other states
- Consultation on approaches for organizing and developing a statewide framework
- Management of the process for designing and developing statewide frameworks
- *Neutral* facilitation of discussion and consensus building
- Mediation among framework development group members to resolve differences
- Documentation of the framework to provide a long-term reference for a state
- Assistance in making the transition to the new framework

The approach has varied for each state depending on its needs, perspectives, and available resources. Some states have used facilitation services only to "get the ball rolling" or for specific, short-term efforts. Other

states have used facilitation comprehensively to initiate, design, and establish a management framework. The purpose of this document is to describe how facilitation has helped many states progress in developing and implementing watershed approaches. This document provides useful recommendations for states that are considering the use of facilitation for framework development.

Which States Have Used a Facilitated Approach?

Seventeen states are known to have used (or are currently using) facilitators to help design their watershed management frameworks. This document focuses on 13 of these states where facilitation efforts have been completed and frameworks are being implemented:

Alaska	North Carolina
Arizona	Tennessee
Delaware	Texas
Georgia	Utah
Kentucky	Washington
Nebraska	West Virginia
New Jersey	

How and Why Has Facilitation Been Used?

The types of facilitation services received by each of the 13 states are summarized in Table 1. We asked representatives from each state why they sought facilitation assistance, and here are some of their responses:

Alaska: “The objective of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was to establish partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders. DEC did not want primary responsibility for establishing or maintaining the statewide watershed framework. The independent facilitator was a logical extension of this strategy and was in fact necessary for development of the broadly based Alaska Watershed Partnerships framework.”

Arizona: “USEPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency] Region 9 sponsored an information session on the watershed approach. Participants responded favorably to both the watershed approach concepts and the workshop presenter (who later became our framework development facilitator).”

Delaware: “The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is a comprehensive natural resources management agency with divisions overseeing every conceivable aspect of the environment. We in the Surface Water Division realized that, if we were to propose a watershed approach that involved the coordination and integration of activities with other divisions, an objective facilitator would be necessary to guide the framework development process.”

Georgia: “We were starting something new, and we wanted to learn from somebody who had already gone through the framework development process. We hoped to build on the good ideas generated by states who pioneered the statewide approach, and avoid potential pitfalls where they could be foreseen because of others’ experiences.”

Table 1. Summary of Facilitation Services Provided to 13 States

Types of Assistance Provided	States												
	AZ	DE	GA	AK	KY	NC	NE	NJ	WA	TN	TX	UT	WV
Identifying stakeholders to include in the framework design	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Educating staff and other stakeholders about the concepts of the watershed approach	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Developing or clarifying common goals and a vision to guide framework design	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Developing a work plan and milestones for framework design	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Planning workshops or work sessions, including developing agenda	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Writing work session summaries/minutes to distribute to the group	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	
Documenting the outcomes of group discussion	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P		P	P	P
Presenting alternative options or strategies for the group to consider in key decision areas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Providing <i>neutral</i> facilitation of group discussion and consensus building	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Actively mediating among group members to identify areas of agreement and disagreement and to resolve differences	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P		P	P	P
Designing detailed framework elements	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				P	P	P
Developing a watershed or basin management framework													
documentation	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			P	P	P
technical editing	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				P	P	P
production design	P	P		P	P	P	P				P	P	P
other	P	P		P								P	
Making the transition													
clarifying short-term actions needed (e.g., next steps)	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P
developing a transition plan	P	P	P		P						P	P	
helping to set up forums	P	P	P		P								P
staff training	P	P	P						P				P
other			P										

Kentucky: “We were exposed to examples of facilitated statewide frameworks at an EPA Watershed Academy training session, and wanted to achieve similar results in Kentucky. Additionally, our previous experience indicated that facilitated multi-stakeholder initiatives have been much more successful than non-facilitated efforts.”

Nebraska: “Our staff had very little previous experience with watershed approaches, and no additional time to manage framework development and document the results ourselves. We needed to learn from others’ experiences, and the support to design and document our statewide framework.”

New Jersey: “We [Office of Environmental Planning] had been promoting the idea of a statewide watershed management framework for years, and were frustrated at the lack of buy-in by other agency program heads. We needed to bring in an outside party who could demonstrate to our department’s managers that a statewide framework is a valid idea, and that other states have overcome issues similar to ours and are already implementing frameworks.”

North Carolina (first state to use facilitation to define and document a framework): “In North Carolina we had a diverse set of water quality agency staff with a wide range of ideas and concerns regarding a watershed approach. We knew that we needed a skilled consensus-builder to help us clarify and document our vision of a statewide framework.”

Tennessee: “We [Water Pollution Control Division] were in the midst of developing our framework, and management was asking for more detail on how the agency could continue to build its watershed approach. We wanted someone with experience to share ideas on what other states were doing and to help us think through useful next steps.”

Texas: “We had been developing components of a watershed approach for a considerable amount of time, and we knew we needed assistance to help us focus our efforts and expedite the preparation of a written framework document that could pull all of the pieces together into a coherent, user-friendly reference.”

Utah: “In the beginning, I was the only person advocating a watershed approach. Also, I was not in an administrative or management position to make the decision to develop a watershed approach. I needed a more substantive presence to help educate staff and to help develop a common vision for a watershed approach.”

Washington: “Facilitation was offered as part of a lawsuit settlement agreement between plaintiffs and USEPA Region 10. We [Washington Department of Ecology] had already begun a design process for a watershed approach. Initially, our water quality programs were not enthusiastic about outside assistance. However, after several facilitated work group meetings, most participants fully supported the facilitation assistance.”

West Virginia: “As discussion of the concept of the watershed approach progressed [in the Office of Water Resources], it was clear that one agency didn’t have adequate authority to address the multiple issues that needed

to be considered. OWR assumed leadership, but knew that outside assistance was needed to enhance the process of consensus building.”

Benefits of Facilitation

So how did the facilitation efforts turn out? Perspectives from states are provided below, along with some additional observations from the facilitators. (Note: More detailed descriptions of accomplishments and progress in states are provided in Part 2.)

Reflections from States

Alaska: “Facilitation has given us the capability to have a statewide watershed framework that can develop without relying on a single agency as the sponsor. The exchange of ideas between work group partners during the framework development process has raised the level of trust and cooperation among many of those involved and affected by resource management decisions in Alaska.”

Arizona: “Facilitation led to a watershed approach that was better thought out and had a higher degree of buy-in from participating programs, agencies, and citizen watershed organizations. Facilitation allowed the agency to take the necessary time for head scratching and soul searching all through periods of uncertainty within the agency. Facilitation enabled us to take the brainstorming during the two-year development period and turn it into a coherent strategy.”

Delaware: “The process of developing a coordinated basin approach helped to address other long standing issues between agency Divisions, and led to improved teamwork and communication within the agency.”

Georgia: “The knowledge and experiences of the facilitator provided a base of ideas to work from and tailor to Georgia’s needs. Importantly, facilitation kept us moving forward and on schedule. Framework components were completed during work group meetings, and the facilitator quickly turned around written results. We simply didn’t have the resources to do this by ourselves. In the end, a more thorough framework was designed and documented, and the facilitation process really helped enhance working relationships among the framework development work group members.”

Kentucky: “Facilitation helped neutralize’ our agency’s leadership role in developing the framework and we achieved much greater partner participation than we anticipated at the beginning. The facilitator’s knowledge of experiences in other states provided the diverse work group building the framework with helpful insights and ideas. Facilitation also kept the agenda moving and forced answers to questions we may have overlooked or minimized. The end result was a very professional and complete framework.”

Nebraska: “Educating staff and other stakeholders about watershed approaches by an expert gave credibility to our framework development process. Neutral facilitation ensured that this was an open’ process and not perceived as a surface water effort. Planning work group sessions, documenting outcomes of group discussions, and preparing the framework document were the most helpful services. Without the assistance in developing activity schedules and synchronizing permit reissuance, it is

likely that less coordination and extended deadlines would have occurred.”

New Jersey: “Information provided by the facilitator helped us move forward by giving specific examples of how our management processes and activities could be more efficient and effective through a statewide watershed approach. Several of our framework’s components were modeled after ideas and materials shared by the facilitator.”

North Carolina: “Neutral facilitation helped us to focus collectively on what we wanted to achieve through a basinwide planning approach, and on defining a coordinated approach to implement that vision. The process led to greater understanding of one another’s roles among participating programs, and helped us to establish a management cycle of activities that improved efficiency and generated products such as monitoring plans, assessments, modeling analyses, and management plans to meet key milestone dates on time.”

Tennessee: “Providing more in-depth information on the principles and elements of a statewide watershed approach helped us to better understand the approach, and produced more internal and external support to continue enhancing a watershed approach for Tennessee. In essence, we believe the facilitation validated and expedited the process that we used to develop our watershed initiative.”

Texas: “The facilitator helped keep work sessions focused and promoted innovative thinking. He also helped our staff articulate fairly complex aspects of synchronizing individual program activities with the overall statewide basin management cycle. This resulted in a higher quality framework document than we originally anticipated, in a shorter amount of time than we could have accomplished on our own, and with greater buy-in by the programs participating in the framework.”

Utah: “It made the process happen. Without the education, consensus building, mediation, and physical support (e.g., documentation) the watershed approach framework development process would not have occurred in Utah. Facilitation definitely made our watershed approach framework more comprehensive and inclusive.”

Washington: “Facilitation helped us maintain the operational focus of the agency during a process of change and transition to the watershed approach. Facilitation allowed us to develop a realistic plan for integrating other agency program areas for example: permits, loan/grant, 303(d), 305(b), 303(e), NPS, water quantity, waste, toxics. These included adaptations to the watershed approach to accommodate current agency philosophy, guidance, and policies.”

West Virginia: “The process of neutral facilitation was designed to encourage multi-agency participation, not aimed at or driven by one agency. The facilitator helped us develop a work plan and milestones, and directed discussion toward achievable outcomes without being bogged down with discussion. Some issues did require discussion and argument, and the facilitator’s mediation was helpful in resolving them. As the

process matured, it was clear that facilitation was essential to maintaining and increasing involvement, interest, and ultimate commitment of the multiple agencies. Now, the framework is statewide, includes more than just the original players, has support from administration [from office chiefs to agency directors to the Governor], and other agencies are lined up to join.”

More Observations From Facilitators

Most of the benefits that we have witnessed in the states where facilitation services have been provided are well covered by the reflections provided by the state representatives. Clearly, the sharing and scrutinizing of ideas among states has helped to refine and evolve good ideas into more effective frameworks. From the facilitators’ perspectives, some of the key benefits of the process include:

- Providing types of technical support not typically available within resource management agencies and organizations.
- Creating an open, focused, creative, productive, and challenging environment where working relationships and partnerships that will carry over into framework implementation can develop.
- Identifying concrete and common goals and objectives for framework design. (“What’s in this for my program, agency, or organization?”)
- Presenting or generating alternative options for framework development groups to consider in key decision areas.
- Helping to create a sense of group momentum and accomplishment.

2.0 Common Components of Facilitation: What's Involved?

States use facilitation services to meet different needs. Some states, such as Tennessee and New Jersey, bring facilitators in for short-term, targeted assistance. Other states use facilitation for the entire process from organizing the initiative to implementing the watershed management framework. Regardless of how comprehensive any one state's use of facilitation is, the components of facilitation generally fall into one of five areas: scoping, work group formation, framework design and development, framework documentation, and transition planning. This section describes each of these areas in more detail.

Scoping

The term *scoping* is used to describe facilitation services that help a state to learn more about a statewide watershed management approach and to examine whether such an approach would be beneficial. It often involves gathering agency and organization leaders together to share presentations on components and benefits of management frameworks in other states, and to discuss whether some or all of the management challenges they're facing can be addressed better through a watershed approach. Facilitated dialogue can help to identify common goals and objectives and to establish the scope and magnitude of interest for developing a framework. For example, in Texas, the scoping process resulted in a decision to build the first version of the framework internally within the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission. In contrast, the scoping process in Kentucky led a Division of Water internal work group to expand the framework development team to include more than 30 agencies and private organizations representing local, state, and federal interests.

The value of the scoping step should not be underestimated. In Washington state scoping was preempted by the conditions and schedule dictated by a court ordered settlement agreement. Many of the logical partners for the Washington framework were not included in the planning process. The Department of Ecology and the Governor's office is currently working to reopen the framework design process to better incorporate missing partners into the framework.

In West Virginia, scoping produced a multiagency approach that linked framework development with other initiatives, including strategic planning, permit reengineering, a performance partnership agreement with EPA, and a TMDL lawsuit settlement.

The facilitator's role in the scoping process varies, but typically includes services such as the following:

- Providing written and oral background information on watershed management and statewide approaches through informal discussions and formal presentations.
- Working with a sponsor to plan and conduct seminars or workshops on the approach.
- Facilitating identification of common goals and objectives to guide framework development, and evaluation of current methods for managing watershed resources for their effectiveness and potential gaps.
- Facilitating discussion at seminars or workshops to examine whether framework development or refinement should be further pursued.
- Documenting discussions and group consensus. (Is there a common vision?)

Work Group Formation

Most states have used a work group method to design and develop their frameworks. As its name suggests, this method involves assembling a work group from interested participants who are willing and able to spend their time developing the framework.

In Alaska, scoping led to formation of a work group that included state-wide partners from several federal, state, and local agencies, trade organizations, environmental groups, and community-based citizen organizations. Shared leadership among work group members has been vital to the survival of the Alaska Watershed Partnerships framework.

In Utah, a work group was formed within the Division of Water Quality. The work group included staff from all affected programs representing a wide range of department experience and several grade levels (e.g., project staff, middle managers, and senior managers). In this sense, the Utah Framework development workgroup resembled a typical Total Quality Management Team that is designed to incorporate/represent as many perspectives in the production process as possible. The facilitator and work group ground rules encouraged the use of this diversity to create a balanced and integrated framework.

Factors to consider when forming a work group include:

- Given the common vision of the framework, who should be in the work group to develop an approach that meets expectations?
- How will the work group operate and what will be expected of its members?
- Who can handle work group meeting logistics such as finding meeting space, maintaining mailing lists and communicating meeting times, taking meeting notes, and so forth?
- How can a work group that's inclusive and of manageable size be formed?

- How can a work group be initiated without seeming to encroach on others' "turf"?

Facilitation is not required for this task, but can be used to assist in some or all of these areas. For example, facilitators have:

- Helped leaders to develop a strategy for work group formation, including advice on membership and methods for achieving participation.
- Helped prospective work group members understand what the framework development process will entail and what will be expected of them (roles, time commitments, etc.).
- Assisted interested groups in brainstorming whether they have "at the table" everyone who needs to be involved for an effective framework.
- Provided examples of organizational structure and ground rules for work group operation that have worked in other states, and tailored them if needed.
- Helped to establish a work plan to initiate and guide the work group through the framework development process.

Framework Design and Development

In the framework development phase, facilitation is used to help participants reach a series of milestones established in their work plan. Typically, meeting agendas focus on specific framework components such that by the end of the session the work group has completed its design or reached an understanding of what needs to be completed at the next meeting or through between-meeting assignments.

Facilitators frequently assist states by planning and preparing the agenda for these meetings or workshops in accordance with the overall work plan. Facilitators are often looked to by states to provide neutral leadership or mediation of framework design work sessions. A variety of facilitation techniques (e.g., round robin discussion, break-out groups, large-group critique of "strawman" ideas) can be used to ensure opportunities for all group members to stay actively involved and provide input to the framework design. It is the role of the facilitator to make sure work group members understand what outcome they're working toward, pose key questions for the group to answer, and provide examples from other states to aid in understanding and provide possible models to follow as needed. In short, facilitators make it easier for the group to design and build its framework, sometimes sharing options for how components could be designed, but not "telling" them how components "should" be designed. Occasionally, experienced facilitators are asked to play a strong advisory role in the technical design of components because of their background in a given area and their ability to share what has worked well or not worked well elsewhere.

Sometimes state work groups use smaller subcommittees with experts who work out framework component details for the larger group's consideration. This can be effective where the work group is fairly large. For

example, Kentucky's work group was composed of more than 30 agencies and organizations. It used five subcommittees to design the bulk of its framework, using a shorter period of time than that needed by states where one work group designed all of the components.

One challenge posed by the multiple subcommittee approach, however, is maintaining communication among subcommittees such that linkages between components are understood or worked through. The facilitator plays a strong role in ensuring that communication is maintained and linkages are identified. Also, it is possible that the larger work group will not agree with everything recommended by a subcommittee and sometimes components need further design work. West Virginia established issue-oriented subcommittees on an as-needed basis. The subcommittees reported progress or recommendations on a monthly basis to the full work group.

Texas, which focused initial framework development within the state water quality agency, used a facilitator and watershed coordinator team for part of its development process to move around to each individual program to work out their roles and responsibilities in the management cycle. This method was combined with periodic meetings of a larger work group, which focused on designing the overarching framework components that supported coordination among the agency's programs.

Initial emphasis in the design stage is often placed on defining the primary coordinating elements of the framework geographic management units for coordinating over space, a watershed management cycle and statewide schedule for coordinating over time, and forums for different levels of stakeholder involvement (e.g., statewide steering committees, river basin teams, local watershed task forces or associations, and partner networks). Consensus in these areas is essential because they form the basis for integrating efforts and drive the location and timing of daily operations for several types of activities. Facilitation can help build consensus by helping group members establish and apply criteria for making their decisions. Where experience among group members making these decisions is lacking, facilitators can provide examples of criteria and methods used elsewhere.

Once the primary coordinating elements of the framework have been designed, emphasis usually turns to detailing roles and responsibilities for operating the framework and carrying out the cycle of management activities. There are several types of roles to define including technical, policy-making, coordination, communication, and support (e.g., information management and administrative) roles. Experienced facilitators can be used to provide examples of roles defined in other states for entities such as basin coordinators, public information coordinators, statewide steering committees, technical basin teams, local advisory groups, and others. Additionally, some states (Georgia, Kentucky, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia) have used facilitation to map out detailed activity guides that communicate what each responsible entity will try to achieve at each step in the management cycle. In this process, each participating agency, organization, or program is asked to think through its actions, desired outcomes, and timing for each step in the cycle. The facilitator helps the groups think through the process, and then compiles the results into a

common reference guide so that each partner can see its own role and how its efforts integrate with those of the other partners.

Throughout the design process, a trained facilitator can assist state work groups by identifying issues or apparent gaps in the design that the group should address, or implications of design decisions such as the need for additional support or coordination to implement the design. In Nebraska, for example, facilitation helped to identify and rectify workload imbalances for certain key programs in the initial design of the statewide basin management schedule. In Kentucky, where partners didn't want to create another new coordination and communication forum to add to the many that already exist, facilitation led to the idea for a partner network that connected existing forums.

As is the case in any process where more than one person is involved, framework design team members might not always see eye-to-eye on how the approach should take place. Indeed, constructive debate often helps work groups to think through framework components completely and results in a stronger design.

Occasionally, however, there are issues where the work group can get stuck because of lack of consensus. Facilitation is useful in these circumstances to mediate among the group members to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and to work to resolve differences by looking for common ground and a win-win outcome or a satisfactory compromise. Sometimes this process requires negotiations outside a group meeting.

Transition Planning

Implementing a statewide framework involves more than reaching a consensus on coordinating elements and a framework design. The greatest challenge, perhaps, lies in translating the design concepts into routine daily operations. Practical considerations include assembling technical teams and advisory groups, hiring or appointing coordinators, maintaining adequate funding of key activities, maintaining communication and coordination, managing information, supporting and conducting outreach and public participation, and monitoring implementation of the framework and corresponding levels of success in meeting environmental goals and objectives. As the saying goes, "this is where the rubber hits the road," and good planning can help avoid pitfalls along the way.

Facilitation can play a significant role in helping partners plan for and begin the transition from current operations to those under a statewide watershed management framework. For example, experienced facilitators can help framework partners to:

- Identify areas where standard operating procedures should be updated or new guidance developed to support implementation (including areas where revisions could capitalize on the framework structure to improve efficiency or effectiveness).
- Clarify resource needs for implementation (including how leveraging among partner resource bases will contribute to implementation).

- Establish outreach and training plans to see that participants and the public are oriented to the new framework and understand procedures, expectations, and opportunities.
- Identify legal or institutional barriers that could inhibit or block implementation of any design components, and determine next steps to address them.
- Outline keys to success and indicators to monitor to ensure that efforts stay on the right track.

In West Virginia, the facilitator helped in the transition by planning and conducting a kick-off meeting for the Interagency Steering Committee that oriented new members to the new framework. She also helped finalize a schedule for synchronizing all National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits with the watershed cycle and developed a job description for the new basin coordinator position.

In Georgia, facilitation was used to guide basin team members through the first set of basin plans for the Chattahoochee and Flint River basins. The facilitators helped members identify and compile available information on basin features and condition, clarify management priorities, and prepare initial action plans to address priority issues. The process helped team members establish their procedures to make it easier in the next basin groups.

A facilitated transition planning workshop was used in Utah to develop an activity guide for implementation of the watershed management steps for a pilot watershed (Jordan River). Participants were asked to provide their program's or organization's objectives, needs, and outputs for each step of the watershed planning and management cycle. The workshop identified many areas of redundant activity and opportunities for increased levels of collaboration. It also helped to clarify specific roles and responsibilities. This included an improved understanding of how local conditions will influence changes in each program's roles and responsibilities from one watershed management unit to the next. The results of the workshop were used to initiate activities within the Jordan River watershed.

Framework Documentation

Documenting the progress and outcome of the framework development process is a valuable service that can be provided by facilitation. Frequently, the agencies or organizations participating in the framework development process are limited in the amount of resources available for documenting efforts. Staff are usually pressed for time, and writing meeting summaries or framework component descriptions falls to the bottom of the "to-do" list. Additionally, writing for a broad audience is not always the strong point of the scientists and engineers who frequently compose much of the framework development group. Facilitation can therefore expedite the process by providing quick turnaround on meeting summaries and offering strong writing skills that produce documents that can communicate with a broad audience. When efforts are documented along the way, work groups are often better able to see their progress.

Many states are compiling written summaries of their efforts into a single *framework document* that can serve as a common reference for all involved. The document can help participants understand and communicate the framework by summarizing its vision, goals and objectives, core components, and key roles and responsibilities, and the transition plan to implement the framework. Some states use the framework document like a memorandum of understanding among partners. Utah has included specific framework evaluation procedures in its document to describe how it intends to measure progress toward achieving its watershed approach goals.

In addition to helping to write and prepare framework documents, facilitators can play a key role in preparing states to use the documents. For example, facilitation can be used to help determine the purpose of a framework document. In Kentucky, facilitators helped the framework development work group reach the conclusion that it needed a document that not only would provide a reference for partners, but also would help sell the idea. This affected the organization of the document (making sure benefits were up front to achieve quick buy-in) and the format (designing a document that people would want to pick up and would find easy to read). In the end, the facilitators for Kentucky helped develop a brief flyer for the public, an executive summary for directors and others who needed a strong overview, and a detailed framework document for the practitioners charged with carrying out the framework.

In Alaska, the Watershed Partnerships framework is currently being documented in a series of short volumes. Each volume is focused on a different set of topics related to the use of the Alaska Watershed Partnerships Framework. For example, a local organization may not have an interest in working with agencies to develop a comprehensive watershed management strategy. These groups would not have a need for the agency maps and procedures that are described in Volume 4. However, they may have use for a description for establishing a volunteer monitoring program or a local information management and communication support network that are described in Volume 3.

To signal their support for coordinating watershed management efforts in West Virginia, 10 state and federal agencies and the Governor signed a Resolution of Mutual Intent to carry out their roles and responsibilities detailed in the West Virginia Watershed Management Framework Partners' Guidance Manual and Program Activity Guide. Through this, the document provided a commitment to and authority for implementing the framework. To help publicize the state's new approach, partners hosted an information session and signing ceremony in the Governor's office.

The Arizona framework document will be used for a series of agency wide training workshops to promote the transition to and implementation of the statewide watershed approach. Arizona, like several other states, produced its framework document in a notebook format that will be easy to update on a regular basis.

3.0 Considering a Facilitated Approach: How Do We Define Our Needs?

How do you know when or if you need facilitation assistance and the skills required to meet those needs? This section summarizes common themes from all states that have used facilitation, as well as special considerations or key questions to ask in tailoring the facilitation process to meet your needs.

Common Themes

All states surveyed indicated that they used facilitation to:

- Learn from other states and spur innovative thinking. The states were undertaking something new. They believed they could build a stronger framework through learning about other states' successes, failures, and approaches.
- Remove or prevent the perception that the process is driven by one program, section, or agency. The staff believed they could maximize buy-in through using a neutral facilitator to minimize the sense of bias, control, or crossing onto others' "turf."
- Expedite the process. Some states were just getting started and already felt overwhelmed by existing responsibilities or tight framework development deadlines. Others had made progress in framework development, but had reached an impasse and stalled. All states said they used facilitation assistance to jump-start the process and move it along more quickly.

What are the basic attributes you should look for in a facilitator? All agreed that the person should be able to:

- Understand and effectively communicate the issues involved in statewide watershed management.
- Encourage open discussion and consensus building.
- Provide structure for the group's efforts and keep the group focused.
- Offer ideas and solutions that are based on the experience of other states and that weave together points of work group members.
- Adapt facilitation styles from structured to flexible, formal to informal depending on the work session objectives and participants, timing constraints, and other factors. For example, facilitators might need to use a structured, formal style in working with

senior managers and policy makers during the scoping process and briefing work sessions, but might need to use a blend of structured and flexible, formal and informal styles in facilitating the monthly meetings of the staff workgroup.

Special Considerations/Key Questions to Ask

Do we have a basin coordinator on staff who can assist in the framework development process?

Yes. A basin coordinator can assist in the framework development process by organizing efforts, including planning the facilitation process, recruiting work group participants, and helping outline milestones to achieve; helping educate staff about the concepts of statewide watershed management; planning work sessions and documenting their outcomes; compiling or writing components of the framework document; and helping to keep framework development on track, including helping to achieve meeting objectives and making progress between meetings.

Having a basin coordinator might allow a state to have a smaller facilitation budget, targeting its facilitation assistance to specific issues or phases of framework development. Or, through leveraging the hours of the basin coordinator, the state could choose to redirect dollars otherwise spent on administrative services (e.g., writing meeting summaries) to give more in-depth attention to issues or to provide a more comprehensive range of assistance.

No. If a staff person does not have assigned responsibilities in his or her work plan for the tasks outlined above, the work will probably not be done without outside facilitation assistance. In such a case, the facilitator's key skills and attributes are (1) being organized and able to keep the group organized, (2) being able to keep efforts focused, (3) having experience with statewide watershed framework design, and (4) having the ability to effectively communicate key concepts and issues to the group and to communicate the group's framework design. These skills are helpful when a facilitator is working in tandem with a basin coordinator; they are crucial when he or she is operating without one.

Are we designing a multi-agency or single-agency framework?

Multiagency. States designing a multiagency framework face some unique challenges:

Since *how a multiagency process is initiated can greatly influence its outcome*, thoughtful planning up front with experienced facilitators can be critical in answering sensitive questions such as "Who should be at the table? How do we establish a common vision? How do we establish a workgroup that has authority and direction?"

Although one agency might be able to initiate and help lead the process, *that agency lacks the authority to manage the discussion and activities covering multiple resource management issues* outside its jurisdiction. Neutral facilitation is needed not only to build consensus but also to design and manage a process that neutralizes the issue of control and authority and provides a catalyst for partnership. This means the framework development process originally envisioned might evolve or change as new partners become active in the process.

- *Multiple agencies have multiple missions, perspectives, and priorities.* Active mediation is needed to find common ground and resolve differences.
- Multiagency frameworks add more opportunity for leveraging expertise and resources to address common problems. At the same time, *establishing complementary roles and responsibilities within an agreed-upon time line for multiple partners is more complex* than if operating within a single agency or section.
- *Multiagency initiatives often require a larger, more diverse group and involve a more complex group dynamic.* This requires that a facilitator use multiple large and small group techniques to help maintain and increase partner involvement, interest, and commitment. The tone that is set, and the way the group is managed during framework development can determine the success of framework implementation.

In short, if you are interested in designing a multiagency framework, you should consider using an experienced facilitator to assist in developing an outreach strategy, to resolve differences and find common ground through neutral facilitation and mediation, and to manage complex group dynamics.

Single-agency. States that have developed single-agency (or single-section) watershed management frameworks have had a more straightforward or predictable framework development process. These states indicated that facilitation did not change the process that would otherwise have been used to develop their watershed approach, but it did expedite the process. Most important to these states was a facilitator's ability to:

- Share experience from other states that have embarked on statewide watershed management.
- Ensure that programs are adequately coordinating efforts.
- Develop realistic time schedules for watershed management activities.
- Advise on synchronizing various program activities (e.g., NPDES permit renewal) with the watershed management cycle.

Do we want (or need) to link framework development to other initiatives?

Water resource agency staff often feel overwhelmed by existing duties and pulled in many directions by government mandates or internal management initiatives. Where this is the case, staff might view watershed framework development as just one more initiative or trend. In recent years, some states have directed facilitators to link framework development to initiatives or mandates such as the following:

- Internal strategic planning
- Permit reengineering
- Performance partnership agreements with EPA
- TMDL legal settlements

In fact, some states have used framework development as an “umbrella” process to ensure that initiatives complement one another and keep the big picture in mind. It is important to clarify the need for these linkages up front during the design of the facilitation process.

What is the time frame for designing our framework?

Setting a deadline for completing your framework is crucial to making progress. Factors that influence that deadline will vary from state to state, but could include:

- The scope of your watershed approach and how many partners are involved. (Although wider scope and more partners might lengthen the time required to develop the framework, they don’t necessarily have to lengthen the time frame; i.e., more work can be compressed into the same time frame.)
- TMDL legal agreements, or other linkages listed above.
- Overall resources (staff time and support funds) available to pay for facilitation services, including any time frame for grants.
- Degree to which a common vision for the framework already exists.
- Current infrastructure. (Do some of the components of the framework fully or partially exist already?)

How much will facilitation cost and how will we pay for it?

States embarking on facilitation will need to commit significant staff time to framework development as well as securing funds to pay for facilitation services. Generally, the work group that is designing framework components meets monthly over a 2-day period with the facilitator. Between monthly work sessions, the staff will likely have four or more hours of tasks to complete individually or in subcommittees. In other words, staff that you assign to the workgroup will likely devote 20 or more hours a month (or approximately 15 percent of their time) to framework development. Depending on the scope of the framework design, the work group might meet from 6 months to 2 years, with most processes taking 15 to 18 months. To signal commitment to the process, senior managers should not only make appointments to the work group but also adjust responsibilities of work group members and other staff to allow for meaningful participation in framework development.

The cost of facilitation services also depends on the scope of effort. To date, facilitation services provided to states have ranged in cost from about \$15,000 to \$125,000. States have funded facilitation services through:

- USEPA Office of Water contractor support (made available through the Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds’ Assessment and Watershed Protection Division and the Office of Wastewater Management’s Permits Division)
- USEPA Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation

- Federal Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3) grants issued by EPA
- State appropriation and grant funds

Do we have the executive support to see the process through?

Are the chief decision makers supportive of framework development? Efforts in some states have bogged down from lack of support by key executives. Where efforts are initiated by staff other than the agency head, staff should plan effective ways to explain the potential benefits of the watershed approach and the importance of manager support and leadership in other states that have developed frameworks. Scoping services from an experienced facilitator can be used to help inform key executives and to answer questions related to framework development and implementation based on experiences in other states.

How are we going to prepare ourselves to implement the framework?

In addition to designing framework elements, it takes considerable effort to plan for and make the transition to the new approach. Making the transition involves conducting outreach and training on the new approach to increase staff and stakeholder awareness and understanding, updating work plans to synchronize activities with a management cycle where appropriate, updating standard operating procedures and guidance to reflect the new approach, organizing forums that will be used to coordinate activities, and targeting resources to administer and implement the framework. This equates to a change in the work paradigm for many agencies and organizations, which can be intimidating and confusing for some, especially the first time through the management cycle.

You might want to consider using facilitation services to help smooth this transition. Experienced facilitators can offer tips to keep implementation on course and can provide support in navigating through previously uncharted waters.

Summary

Many of the considerations described above are interrelated, and hinge on the degree of experience and resources that a state has at its disposal. Those agencies and organizations that can devote significant staff time to organizing, planning, mediating, and documenting the tasks involved might choose not to rely as heavily on facilitation. On the other hand, states with less available staff time and experience may find facilitation services vital to making progress in developing or enhancing their approach.