Online Network Platform

The Minnesota River Congress sees the need for an informal, but structured setting where diverse organizations and interested citizens can collaborate to improve the river basin's future. This *Online Network Platform* will be created using a 4-Step process. MRC participants in the collaboration will provide the input and substance for the Platform.

A Minnesota River Basin Map depicting the diverse organizations with interests in the Basin

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Go directly to 5-Question Survey

Or

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Learn More About the 4-Steps to the Online Network Platform ➔

Invite a colleague to take the Online Network Platform survey ➔   Email address

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This document describes a "engage-design-build" or a so-called "strategic doing" approach to develop an Online Network Platform. Each step in the build process requires a certain level of engagement prior to progressing to the next step. In this way, stakeholders will gain access to and ownership in the process and potential funders can be assured a certain level of support exists prior to funding.

Online Network Platform technology has been available for 10 years, but this MRC ONP will be the first application as a *river basin platform* in the nation.

To ensure the MRC ONP will be the *first and best*, the MRC is proposing a four-step process for stakeholder input and buy-in to occur as each of the four steps are taken.

The four-step process includes:

1. "River Community Actors" take a 5-question survey to identify their issue types and needs. [Milestone – 250 individual]
2. Individuals and organization take a 10-minute survey to find out what their "governance personality" is. Milestone – 300 individual surveys]
3. MRC stakeholders design a "Collaboration Template" based on 9 objectives of the MRC.
4. The "Project Collaboration Template" is connected to GIS Layer so organizations can search and locate partners, communicate,

Step 1. Who are the River Basin Community Actors?

Each one of us participates in the MRC as one (or more) of the four community actor types. In Step 1, you will identify which actor type _most_ represents your involvement in the MRC. It is from this perspective that you will answer the questions about the "type" of problems you work and what your organizational needs and wants are.

Survey # 1.

1. Contact Info (_This is the start of populating the platform, and in time, each individual and organization will have their own MRC ONP profile that they may add to. For now, this is enough)._
    a. Organization_____
    b. Name_____
    c. Position Type_____ (pick from Administration, Technical, Sales, Marketing, Management, Training, Research, other)
    d. Email_____

2. Community Actor Type (Choose One that most represents you working toward MRC Goals)

    a. ____**Public Policy-Maker:** Elected officials, agency staff and appointed board members that develop and approve policies (_e.g. Legislators, County Commissioners, City Councilpersons, SWCD Boards and Township Board Members)_

    b. ____**Private Policy-Maker**: Corporate board members that develop purchasing policies for commodities, food products, etc. Non-profit organizations that influence public and private policy. _(e.g. Non-Government Organizations, Sustainability Supply Chains, eco-marketers, community orgs, etc.)_

    c. ____**Public Practitioner**: Individuals employed in the public sector that provide support, education, technical assistance, etc. to carry out public policies (_e.g. SWCD and watershed technicians and engineers, State and county regulators, Extension, etc.)_

    d. ____**Private Practitioner**: Individuals in businesses, communities, utilities and organizations that have private or parochial interests and duties related to delivering outcomes and outputs (_e.g. business people, farmers, tradesmen/women, utility workers, foresters, public works, etc.)_
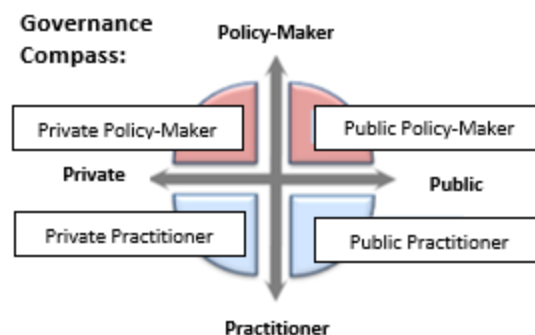
3. The type of River Basin Issue that most represents what you are working on toward MRC goals. (Choose One)
   a. ____**Technical Issues:** If there is consensus on Values and Knowledge
   (*e.g. nitrate leaching should be reduced, and side-dressing and wetlands will reduce it*)

   b. ____ **Scientific Issues:** If there is consensus on Values, but disagreement on Knowledge
   (*e.g. Nitrates in water is bad, but no one knows how it gets there?*)

   c. ____ **Political Issues**: If there is consensus on Knowledge, but disagreement on Values.
   (*e.g. Nitrates get into water from tile lines, but yield benefits outweigh the pollution costs*)

   d. ____ **Social Issues**: If there is disagreement on Knowledge and Values
   (*e.g. the source of nitrates is unknown, and it is not necessary to reduce them.*)

Values / Knowledge	Consensus	Disagree
Consensus	**Technical**	**Political**
Disagree	**Scientific**	**Social**

4. What do you or your organization need from the MRC Collaboration? (Rank from 1-4 with 1 being most important, leave blank if not applicable)
   a. ____To advance the mission of the organization
   b. ____To leverage resources, find new opportunities, and generate revenue
   c. ____To enhance the organization's public image and reputation
   d. ____To improve services to clients
   e. ____ Other____(can they write in?)_____

5. What can you or your organization offer to the MRC Collaboration? (Rank from 1-4 with 1 being most important, leave blank if not applicable)
   a. ____Access to funding
   b. ____Access to citizens, landowners, or organizations
   c. ____Experience related to solving the 9 MRC Collaboration's objectives
   d. ____Capacity building for other MRC Collaborators.
   e. ____ Other___(can they write in?_____

What does the MRC Collaboration want to get out of Step #1?
   1. 250 completed surveys (required to go to Step #2)
   2. Understand what "community actor" perspective MRC stakeholders come from
   3. Understand the "Type of Issues" (technical, scientific, political, social) MRC stakeholders have
   4. MRC, as a group, can learn what stakeholders need to be more successful
   5. MRC, as a group, can learn what stakeholders can share for others to be more successful

6. Buy-in, support and funding to enable the MRC to proceed to Step #2

## Step 2. What are the organizations' "Governance Styles" in the MRC Collaboration?

In organizations such as corporations and government agencies, *governance* is a *structural component*. In collaborations, governance is a *process*. For organizations to be successful in their collaborations, they need to know their "style" of governance and the "style" of their collaborators. This helps them identify how their governance structure can enhance, not hinder, the governance process of the collaboration.

Interestingly, governance is also a cultural component of organizations, or somewhat of the organization's "personality". To reveal this "personality" a governance style preference survey is completed.

Each MRC stakeholder that completed Survey #1 is sent a link to complete Survey #2; a ~30-question multiple choice survey that identifies the "governance styles and footprints" of individuals and organizations.

Dashboard Graphics will describe the number of individuals in the organization that took the survey, the actor types in the organizations (pie graph), and the governance styles (bar graph), and the location of the governance footprint (triad graph):
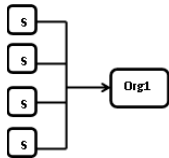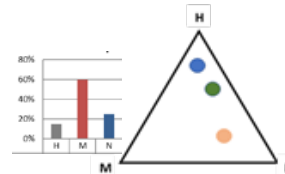
Organizations   Actor Types   Governance Styles   Governance Footprints

What does the MRC Collaboration want to get out of Step #2?
1. 300 completed surveys (required to go to Step #3)
2. Stakeholders learn about their and others governance "preference".
3. Stakeholders understand how organizational *structural governance* can help or hurt collaboration's *process governance*
4. Buy-in, support and funding to enable the MRC to proceed to Step #3

Step 3: Designing the Project Collaboration Template

The stakeholder and organization information provided in Survey #1 and #2 will be used by collaborators as they initiate, design, and implement their projects, programs, policies, etc.

The Project Collaboration Template will be very similar to other collaboration software with the addition of the ability to design the *governance process* (actors and styles) of the project.

For example, a project may include Resource Inventory, Priority Development, Outreach, Training and Education, Data Collection, Monitoring and Incentives programs components. Not shown below, but each could also have tasks and subtasks. Drop-down menus based on a project description and the stakeholder information in Steps #1 and #2 will allow collaborations to design the *governance process* that best meets their needs. This process becomes the collaborative governance framework.

Community actors and governance style, along with lead organizations and lead staff can be assigned different components of the project. While this may sound confusing, in reality, all of this happens with every project, but it is seldom transparent or consciously developed. Now it can be. Collaborators can openly rationalize and justify certain governance styles for specific project components. In time, collaborators will become proficient in identifying which type of actors and which type of styles are most effective in achieving goals.

Stakeholders that completed Steps #1 and #2 will be knowledgeable on the basics of collaborative governance processes to the level they can complete templates with a basic understanding of how the collaboration will function, and know the governance processes of the collaboration.

		Community Actors				Governance Style					Lead	Lead
		Policy-Makers		Practitioners		H	M	N-l	N-a	N-p	Organization(s)	Staff
		Public	Private	Public	Private							
Resource Inventory				X	x		X				SWCD	B. Wildson
Priorities		X	X	X	X				x		State Agency	S. Phillips
Outreach Programs		X	x			X			X		University	F. Langly
Training and Education				X					X		State Agency	R. Slater
Data Collection				X	X		X				Consultant, Inc.	O. Ostrom
Resource Monitoring		X							X		Co. Env. Services	T. Anders
Incentive Programs		X	X	X			X				Corp. Inc.	D. Carmich

What does the MRC Collaboration want to get out of Step #3?
1. 10 completed templates (required to go to Step #4)
2. Stakeholders design the template that meets their project needs.
3. Stakeholders understand how *governance is a key aspect of a project components, tasks, and subtasks.*
4. Buy-in, support and funding to enable the MRC to proceed to Step #4

Step 4. Connect Collaboration Project to GIS Layer

The full value of an **Online Network Platform** is realized by connecting the River Community Actors information of Step #1, the knowledge from Step #2, and the Project Template from Step #3. Using readily available GIS technology, the MRC ONP can enable organizations to connect with each other based on criteria such as 1) interest in geography, 2) common resource or economic objectives, 3) expertise needed or available, and/or 4) other values of interest such as eco-markets.

How does this work? Imagine the river basin map depicting the hundreds of organizations as the motherlode of human, financial and social resources to be tapped into, rather than the entangled mess of organizations it seems to be. The MRC ONP is able to sort and query the thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations that are enrolled on the platform.

For example, a properly designed and populated MRC ONP, the following exercise could become common place.

1. "Project Location" is identified on map by any MRC Community Actor (red polygon) with access to a computer.
2. The "Project Initiator" identifies a "Project Category" based on MRC objective categories.
3. The MRC ONP generates a list of organizations based on criteria and location (displayed on screen).
4. "Project Initiator" checks the boxes of those organizations and individuals they would like to invite into the "Project Group".
5. "Project Collaboration" template is used to define components and tasks.
6. "Project Group" member can begin populating template based on their level of access.
7. "Project Outputs" can be generated based on GIS capabilities, such as index-based accounting for ecosystem services markets, erosion reductions, or public and private-funded conservation projects.

Natural Resources

☐ Consulting Firm
☐ SWCD
☐ WMO
☐ Birds Forever
☐ Engineering Firm
☐ Wildlife Group
☐ Food Corp.
☐ Ag Production Co.
☐ ……..