Brandywine Christina Healthy Water Fund

Delaware

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BRANDYWINE CHRISTINA
HEALTHY WATER FUND

PHASE Design
COMPONENT Multi-stakeholder Governance
STEP Steering Committee

How many people collaborated to complete this step for this water fund?
8 people collaborated on the working group step (we call it our steering committee). This included 4 internal TNC staff and 4 people from a partner organization.

How much time was required to complete this step?
4 weeks
In our project, the steering committee serves as a working group to help guide the design of the water fund. The steering committee consists of representatives from the City of Wilmington (DE), City of Newark (DE), the Christina TMDL Implementation Partnership (PA), Suez Water, Aqua PA, and Pennsylvania American. The steering committee was formed using the following process:

1. Identify potential committee members, focusing on the water purveyors and municipal stormwater entities.
2. Design an engagement protocol to collect information about concerns, needs and preferences for service.
3. Based on the information collected, assess the stakeholder’s willingness to participate in steering committee.
4. Formalize the agreement to participate in a form that is acceptable to all committee members.
SYNTHESIS

As part of our Preliminary Feasibility Study process, we developed a stakeholder engagement protocol that included a set of interview questions. At the close of each interview, the stakeholder was asked about their willingness to continue to participate in discussions about the water fund. All of the stakeholders responded positively. As we reported in the study, the stakeholders recognized the value of pooling local resources to better leverage funding opportunities; they wanted to partner with others who are similarly motivated and bring a variety of expertise to the table; and they want to be strategic with watershed restoration investments.

In March 2015, we received a second phase of funding from the William Penn Foundation to continue to work on the water fund project based on the conclusions from the Preliminary Feasibility Study. The first task for the team to accomplish was the formalization of the stakeholders’ commitment to continue to participate in the project. We accomplished this through a letter of agreement that was completed in June 2015. The committee members agreed in the letter to come to meetings, share information and provide technical assistance as appropriate. We asked the committee members to approach their participation with the goal in mind of helping design the water fund so that it addresses the concerns and needs of their organization so that when they are ready to participate, it is a relatively easy to decision to do so.

With the initiation of the second phase of our work (after the completion of the Preliminary Feasibility Study), our team benefited from the implementation of some project management tools to help guide our collaboration. We developed a project charter, project milestone matrices, project timeline, and a draft business plan outline. The TNC project members also participated in highly effective team training and we have implemented some of the tools from that training as well that have helped with the visualization of our work flows.
LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson Learned #1
Perhaps the most important lesson learned from establishing the steering committee was to ensure that the “ask” to a stakeholder matches the willingness to participate. The stakeholder engagement process allows for an assessment of preferences, including gathering some information about what the stakeholder would consider an appropriate next step. Based on this information we collected during interviews, we made a very soft ask around willingness to participate in continued discussions.

Lesson Learned #2
The order for collecting the signatures on an agreement deserves careful consideration. In order to develop a sense of momentum, we asked the stakeholders with whom the project team had the most established relationship and were willing to sign. The signatures of the other stakeholders allowed the last stakeholder to sign on.

Lesson Learned #3
With the second phase of the grant, we have implemented many of the tools from the Highly Effective Team training, including the development of a project charter, work packets for defined deliverables in visual format, and standard meeting agenda format and decision tracking. This has improved our ability to manage multiple deliverables, some with dependencies.