

Characteristics of a Successful Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program

ORGANIZATIONAL

I. Mission

A. A successful group:

1. is guided by a clear written statement of purpose
2. sets measurable goals in line with its purpose
3. has an action plan to achieve the goals

B. Group demonstrates a commitment to the program.

Examples:

- a. group has a multiple year, realistic budget
- b. group has a 5 year strategic plan
- c. group has a history of ongoing activities and participation

C. Group's monitoring program relates to mission of the organization as a whole.

II. Community Support

A. Group is comprised of or has established cooperative partnerships with a broad base of river or lake interest, schools, organization, agencies, businesses, and individuals. Possible measure: list of cooperators and contributors.

B. Group has a good working relationship with local officials/ decision makers. They participate in the decision making process and/or act as consultants to the decision makers.

C. Group is visible in its community.

Examples:

- a. group exhibits results and recruitment information in town library
- b. group participates in civic functions

D. Community membership in the organization.

E. Percentage of funding for group is supplied by the community.

III. Funding

A. The Group has a broad base of funding support.

Examples:

- a. grants
- b. membership contributions
- c. in-kind services or donations of equipment, etc.

B. The group has a strategic fundraising plan.

IV. Leadership

A. Strong local leadership (the Asparkplug@ factor).

B. Strong group supporting the Asparkplug@ (the Aengine@ factor).

C. They have either paid staff or a designated volunteer program coordinator.

D. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities plus written documentation.

Examples:

- a. job descriptions
- b. program descriptions
- c. task outlines
- d. etc.

E. Recognition of and plan for turnover of leadership and volunteers.

F. Plan for board and staff development.

V. Volunteers

A. Group has committed volunteers (low turnover rates?) and is constantly working to recruit new talent and educate all involved.

B. Group effectively provides support for volunteers

Examples:

- a. recognition
- b. training
- c. opportunities for advancement

C. Group has deep volunteer pool available (more than enough to insure that volunteer tasks get accomplished).

VI. Data Use

A. Group identifies target users of their data.

B. Group uses data to further determine issues and direction of monitoring program.

Examples:

- a. comparison of results with MA/NH water quality standards

- b. locating point and non-point sources of pollution and bringing this information to the attention of the appropriate state agencies or local government

C. Group presents their data to targeted users and other interested parties.

VII. Achievement

A. The results the group produces are used by their target audiences which results in action.

B. Group does effective outreach to get the information they collect to a variety of interest groups.

Examples:

- a. Rotary or other civic clubs
- b. schools
- c. federal, state and local decision-makers
- d. general public (post in town halls or libraries)

C. Group is making strides toward meeting program goals.

Examples:

- a. trout restoration
- b. improved water quality
- c. increased ecological diversity
- d. increased recreational use

VIII. Community Outreach and Public Education

A. Group provides presentations, workshops, and displays aimed at public education.

B. Group cultivates and receives media coverage.

C. Group coordinates projects with other groups working on similar issues in their local area.

D. Group networks with area businesses, clubs, schools, community leaders, etc.

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TECHNICAL

I. Study Design

A. Program has a written study design.

B. Program has a discrete survey designed to answer each study question.

The study design:

a. is geared toward answering questions which address program goals

b. lists intended uses and users of monitoring information

c. establishes data quality objectives that match data quality needs of intended users

d. identifies indicators that the group has selected to address the study questions

e. program has established and documented locations, frequency and conditions for monitoring to meet study goals

f. lists data quality requirements for sampling and analysis of each indicator

g. describes sampling and analysis methods that meet data quality requirements for each indicator

C. Study design is appropriate to the group's financial and human means.

II. Quality Control

A. Program has QA/QC plan approved by data users with internal and external checks.

B0 Group has a proven training program for field and laboratory methods.

C0 All participants are adequately trained to perform assigned tasks.

D0 Participants go through certification process.

III. Data Management and Reporting

A0 Group has a reliable data management system including quality controls.

B0 Group involves regional and local resource people in data interpretation

C0 Reports are produced in a timely manner.

D0 Group's water quality reports are reviewed by data users and resource people.

E0 Groups use presentation or reporting techniques or methods appropriate to each of their intended user groups.

Examples:

a0 public testimony before town boards

b0 public presentation of results for monitors

c0 exhibits in public locations (e.g. libraries, town halls, store fronts)

d0 written reports given to biologists

e0 etc.

F0 The data produced by the group are actually used by target audience.

G0 Interpretation and data reports reflect issues and questions found in the study design.

H0 QA/QC data are reported and analyzed along with monitoring data.