



Four-year Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils Board of Directors

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Network of Oregon Watershed Councils Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Background and Context

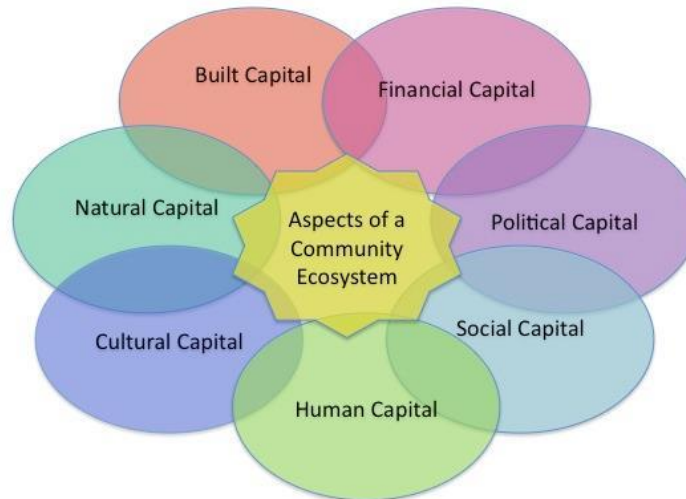
This four-year plan presents the goals and anticipated actions of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC) for 2018-2021. As an ‘outcome-focused’ plan, it outlines our philosophy and presents our best thinking about the link between our proposed actions and what we aim to achieve. This plan is the product of an engaging, year-long process of the Network of Oregon Watershed Council board, informed by multiple sources of input, including consultation with NOWC members and funders.

NOWC is a statewide non-profit organization formed by a visionary group of watershed council staff members for the purpose of convening, representing, and linking watershed councils to resources and to each other for learning and support. Together with our key partners- the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, and the Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network- we have significantly increased our ability to leverage resources and benefit watershed councils. NOWC receives partial funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), a state agency supported through lottery and federal funds, through a grant shared with our key partners.

The NOWC board discovered that the Community Capitals Framework that is used in the community capacity building field provides an excellent model for NOWC’s work and we adapted it for this strategic plan. Our theory is that if watershed councils can increase their stock in four types of **capital**, these factors will enable councils to have more resilient organizations and greater impact.

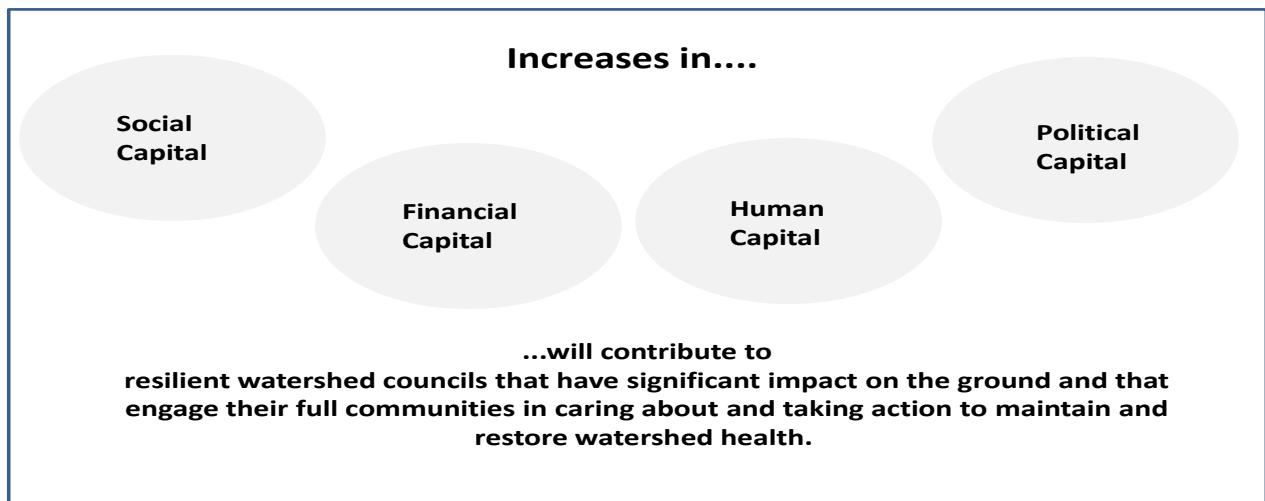
Our belief is that NOWC plays an important role in helping councils increase their stock in these four forms of capital. Thus, the Community Capitals Framework provides the “scaffolding” for our planning, assessing, and reporting on the difference that we make as we communicate with councils and stakeholders.

Community Capitals Framework



Source: Community Capitals Framework & Sustainable Communities,
Cornelia Butler Flora, Rural Studies Research Seminar, July 4, 2006, University of Guelph

Network of Oregon Watershed Council Theory of Change



NOWC's strengths

- Solid support from OWEB board and staff that recognize NOWC's critical role in the state
- A dedicated and growing board that thinks strategically and is committed for the long-haul
- A membership program that helps fund operations through annual council dues and an increasing number of councils joining each year
- Highly qualified, dedicated, collaborative and knowledgeable staff
- Filling an important niche of representing watershed councils at statewide level

NOWC's challenges

- The wide diversity of watershed councils makes it challenging to design programs that address all needs
- Lack of sufficient staffing makes it difficult to meet increasing demand for services from members
- The task of securing annual funding to support full-time staffing diverts time and energy away from providing services for councils
- Watershed councils that have small budgets find paying NOWC membership dues a challenge. Keeping membership dues low means that NOWC must seek financial support in other ways.

NOWC Mission, Vision and Whom We Serve

Mission

The Network supports the work of Oregon's watershed councils to enhance watershed health and benefit their local communities.

Vision

We envision increasingly strong, resilient watershed councils throughout Oregon, sustaining healthy land, water and economies. Oregon watershed councils are the pride of our local communities and a model for our country and the world. By focusing the Network's resources, we help councils be more effective in order to advance the organizations individually and to further watershed health collectively.

Helping Oregon watershed councils increase social, financial, human, and political capital will result in resilient watershed councils that have significant impact on the ground and engage their full communities in caring about and taking action to maintain and restore watershed health.

Who we serve

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils represents and serves staff and boards of all locally-recognized watershed councils in Oregon. NOWC provides additional benefits to staff and boards whose watershed councils provide annual financial support to the Network ("membership") as an incentive for that support. Each year of the strategic plan, the Network will expand its key target audience as the Network develops capacity, as below.

2018-19 key target audience: Watershed Council Coordinators/Executive Directors

2019-20 key target audiences: Watershed Council Coordinators/Executive Directors and staff

2020-21 key target audiences: Watershed Council Coordinators/Executive Directors, staff and board members (through board chairs)

NOWC Service Areas

We serve watershed Council Coordinators/Executive Directors, staff, and boards in four ways:

Represent. NOWC provides a collective voice for watershed councils through participation in statewide agency and funder meetings and serves as a liaison between decision makers and watershed councils.

Examples: Attend Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board meetings and present verbal reports about watershed council impact, concerns, testify at legislature, track legislation and report to councils. Educate decision makers about the role of watershed councils in Oregon, and craft policy agendas and advocate on behalf of watershed councils in Oregon.

Convene. NOWC delivers in-person and virtual events and other communication vehicles to enhance networking and information-sharing among watershed councils' staff and boards and external partners.

Examples: annual conference, annual meetings, regional meetings, local networking events, and coordinator list serv.

Build Capacity. NOWC provides in-person and virtual educational programs; creates, collects, and disseminates information for watershed councils' staff and boards to increase knowledge and skills and help councils meet and exceed OWEB merit criteria. NOWC collects and provides shared (pooled) resources and templates for councils to increase efficiency and save costs.

Examples: Email news blasts, training sessions, webinars, and guides. Collecting and posting templates on the NOWC website. Providing resources and information for new coordinators/Executive Directors. Researching and serving as a hub for shared resources such as legal resources, information technology, and insurance for councils. Connecting councils with sources of support and resources on request.

Increase the financial pie. NOWC researches and disseminates information about funding opportunities, links councils with funders, and serves as hub for funders in service to watershed councils resulting in councils that have more financial resources to conduct their work and grow their impact.

Examples: Informing watershed councils about opportunities for funding through newsletters, advocating for watershed councils with funders, soliciting aggregate opportunities.

Program Goals

Program goals refer to the results that NOWC aims to achieve through our work. They address the question, "What happens for watershed councils as a result of NOWC's work?" Using the "Community Capitals Framework," NOWC's four goal areas address how we help Oregon's watershed councils build their organizations, increase their stock of financial resources, increase their role and impact in Oregon, and enhance the skills and knowledge of their staff and boards to enable them to achieve their goals.

As a result of NOWC's work, Oregon's watershed councils will increase their stock of the following four forms of capital:

1) PROGRAM GOAL #1: BUILD STOCK OF HUMAN CAPITAL. As a result of NOWC's education and information services and programs, watershed councils will have staff and board members with increased knowledge and skills to implement organizational and programmatic best practices, resulting in high-functioning organizations and boards, effective projects, and a full range of local community members that are engaged in activities that support a healthy watershed. As a member of the Oregon Conservation Partnership, we collaborate with other statewide organizations to co-sponsor educational programs and leverage resources.

2) PROGRAM GOAL #2: BUILD STOCK OF FINANCIAL CAPITAL. As a result of NOWCs partnerships with funders and fundraising efforts, watershed councils will increase their sustainable and diverse financial resources to meet their goals and provide adequate reserves and competitive staff compensation that retain high quality and diverse staff.

3) PROGRAM GOAL #3: BUILD STOCK OF SOCIAL CAPITAL. As a result of NOWC's convening and communications efforts, watershed councils will have stronger networks and partnerships within and outside of the watershed council community that support their missions. The staff, board, and council members are well connected in their local communities, and they feel part of a larger watershed peer community that provides mentorship, brings resources, and increases efficiencies. Significant social capital results in high job satisfaction and high-quality and effective programs.

4) PROGRAM GOAL #4: BUILD STOCK OF POLITICAL CAPITAL. As a result of NOWC's engagement with state and federal decision makers, funders will increasingly support watershed council capacity and programs. Agency land managers will increasingly engage with watershed councils and decision makers will continue to consider watershed councils as key players in natural resource management in Oregon. Decision makers will continue to support voluntary conservation as a key tool for achieving conservation outcomes. Watershed councils will engage with natural resource decision makers at all levels.

Objectives, Measures, and Strategies for Program Goals

PROGRAM GOAL #1: HUMAN CAPITAL Watershed councils will have staff and board members with increased knowledge and skills to implement organizational and programmatic best practices, resulting in high-functioning organizations and boards, effective programs, and a full range of local community members that are engaged in activities that support a healthy watershed. Objectives:	Measures
1) Increased skills and knowledge in operations, organizational development, board development, fundraising, and supervision among Coordinators/Executive Directors and board members	# and % who gain new skills and who intend to apply new knowledge to their work
2) Increased technical skills and knowledge among technical staff to increase impact and efficiency	# and % who gain new skills and who intend to apply new knowledge to their work
3) Increased application of 'best board practices' as outlined in current board development literature	% of board presidents/chairs who perceive increases in use of best board practices
4) Watershed council boards and staffs increase their cultural competency (skills and knowledge in diversity, equity and inclusion- DEI)	% of board chairs/presidents and coordinators/Executive Directors who perceive increased cultural competency for their councils and take actions to address DEI issues
5) Increased number of watershed council staff who use templates provided by NOWC	# downloads and requests of templates # council staff reporting use of NOWC-provided templates and increased effectiveness

Strategies

- *Co-sponsor biennial CONNECT conference, including technical, administrative and leadership sessions, including diversity, equity and inclusion topics*
- *Organize biennial in-person networking and educational event for watershed Coordinators/Executive Directors and staff*

- *Continue monthly webinar series and create regular newsletter*
- *Disseminate information on relevant trainings from other organizations*
- *Disseminate tools/information on diversity, equity and inclusion*
- *Disseminate tools/guides on board and organizational best practices*
- *Pursue scholarships and financial support to enable increasing numbers of council board and staff to participate in organizational training.*

PROGRAM GOAL #2: FINANCIAL CAPITAL Watershed councils will have more sustainable, diverse, and resilient financial resources to meet their goals and to provide adequate reserves and staff compensation that retain high quality staff. Objectives:	Measures
1) Increased knowledge of fundraising concepts and approaches among council staff and board members. Build new relationships between NOWC and funders and partners to increase their knowledge of watershed councils in Oregon and increase the level of funding to watershed councils	# and % of participants who increase knowledge and intend to apply new knowledge Use of NOWC resources for fundraising activities Average % of watershed council income sourced from non-OWEB funds across councils # of new funding sources accessed Amount of non-OWEB funds obtained by watershed councils
2) Increased access to new funding sources including new sectors and partners among council staff and boards	# of councils that receive income through new sources Increase in overall council budgets
3) Increased cost savings through increased administrative and programmatic efficiencies achieved through collaboration	Dollars saved through collaboration

Strategies

- *Collect annual salaries and benefits data about councils and distribute to council boards.*
- *Conduct or partner to offer three or more educational offerings per year on fundraising topics for board and staff members*
- *Research and include new funding sources and sectors in newsletters*
- *Facilitate collaboration between councils and partners and among councils to gain efficiencies in project costs and staffing (e.g. SWCD, WC, NRCS, etc.)*
- *Research process for listing of watershed councils as recipients for agency donation programs (combined campaign)*

PROGRAM GOAL #3: SOCIAL CAPITAL	Measures
<p>Watershed councils will have stronger networks and partnerships that support their missions. The staff, board, and council members are increasingly well connected in their local communities, and they feel part of a larger watershed peer community that provides mentorship, brings resources, and increases efficiencies. Significant social capital results in high job satisfaction and high quality and effective programs.</p> <p>Objectives:</p>	
1) Increased number of watershed council staff who feel part of a peer watershed community	# council staff who indicate they feel more connected to the watershed council community than before
2) Increased number of watershed council staff who reach out to peers for help and idea sharing and who participate in events designed to build relationships among councils and external partners	# council staff (and % of new coordinator/staff) who report reaching out to or hearing from peers than before # of entries on coordinator list serv/year % of new coordinators with a mentor

	# of watershed council participants at conferences
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Strategies

- *Create mentoring relationships between experienced and newer council coordinators*
- *Board members who represent a region place quarterly check-in phone calls before each board meeting and send a brief report to member councils after each board meeting.*
- *Maintain and grow coordinator list serv and add board members and/or create board list serv*
- *Re-instate the annual dedicated service award*
- *Sponsor regional networking events*
- *Create member-only website*
- *Highlight projects and success stories of watershed councils on website*
- *Reach out to new Council Coordinators/Executive Directors within 60 days of hire*

PROGRAM GOAL #4: POLITICAL CAPITAL	Measures
<p>Funders will increasingly support watershed council capacity and programs. Agency land managers engage with watershed councils and consider them key players in natural resource management in Oregon. Decision makers will continue to support voluntary conservation as a key tool for achieving conservation outcomes. Watershed councils will increasingly engage with natural resource decision makers at all levels.</p> <p>Objectives:</p>	
1) Increased number of watershed council staff and board members who know their local elected officials on a first-name basis (county commissioners, state representatives, and municipal elected leaders)	# of councils that report increased number of elected officials they know on a first-name basis
2) Increased watershed council representation into land management decisions and processes regionally and statewide	# councils that report increased involvement and influence in regional and statewide decision processes

Strategies

- *NOWC continue to participate in state and federal processes that affect work of councils and report quarterly to councils*
- *Develop and disseminate government relations tool kit*
- *Hire communications contractor to provide assistance to councils in “telling their story”*
- *Track relevant legislation, provide testimony on relevant issues, including on state and federal budgets that affect watershed councils and report back to councils*

Organizational Goals

Organizational goals refer to the internal work that NOWC will conduct to ensure we have the capacity to achieve our program goals.

1) ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #1: BUSINESS MODEL. NOWC will develop a business model that sustains funding, maintains full time staffing, and builds a reserve to manage cash flow and allow for growth.

2) ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #2: BOARD. NOWC will have an increasingly high-functioning, self-governing, and diverse board that serves as a model and whose members also represent the diversity of the communities served by watershed councils. The board has active committees, and regularly reviews the strategic plan and policies and procedures and adjusts as needed. Board members build relationships that lead to strategic relationships to grow staff capacity and continue to position NOWC as a conservation leader.

3) ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #3: STAFFING. NOWC has adequate staffing to meet its program goals. NOWC will seek funding and innovative partnerships to enable the establishment of administrative and program support staff that frees up the Executive Director to increase NOWC’s value for councils and increase the impact of watershed councils in Oregon.

Objectives, Measures and Strategies for Organizational Goals

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #1: BUSINESS MODEL NOWC will develop a business model that sustains funding, maintains full time staffing over time and builds a reserve to manage cash flow and allow for growth. Objectives:	Measures
1) Continued participation as a key partner in the Oregon Conservation Partnership and maintained or increased grant funds from OWEB to support operations and salary. Continued role as fiscal sponsor of the Oregon Conservation Partnership grant to manage cash flow	Half of Executive Director salary and all office operations continue to be funded through the Oregon Conservation Partnership grant
2) Increased number of watershed councils that contribute membership dues	90% of councils that receive OWEB capacity grants pay annual NOWC dues by 2021
3) Increased annual income through contracts with watershed councils and partners, grants, and donations to build a reserve	Establishment of a three-month operational reserve by 2021

Strategies

- *Strengthen the contracted services program through promotion on website, newsletters, and through board members in their regions. Assess the fee structure to ensure optimal fee structure is in place.*
- *Establish a corporate sponsorship program and solicit donations from companies that share an interest in watershed protection and enhancement.*
- *Continue to strengthen Business Development board committee and more fully integrate this committee's work with membership and Outreach/engagement committees' activities and decisions*
- *Increase incentives for council membership contributions through increased member-only benefits*
- *Survey watershed Council Coordinators/Executive Directors and board presidents/chairs annually to assess satisfaction with NOWC services and inventory emerging needs. Make programming shifts as needed.*

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #2: BOARD NOWC will have an increasingly high-functioning, self-governing, and diverse board that serves as a model and whose members represent the diversity of the communities served by watershed councils. The board has active committees. It regularly reviews the strategic plan and policies and procedures and adjusts as needed. Board members build relationships that lead to strategic relationships to grow the staff capacity and that continue to position NOWC as a conservation leader. Objectives:	Measures
1) Increased interaction between NOWC board members and watershed council staff and boards in their region	90% of Coordinator/Executive Directors can name at least one of their regional NOWC representatives and reports at least two interactions with them about NOWC per year by 2020
2) Increased number and diversity of at-large members with skills to help grow the organization financially and programmatically	3 new at-large members by 2019, at least one of whom represents an underrepresented community member
3) Increased visibility of NOWC board as a model for watershed council boards across the state	# of downloads of NOWC Board documents (templates) from NOWC website
4) Adoption of high quality, fundamental policies and procedures underpinning a strong governance structure	# of priority policies adopted. All NOWC policies reviewed and updated as needed by 2020

Strategies

- *Conduct annual board self-assessment similar to watershed council self-assessment and implement strategies for improvement (such as training, guest presenters, etc.)*
- *Board members read newsletters of councils in their region and report on highlights at each board meeting*
- *Post updated NOWC board documents on NOWC website as templates*

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL #3: STAFFING NOWC has adequate staffing to meet its goals. We have funding and innovative partnerships to enable the establishment of administrative and program support staff positions that frees up the Executive Director to perform strategically to increase the NOWC's value for councils and increase the overall impact of watershed councils in Oregon. Objectives:	Measures
1) Increased access to administrative support	A half time or greater position or contract is filled by 2019
2) Increased program staff capacity by partnering with Americorps, and by creating student internship opportunities	An Americorps participant and a university student serves with NOWC by 2020
3) Continued building of NOWC's capacity by funding a half-time program assistant position	A half time or greater position or contract is filled by 2021

Strategies

- *Secure match funds and apply for and host an Americorps member*
- *Continue developing relationships with educational institutions to host student interns.*
- *Pursue foundation support to seed additional staff capacity while building membership and corporate donor programs.*