

Goals, Hurdles, & Outcomes, *Additional Guidance*

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Purpose:

This document provides additional information for Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program applicants. It may help you develop the Goals and the plan needed to achieve those Goals that are requested in the application. This is an optional exercise; it is offered simply to help you work through this process.

This document is intended to help ensure that:

- a) Applicants and proposal reviewers use language in a consistent manner;
- b) Goals and outcomes are clearly articulated;
- c) Project plans include the necessary and sufficient strategies to accomplish goals;
- d) Metrics and monitoring methods are adequate; and,
- e) Evaluation flows easily and logically from your approach.

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Definition of Terms

The capital letters below connect specific Goals, Hurdles, Strategies, Activities, and Metrics as you read down the page (e.g. Goal A connects to Hurdle A and Strategy A). This process results in what is often referred to as a Logic Model.

Goal – Desired project result; should be realistically achieved with resources and time available.

Examples: A--Permanently protect with conservation easements 60% of the working forests within a specific watershed to maintain environmental benefits.
 B--Organize a consortium of diverse partners with resources needed to implement an existing watershed/drinking water protection/other plan.
 C--Work with the local community to develop land use plans that permanently protect sensitive areas within a watershed.

Hurdles – Barriers to achieving the goal.

Examples: A--Limited access to capital to finance watershed protection.
 B--Consultant or staff person with skills/time needed to build consortium.
 C--Expertise to prepare draft plans and navigate review.

Strategies – Conceptual approach for overcoming limiting factor(s)

Examples: A—Prepare cost/benefit analysis for watershed protection for investors.
 B—Secure funding for dedicated staff person and hire.
 C—Synthesize existing plans and hire consultant to modify for your area.

Activities – Specific actions to implement a strategy.

Examples: A—Gather needed data and hire consultant to prepare analysis.
 B—Research local foundations and prepare proposals.
 C—Secure support to hire consultant/staff to conduct research.

Metrics – Measures of progress toward Goals. Quantitative metrics are best.

Examples: A—Acres within target area that are permanently protected.
 B—Number of partners with defined roles and contributions identified.
 C—Plan adopted within 12 months; initial implementation in 24 months.

Baseline – The existing condition of a metric or limiting factor before intervention.

Examples: A—17% of watershed working forests currently permanently protected.
 B—Only two partners, both non-profits, currently engaged.
 C—No land use planning to protect watershed currently in place.

Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program—Goal Planning

The Endowment suggests using the following process for planning; it is an optional exercise offered simply to help you think through goals and the plans to achieve your goals. The output of this process may be provided in your Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program application, on the “Goal” pages. This structured plan will serve as one basis for the evaluation of your project.

The planning process is intended to be intuitive and straightforward; it’s probably something you do all the time, but may not formalize by writing it down. By using common language and a common planning template, we expect to reduce miscommunication and facilitate meaningful dialogue around the content of goals and the process to achieve those goals.

Individuals, including applicants, partners, or teams can develop goals and the plans needed to achieve those goals. If done as a group, the task becomes increasingly complex as the group size expands but may also allow better input.

It is expected that experience on the ground, collaboration with peers, periodic assessment of progress, and consultation with the Endowment will generate ideas for adapting and improving your approach. These plans are a dynamic process. It may well be that goals, hurdles, strategies, and activities change in the course of a project. We look forward to discussing these changes with you and adapting your approach as required.

Step 1: State Goal(s)

The process begins with a stated goal. *The goal should be realistically achieved with the resources and time available.* Goals are something to be achieved, not something simply to work towards.

Therefore, the scope and scale of the goal should be carefully defined. For example, a project’s goal could be to implement a pilot project demonstrating the effectiveness of a new technology. Or, the goal could be widespread adoption of the technology. Both are perfectly acceptable goals for a project, but each requires a different set of strategies, resources, and time. A very effective pilot project could be deemed a success or failure simply as a result of how its goal is stated.

Step 2: Identify and Assess Hurdles

Hurdles are barriers that prevent achievement of a goal. In effect, projects exist for the very purpose of overcoming specific hurdles. Hurdles will change depending on the scope and scale of a stated goal, but generally they relate to concepts such as: public policy, finance, economics, institutional capacity, education, public attitudes/culture, and environmental factors.

Ask yourself this simple question: What is preventing you from achieving your goal? List the responses to this question, then lump and split those responses until a manageable set of factors is developed (10 or fewer tends to be most practical).

At this stage all hurdles should be listed, regardless of whether they can be affected by, or will be addressed by, the project. It is just as important to know what hurdles will be affected by the project as those that will not, as unaddressed hurdles will have a role in determining success.

Take particular care to assess whether the necessary and sufficient set of hurdles has been identified before proceeding.

For each hurdle, it is valuable to assess the degree to which it is affecting the achievement of the goal. A rating should be assigned between “Prevents” – the worst rating, and “Enables” – the best rating. Any number of gradations is possible between these two scores, but a balance must be struck between precision and practicality of measurement. At a minimum, we suggest using two additional ratings between “Prevents” and “Enables” so that the scale resembles Figure 1:

Figure 1: Example Rating Scale for Hurdles



Although it is not required, it may be useful to write out what each of these ratings means for each hurdle. This helps to maintain consistency during assessment both during initial planning and over time to evaluate progress in overcoming the hurdle. Figure 2 provides an example.

Figure 2: Example Hurdle Descriptors

Hurdle	Prevents	Limits	Neutral	Enabling
Limited access to capital to finance watershed protection	No sources of funding at scale required available	Donors with modest funding available.	Donors with desired funding available.	Multiple sources of large-scale funding possible

Hurdle ratings should include: a) the baseline – what is the status at the start of the project; and b) a counterfactual – what will be the likely status at the end of the proposed project time period if the project/program/initiative were not implemented (in some cases it may improve on its own, and in others it may not change or even get worse).

Finally, for each hurdle, identify those factors that the project can affect. For example, if no significant sources of funding are available or likely to develop in your watershed, it may not be possible to achieve ambitious protection goals.

Figure 3 provides an example of the final result of this planning step.

Figure 3: Hurdle Identification and Rating

Hurdle to Achieve Goal	Baseline (Start of Period)	Counterfactual (End of Period)	Can Project Affect?
Limited access to capital	Limits	Limits	Yes
Person to build consortium	Prevents	Limits	Yes
Appreciating cost of land for easements	Limits	Limits	No
Organizational capacity for watershed protection	Enables	Enables	Yes

Step 3: Select Strategies

Next, assign strategies for addressing hurdles. Because not all hurdles can be affected by the project, only those that can should be treated. The grant application asks for what you consider to be the most important hurdles that can be addressed through your project.

Note: this does not mean that those factors that cannot be addressed are not important or fall out of the plan – the plan must continue to acknowledge their influence in achieving the project goal.

Strategies are conceptual approaches for overcoming a hurdle. For example, a possible strategy for overcoming the inaccessibility of capital for conservation easements to protect watersheds is to link land trusts with grant programs or loan funds. Another example would be to adapt sources of capital not traditionally used for land conservation to suit your watershed needs. One or more strategies can be developed to overcome each hurdle.

Assess whether the necessary and sufficient set of strategies has been developed to overcome each hurdle before proceeding.

Step 4: Design activities to implement strategies

Each strategy requires a set of activities. Those activities should be enumerated, along with their resource allocation (e.g. budget, staffing), timing, and specific indicators that will allow tracking of their completion status. Upon execution of planned activities, an

outcome is expected for each strategy. That outcome should be defined with specificity and using quantitative metrics wherever possible and appropriate. See Figure 4 for an example.

Step 5: Identify potential sources of failure

For each hurdle, the chosen strategies to address it may have risks of failure. The purpose of this step is to generate an honest and transparent assessment of risks, rather than an argument that all risks are adequately managed. This is a reminder of risks to monitor and manage during project implementation. See Figure 4 for an example.

Step 6: Estimate hurdle rating

The outcomes accomplished for each strategy should all contribute to overcoming the hurdles to achieving your goal. In our example, by finding sources of credit for forestland owners and improving their creditworthiness, it should be possible to improve the status of the limiting factor of “access to finance.”

In theory, as the hurdle status improves, progress is made towards achieving the goal. Consider if the expected changes in hurdles (also keeping in mind those factors not addressed by the project) constitutes the necessary and sufficient set of improvements for achieving the goal. If not, the plan requires revision.

Figure 4: Example Partial Plan

Hurdle	Baseline Rating	Strategies to Overcome Hurdle	Activities for this Strategy	Potential Sources of Failure
<p>Limited access to capital to finance watershed protection</p>	<p>Prevents/Limits</p>	<p>1. Prepare cost/benefit analysis for watershed protection for investors.</p> <p>2. Engage retired utility CEO to present case for making capital available for watershed conservation.</p> <p>3. Talk with State Revolving Fund staff about financing opportunities.</p>	<p>1. Gather needed data and hire consultant to prepare analysis; 2. Prepare reports customized for water utilities, corporations, foundations, and other potential investors.</p> <p>1. Retired CEO has informal meetings with potential donors; 2. Proposals prepared for investors; 3. Arrange presentations.</p> <p>1. Identify key person with whom to meet; 2. Gather data on SRF use for watershed protection; 3. Investigate options for loan repayment</p>	<p>Data unavailable; too expensive to collect; cost/benefit analysis doesn't support watershed conservation</p> <p>No qualified person available; if person found, they are unable to convince potential investors about project's importance.</p> <p>State SRF has no history of financing watershed protection; no mechanism to repay loan identified.</p>

Evaluation

The information presented in the “Goal” section of the application will be helpful both for evaluating your application and, if your project is funded, for evaluating project progress. It will assist reviewers in answering the following questions:

- 1) Are goals clearly stated?
- 2) Are hurdles to achieving the goal completely identified and assessed?
- 3) Are the strategies necessary and sufficient to address the hurdles?
- 4) Do the activities constitute a reasonable effort to implement the strategies of the plan? Are they resourced adequately? Is there sufficient time to see them through? Were they completed?
- 5) Did the expected outcomes of each strategy occur?
- 6) Did the outcomes contribute to a change in the status of limiting factors?
- 7) Were the changes in limiting factors adequate to achieve the plan’s goal?

Evaluation can also cover a range of other themes, but is generally most useful if these fundamental questions can be answered first. A coherent and succinct plan is the foundation of good evaluation and a culture of accountability and continuous improvement for the organization.