

## Association of State Wetland Managers

### Healthy Wetlands, Healthy Watersheds Worksheet for Integration Partners

Based on findings from ASWM's Healthy Wetlands, Healthy Watersheds Project, this worksheet facilitates internal assessment of integration readiness for collaborations. Partners should work together to review and discuss their levels of agreement with each statement. 1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree. While collaborations can function at a rudimentary level without some elements being strongly in place, having many elements missing can indicate both areas for potential concern and important need for capacity building. The scoring key can be found at the bottom of the worksheet.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		
1) Adequate resources are dedicated to integration partnership building	5	4	3	2	1
2) Staff time is committed to building integration relationships	5	4	3	2	1
3) Shared goals have been jointly developed by the integration partners	5	4	3	2	1
4) Integration partners have shared expectations for activities	5	4	3	2	1
5) The partners have analyzed and understand integration complexities	5	4	3	2	1
6) Internal structures are in place to facilitate integration	5	4	3	2	1
7) The structure for integration fits the scope of work to be completed	5	4	3	2	1
8) Structure for integration is formalized to the extent necessary	5	4	3	2	1
9) Formal systems are in place to determine integration priorities	5	4	3	2	1
10) Policy supports have been developed to facilitate integration efforts	5	4	3	2	1
11) Key disconnects between organizational systems have been addressed	5	4	3	2	1
12) Regulatory barriers to the integration work have been addressed	5	4	3	2	1
13) Partners have access to necessary data, maps, etc. for integrated work	5	4	3	2	1

14) The integration effort has been designed to be adaptable/flexible	5	4	3	2	1
15) Stakeholder engagement has been developed to support integration	5	4	3	2	1
16) Sustainable funding is dedicated for all phases of integration:	5	4	3	2	1
<i>a. Partnership building funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>b. Planning funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>c. Implementation funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>d. Stakeholder engagement funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>e. Public outreach/education funds (re integration efforts)</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>f. Monitoring and assessment funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>g. Evaluation funds</i>	5	4	3	2	1
17) Funding for integration activities comes from multiple sources	5	4	3	2	1
18) The integration effort utilizes third-party facilitation, if appropriate	5	4	3	2	1
19) The integration effort brings in outside expertise as needed	5	4	3	2	1
20) The integration project includes a communications plan	5	4	3	2	1
21) Formal integration measures are used to capture integration value	5	4	3	2	1
22) Formal evaluation plans are in place for all phases of the project	5	4	3	2	1
23) The project includes informal analysis of costs and benefits	5	4	3	2	1
24) The integration effort has transition plans for changes in leadership	5	4	3	2	1

### **Worksheet Scoring:**

**Score of 4-5** = Area of strength; focus is on sustaining and continuous improvement

**Score of 2-3** = Area for additional work; resources should be dedicated to increasing capacity in this area

**Score of 1** = Area of concern; focus should be placed on determining how critical the element is to the integration effort's success; significant focus should be on increasing this capacity area.



**Integration Capacity Building Plan**  
**(Make additional copies as needed)**

<b>Capacity Building Need</b>	<b>Plan to Build this Capacity Need</b>

## **ASWM Healthy Wetlands, Healthy Watersheds Project**

# **Guidance on Best Practices for Integration Activities**

### **Invest in Partnership Building (#1-2)**

Efforts to develop effective partnerships and other relationship building activities should be taken seriously. Collaboration building takes time and commitment. It is not always easy. Planning in time for collaboration building activities is essential, as is the investment in resources such as neutral facilitators to ensure that all voices are heard and plans represent the voices and thinking of all, not just some, of the partners at the table. Partnership research shows that starting small and building on small successes is a “tried and true” method for building the trust and track record of success that leads to greater commitment and broader demand for integration services.

### **Adopt an Integration Mindset – Shared goals, Expectations and Troubleshooting (#3-5)**

In order to engage effectively in integration activities, partners need to adopt a mindset to being part of something larger. This means thinking beyond specific organization or agency goals and taking the time to develop strong shared goals and plans. The process of identifying overlapping goals and priorities is critical to partners’ sense of ownership of the work and active participation.

Integration projects often require significant investments of time and resources, compromise, and create outputs and outcomes that extend beyond resource management goals. For partners, leadership and the public to have appropriate expectations of what will happen when, how funds will be spent and what they should expect to see as a result of these efforts, project managers should work to identify, develop and share appropriate expectations. This work should be conducted as part of the partner planning stage and through stakeholder engagement and public outreach.

Integration projects often suffer from unanticipated complications that could have been addressed if partners had conducted analysis early on in their planning process. Integration projects should include an assessment of complexities and troubleshooting during the planning phase of the project.

### **Provide Formalization and Structure to Fit Scope (#6-9)**

Structure is important. Case studies bear out the findings from integration and collaboration literature that show structure and formal process is essential to creating sustainable, smooth-running joint activities. The delicate balance with integration work is to make the structure and processes simple enough to facilitate action and progress but detailed enough to support the systems necessary to make decisions. Findings also show that the act of prioritizing collaboratively can build relationships and network (also known as “social capital”). Formal systems are also important, as structured, well-documented decision making is critical to ensuring decisions and

resource investments are defensible over time. Additionally, collaborative prioritization using pre-identified criteria based on achieving goals tends to maximize resource use by finding “the most bang for the buck.”

### **Ensure that Regulatory and Administrative Barriers are Identified and Addressed (#10-13)**

All the best intentions may not be able to overcome true regulatory, organizational/agency barriers. Systems have been developed in ways to do not allow, support or facilitate integration. Additionally, the partners should ensure that they have access to the necessary data, maps and other information required to make informed collaborative decisions about sites and activities.

### **Build-in Programmatic Adaptability and Flexibility (#14)**

While structure and formal processes for creating shared goals and prioritizing, all case studies also emphasized the importance of flexibility. While structure and planning were critical elements of success, integration efforts also needed the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and growth. Most case studies reported having gone through multiple iterations over time and benefitting from flexibility and adaptive management. The best laid of plans can come unraveled - remain flexible, adaptive and willing to compromise. One case study indicated that they had initially started with a highly complex decision-making structure that led to feelings of dissatisfaction and confusion. The collaboration had to be ended and restarted later with fewer key players and a simplified, formalized decision-making process that had been carefully thought out to make decision-making workable.

### **Engage Stakeholders Early and Often (#15)**

Projects that engaged stakeholders identified this effort as one of the key elements of their success. Stakeholders should be involved as early and often as possible. Generally, stakeholder engagement should occur at the planning, implementation, and review phases of a project or initiative. A strong example of stakeholder engagement can be found in the St. Johns River Watershed (FL) Case Study, which involved stakeholders at all phases of the project. They hosted agricultural stakeholder meetings on a regular basis and addressed the agriculture industry’s concerns with a Citizen’s Technical Advisory Committee. Understanding that they needed to reach out to more than the agriculture community, they also held regular recreational public meetings to update stakeholders on land management and recreation issues. They also worked with select groups of natural resource stakeholders working to determine if land management planning objectives were being met.

### **Identify and Secure Sustainable Funding for the Lifecycle of Integration Efforts (#16-17)**

All case studies indicated that either strong financial planning that allocated specific streams of funding for each phase of their work was critical or that they had encountered issues they had to overcome if funding had not been allocated for all phases, especially monitoring and evaluation. Projects that struggled in this area had initiated plans without securing additional funding for ongoing monitoring or wrap-up/reporting requirements. It is critical to budget time and funding to support planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation

and reporting phases from the outset. Integration projects also usually benefit from having a diversified stream of funding, as it creates greater ownership across the partners and more stability in the case that one of the funding sources is no longer available to support the integration work.

### **Resource the Integration Effort with External Supports as Needed (#18-19)**

Collaborations require significant work in the area of sharing information, ensuring all partner voices are heard and coming to negotiated agreement on the use of resources and plans. To assist in this process, research indicates that there are significant benefits to collaborations that bring in neutral facilitators to assist with process around making important decisions and external expertise where the partners may not have that knowledge of skills to work effectively to address a need. Additionally, understanding the social component of integration projects is important in order to ensure that time is included to address these elements of the project and professional services, such as facilitators, can be included in project design to assist managers who may not have expertise in this type of work.

### **Invest in Communications and Creating Public Understanding (#20)**

Another finding from analysis of the case studies was that most integration efforts required significant investments in public education or targeted outreach. First, acceptance of and growth in integration projects require consensus that there *is* a problem in the first place. Once the external landowners, land trusts, watershed organizations or other organizational entities integral to the collaborative effort understand the value added from doing these activities, they usually want to get onboard. Those who are not convinced of the value of the effort from the outset especially benefit from learning about others who had experienced success. They prefer to initiate their engagement personally, rather than being told that they need to participate. For this reason, public education may benefit from documenting and sharing early examples of success and sharing those through strategic outreach and peer-to-peer sharing. Case studies also indicate that it can be useful to engage less-eager participants by providing examples of success. Several case studies cited the value of landowners witnessing benefits to neighbors from their integration work for them to get “onboard” with their projects.

### **Use Formal Measures of Integration to Demonstrate Integration Value (#21)**

For the full value of integration activities to be measured, project managers should include other measures of performance beyond environmental outcomes and outputs like numbers of meetings conducted with stakeholders, etc. Integration and collaboration have a host of measures that should be considered when assessing the value of these activities, including measures of relationship building, formalization, increased access to resources, shared goal setting and others. These measures need to be learned and accepted by leadership from the start of a project, so that expectations of what will be accomplished and how it will be measured are agreed upon. Once identified, these measures should be integrated into formal metrics and built-in from the beginning planning stage so that they can

be tracked throughout the life of the project and used for evaluation of outcomes. When designing monitoring and evaluation plans, think how data can be used in benefit-cost analysis and craft plans to support this additional work.

### **Build in Strong Evaluation (#22)**

For project success to be documented, it is critical to include measures that show what has changed from the beginning of the project to the its end. Measures usually focus on environmental outcomes and achievement of resource management goals. To this end, make sure not to gloss over the collection and analysis of scientific baseline data during the planning and early implementation phases of the project. To understand how far you have come, you need to understand where you started.

### **Work Towards Greater Understanding and Use of Benefit-Cost Analysis (#23)**

Integration projects are increasingly being asked to demonstrate their return on investment. While integration projects are historically underrepresented in terms of cost-benefit analysis, research provides useful tools to assist partners in measuring the fruits of their integration labors. Guidance on how to think about and capture this information is provided in the Healthy Wetlands, Healthy Watersheds Appendices.

### **Plan for Transition (#24)**

In order to ensure that integration is sustainable over time, transition planning is key. Highly successful collaboration often begins with the leadership of one or several visionary leaders. Without this vision and drive, and perhaps the relationships that the leader brings to the table, collaboration would not have been initiated or as successful. One of the hardest elements of long-term collaboration is maintaining momentum over time to get to the finish line. Planning and documentation should take place to create a self-sustaining organizational structure and grooming of new leaders should be taken into consideration if transitions may take place.