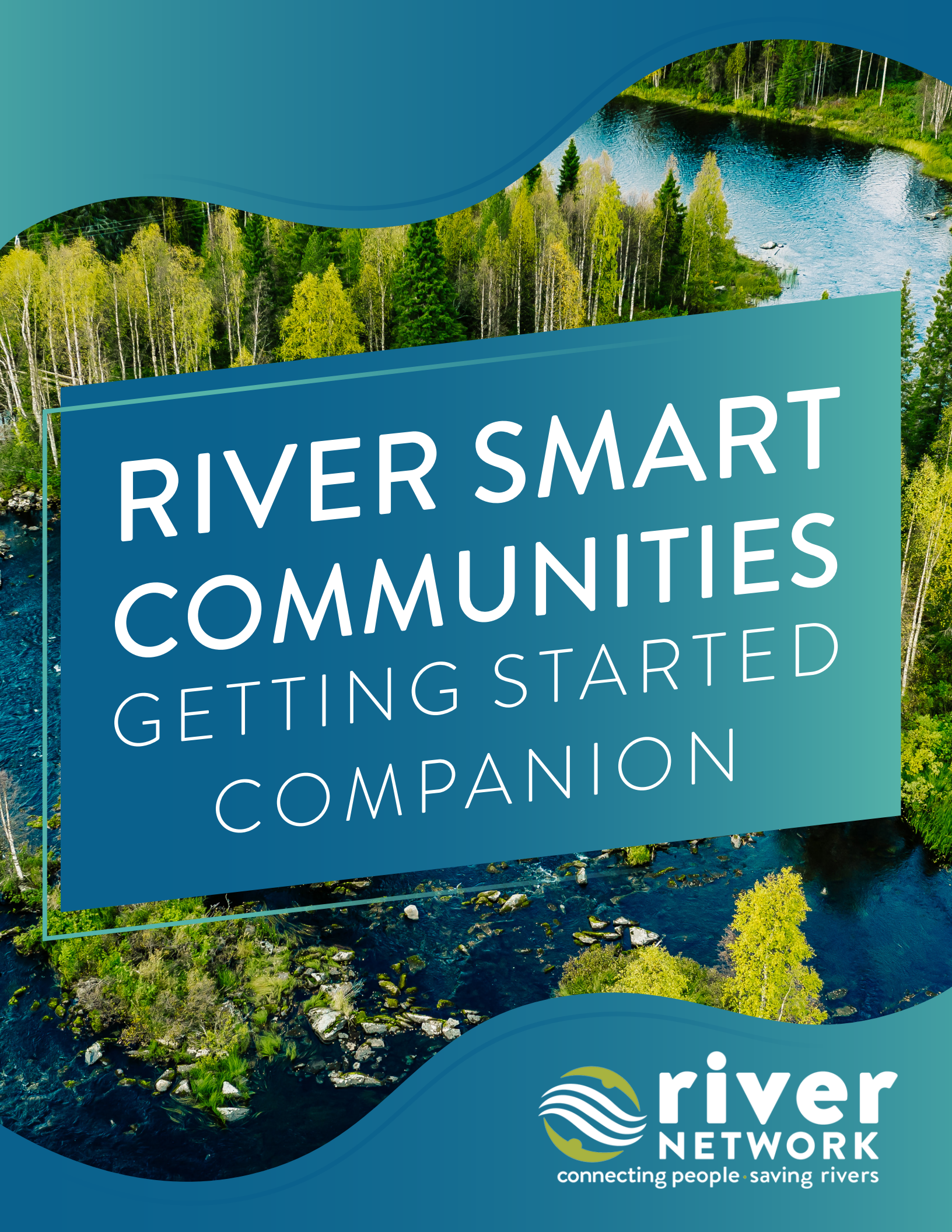
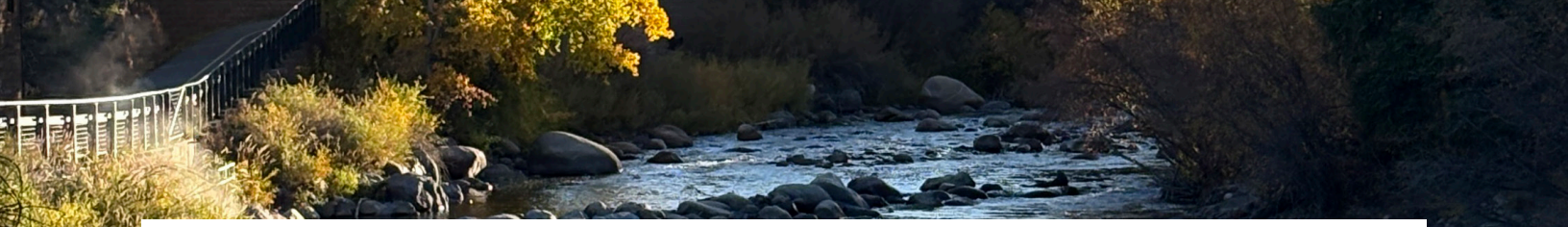


RIVER SMART COMMUNITIES

GETTING STARTED COMPANION

river NETWORK

connecting people · saving rivers



This Getting Started Companion will help your community design its own path to becoming a River Smart Community — starting wherever you are and with whatever you have. **The Companion describes practical approaches to help communities define their River Smart vision and design a roadmap to achieve that vision.**

HOW TO USE THIS COMPANION

Hopefully by now, you have contacted River Network, reviewed the River Smart Communities **Introduction**, and completed a **Readiness Quiz**. This Companion serves as an operation manual to the Guidebook, supporting the remainder of your River Smart Community journey, along with support from a facilitator.

The Companion is organized by the five River Smart principles (Figure 1). This document starts with the "Articulate a Vision" principle, but you can begin your approach wherever it makes the most sense for your community. The circle presentation of the principles illustrates the fact that an iterative approach to your River Smart Community journey works well and your community is likely to return to and refine principles over time.

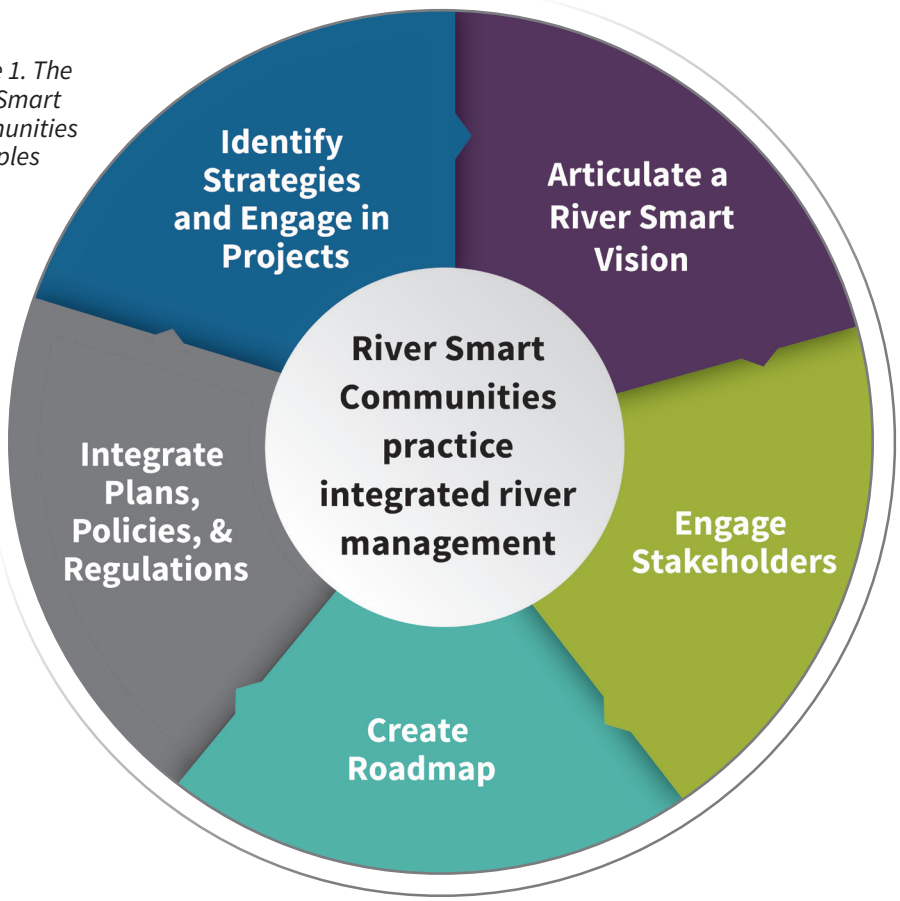


Figure 1. The River Smart Communities principles

Each section in this Companion includes the following information:

Summary of the Principle

and ideas for how to implement it, including:

- ***Checklists*** that summarize the main ideas or actions for practicing that principle. These checklists are meant to spur ideas of how your community could begin identifying the problem, but not every community needs to complete every item on each checklist. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.
- ***Guidebook Connections*** that point you to the sections in the Guidebook that offer further information or resources.

In practice boxes

provide examples of each principle in a community

Outputs

a summary of the direct products or tangible deliverables that should come from the principle.



Using the readiness quiz

The Readiness Quiz provided your community feedback on each of the five River Smart principles which allows you to focus your time on the areas of interest to your community and customize your own approach becoming River Smart. In general, follow this guidance when weighing how much time to focus on different principles.

Ready!	Skim the information. Your community may not need to focus much on the principle
On the way!	Review the principle and identify specifically what aspects you need to incorporate in your approach
Getting started!	Read the principle carefully and include as many aspects as possible in your approach

These icons identify opportunities and examples of how to use other River Smart Community resources to support your journey.



The **Readiness Quiz** will assess your community's strengths and growth areas.



The **Getting Started Companion** creates a template to practice integrated river management following the principles.



The **River Smart Communities Guidebook** offers technical assistance for practicing integrated river management, centered around land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health.



PRINCIPLE 1. ARTICULATE A VISION AND CREATE A PLANNING PROCESS

Vision statements guide a collective planning process and articulate community-driven characteristics for integrated management of a healthy river corridor. A common vision will strike a balance and provide clear and consistent guidance around river management across diverse interests, creating a collective understanding of river health.

This principle covers the foundation of implementing integrated river management. The table below cross-references the sections in this principle to the relevant Readiness Quiz statements to help direct you to the aspects of this principle you wish to work on (if a question was not relevant to your community, it may not have been included in your quiz).

Section	Related Readiness Quiz Statements
1-1 Identify the problem	Our community has a clear understanding of our river management concerns.
	Our community has a clear understanding of our information gaps.
	Our community has a clear understanding of our river health concerns.
1-2 Define a River Smart Community vision	Our community has a stakeholder-driven written vision for our river corridor that influences river-related decisions.
1-3 Build a team and create a planning process	Our community has a river management group or committee that meets regularly to advance our community's river vision.
	Our community has a collaborative, community-focused process that integrates planning, policies, and practices around river health.
1-4 Create a resource library	Our community has created an online resource library where people can access and compare data, find related resources, get project information, and connect with others.

1-1 IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

One approach to beginning a River Smart Community process is to **identify the specific issues your community wants to address**. To do this, bring together voices from land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health sectors to define common concerns. **Use the Guidebook** to map out the sectors that influence river management in your community. What are the concerns, challenges, and opportunities each sector has when it comes to the river? These conversations can help your community define the scope of the problem, provide motivation for action, and create buy-in. When key stakeholders see their own concerns reflected in a problem statement, they can see themselves as part of the solution. A common issue of concern brings people to the table.

During these conversations, consider putting issues into these buckets:

- **operational or managerial** problems such as, "our community works in silos when it comes to managing our river"
- **informational** gaps such as, "we do not have information about the quality of agricultural diversion structures along our river"
- **river health** concerns such as, "our river has an 'impaired water' designation"

Identifying your community's concerns will set the stage for the rest of your roadmap by placing boundaries around your community's work, therefore providing it focus and direction. Once you have identified concerns, tying them into your visioning process will ensure they remain a focus of your community's efforts. The vision can reflect how your community would like to solve the issues and articulate what desired future conditions will solve the problems.

While it is important to have these discussions at the start of your process, your community will likely continue to identify concerns throughout your River Smart Community journey. For example, the problems you identify during this process may inform what baselines your community conducts (see *3-2 Establish baselines*) and results from baseline assessments may help refine your problem statements.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR:
IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

This checklist summarizes the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could begin identifying the problem. Not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

The First 10 Things in the River Smart Communities Introduction are designed to get some of these items and conversations started. Your facilitator will help customize and prioritize the tasks on this list based on your quiz results and workshop plan.

- [ ] Gather key voices that represent diverse interests, especially from the land use, hazard mitigation, water resource, and river health sectors.

- [ ] Hold several listening sessions where stakeholders can voice their concerns (this may be best done by specific sectors first).

- [ ] Identify operational, management, and river health concerns. **Use the Guidebook** to help identify these concerns:

    - [ ] Map all the sectors that influence river management (land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health). Where do they overlap? Where are representatives from different sectors connecting on a regular basis? Where do resources build upon each other or point to a common vision?

    - [ ] Identify which benefits from Table 1.1 *Functions and Benefits of a Healthy, Resilient River* you would like to see more of in your community.

- [ ] Identify areas of common concern.

- [ ] Consider opportunities to refine or iterate on problem statements in the future.

- [ ] Consider data needs (see also *1-4 Create a resource library* and *3-2 Establish baselines* for potential crossovers). **Use the Guidebook** to help identify information gaps:

    - Guidebook Figure 6.1, depicting how River Smart Communities connect multiple sectors, can help you identify what resources your community might be missing (although not every community needs all the resources listed in that Figure).
    - Guidebook Table 1.1 *Functions and Benefits of a Healthy, Resilient River* lists river function indicators. Identify which of those indicators your community has data for and which you need to fill.

1-2 DEFINE A RIVER SMART COMMUNITY VISION

Crafting a community-led vision for your river corridor focuses your community's work on a common set of goals by:

- establishing community priorities,
- creating clarity,
- prioritizing resources,
- mitigating conflict, and
- directing work and providing consistency over time and across siloed work areas.

A River Smart Community vision statement describes your community's ideal state at a set time in the future. It blends desires for practicing integrated management and outcomes for river health, incorporating both the *how* and the *what* that will guide the community's work. It describes *how* your community hopes to manage the river collaboratively and *what* the state of the river corridor will be at that time.

To help your community accomplish its vision, articulate specific goals and activities that support your vision. These smaller steps will help you put your vision into practice. For additional guidance on the content and process of creating goals, see *3-3 Set goals*.

Ideally, vision statements are created in a facilitated process with multiple stakeholders. This helps to align competing interests and create buy-in and ownership (for more information, see *1-3 Build a team*, Section 2 *Engage Stakeholders*, and the process content in *3-2 Set goals*). However, there are multiple approaches your community can take to crafting a vision. The checklist below has some suggestions.

Example River Smart Community Vision Statement

Working collaboratively with local municipal, NGO, and agriculture partners to foster a thriving river corridor with natural flows, high water quality, diverse ecosystems, and dynamic sediment processes by 2035.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION

This checklist summarizes the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could begin identifying the problem, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

The First 10 Things in the River Smart Communities Introduction are designed to get some of these items and conversations started. Your facilitator will help customize and prioritize the tasks on this list based on your quiz results and workshop plan.

- [ ] Gather a core group of dedicated key stakeholders that represent varied interests in river health and river management.

- [ ] If you are not already working with an RN facilitator, you may consider hiring one to host a visioning workshop, especially if you have a larger community or one with divided voices on key topics. In the **Guidebook**, "The Solution: Integrated River Management" on page 9 and the benefits in Guidebook Table 1.1 may be helpful here.

- [ ] Ask stakeholders what success would look like as an approach to creating your vision.

- [ ] Collect key terms or ideas that capture what stakeholders envision the river will look like in a set future time period — 10 years is a common timeframe for visioning.

- [ ] Using the key ideas gathered from stakeholders, develop a statement that captures the collective vision. See the Yampa Case Study on page 112 of the **Guidebook** for an example.

- [ ] Offer a public comment period to allow the community to provide input on a draft version of the statement.

- [ ] Ask stakeholders to formally adopt the vision statement and include it as part of their ongoing work.

- [ ] Once you have finalized a vision statement, advertise it widely and keep it at the forefront of all river health work.

1-3 BUILD A TEAM AND CREATE A PLANNING PROCESS

River Smart Communities work is often led by a champion or a small group of dedicated individuals who oversee the planning, implementation, and direct work in the community. Create a formal River Smart Community advisory, organizing, or steering committee with these individuals. If possible, hire an independent coordinator to support the committee and carry out the day-to-day work. This core team maintains momentum, keeps efforts focused on the vision, and maintains institutional knowledge, helping ensure the longevity and legitimacy of the work.

The committee and coordinator can create structures to guide their work, including:

- defining the committee's purpose
- creating group standards, procedures, expectations, and rules for engagement in a charter or terms of agreement.
- defining leadership structure
- articulating outcomes
- identifying how the team will communicate, store, and share files
- discussing how the group will negotiate conflict and make decisions
- determining how to replace members who cycle off the committee or move on.

A team does not have to be large, but creating clear group guidelines will help ensure all the work does not rely on one or a few individuals and help sustain the committee's momentum. If possible, include representatives from these four sectors on your team: land use, hazard mitigation, water resources, and river health.

The team can also define a planning process to guide its work to specify how the community implements its work, both day-to-day and in bigger picture decisions. The planning process can articulate how the core team works, including how often they meet, when and where meetings are held, and who should be involved.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: BUILDING A TEAM AND CREATING A PLANNING PROCESS

This checklist summarizes the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could begin identifying the problem, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

The First 10 Things in the River Smart Communities Introduction are designed to get some of these items and conversations started. Your facilitator will help customize and prioritize the tasks on this list based on your quiz results and workshop plan.

- [ ] Identify key stakeholders who will be invited to be part of a core group. Think of roles, not just individuals who may change over time. The **Guidebook** can be helpful in identifying what sectors should be represented in your team.
- [ ] Create a formal leadership structure or committee.
- [ ] Set formal operating procedures for the committee.
- [ ] Hire a River Smart Communities coordinator or incorporate those responsibilities into the expectations of an existing role.
- [ ] Create group standards including clear roles and responsibilities and how decisions will be made.
- [ ] Articulate group outcomes and goals.
- [ ] Articulate group rules of engagement, such as how the group will negotiate conflict and make decisions.
- [ ] Establish a process for rotating and maintaining leadership if champions move on to other roles.
- [ ] Set a consistent meeting time and place for the committee.
- [ ] Offer stipends for participants or include participation as part of job responsibilities.
- [ ] Provide accommodations including language interpretation, transportation support, and childcare.

1-4 CREATE A RESOURCE LIBRARY

Part of creating a successful foundational structure for your work is **establishing a user-friendly information hub or resource library**. This library can include information about your River Smart Community efforts and resources related to river health. The library may include information about the team, opportunities for stakeholder engagement, policies and plans that impact river health, and relevant studies and documents about your river health. The purpose of a resource library is to streamline communication, increase efficiencies around creating or finding information, ensure that everyone is working from the same information, breakdown silos around river health, and reduce confusion. Creating and maintaining the library can be one of the responsibilities of the core team.

CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: CREATING A RESOURCE LIBRARY



This checklist summarizes the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could begin identifying the problem, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

The First 10 Things in the River Smart Communities Introduction are designed to get some of these items and conversations started. Your facilitator will help customize and prioritize the tasks on this list based on your quiz results and workshop plan.



- [ ] Conduct a resource audit to identify and create living links to existing resources that include elements integral to river health — use Figure 6.1 in the **Guidebook** as an organizing tool and to identify resource examples.
- [ ] Identify a librarian to collect, curate, and maintain the resource.
- [ ] Create a shareable online library. It can be anything from a Google sheet to a dedicated webpage.
- [ ] Create an online platform where people can search for and access library resources.
- [ ] Share the main river health indicator data in a user-friendly format.

IN PRACTICE

CREATING VISIONS FOR INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AND RIVER HEALTH
YAMPA RIVER VALLEY, CO

For the Yampa River Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP), the IWMP team created two distinct but related vision statements. The first was a vision that aligned the IWMP process and the second, the "River in Balance," defined a collaborative longer-term vision for river health.

The IWMP process vision was to "combine community input with science and engineering assessments to identify actions to protect existing and future water uses and support healthy river ecosystems in the face of growing populations, changing land uses, and climate uncertainty."

The "River in Balance" vision articulated what a resilient river meant to those in the Yampa. The four River in Balance characteristics were:

- Education, understanding, and collaboration regarding the river corridor and its water;
- The river corridor;
- Human use of the river corridor and its water; and
- Water in the river

The statements were a cornerstone of the IWMP process; every recommendation had to align with the vision to be considered for the group's shortlist of projects.

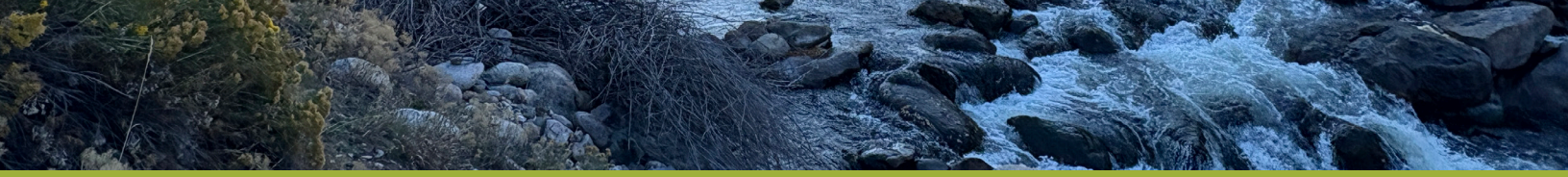
Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable. n.d. Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan. Available: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aIB9LR77eapab6dUjnc6GFxozyJ3iR_V/view?usp=sharing

OUTPUTS

This principle will help your community create:

- A stakeholder-driven **written vision** for your river corridor that influences river-related decisions.
- An **established committee** or group that meets regularly to shape and implement the principle in your community.
- An **online dashboard** where people can access and compare data, access a resource library, find out about projects, and find out how to participate.





PRINCIPLE 2. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Engaging and building a network of stakeholders is critical to creating a River Smart Community. Engage stakeholders thoughtfully, deliberately, and consistently. Ensuring multiple voices are included in developing a vision for the river will allow the community to balance priorities and discuss trade-offs, ultimately creating buy-in and ownership from all sectors. Creating a strong network of stakeholders improves partnership, opens new avenues for collaboration, builds trust, creates local support, and brings new perspectives and ideas to the discussion, elevating all voices. Stakeholders can help inform all aspects of integrating river management from crafting the vision statement to implementing projects, although different stakeholders may take on different levels of engagement at different points in the process. Developing a stakeholder engagement plan that defines target audiences and details how and when to engage them can maximize the benefits of stakeholder engagement.

This principle covers aspects of identifying and engaging stakeholders, outlined in the box below. Each section is cross-referenced to the relevant Readiness Quiz statements to help direct you to the aspects of this principle you wish to work on (if a question was not relevant to your community, it may not have been included in your Readiness Quiz).

Section	Related Readiness Quiz Statements
2-1 Identify stakeholders	Our community has identified sector and community stakeholders who may be affected by integrated river management and river health.
	Our community has taken steps to build trust including meaningfully engaging sector and community stakeholders affected by river health and management.
2-2 Create an engagement plan	Our community has a stakeholder engagement plan for integrated river management and/or river health.
	Our community offers opportunities for sector stakeholders to contribute to integrated discussions and decisions around river management.
	Our community offers opportunities for community stakeholders to contribute to integrated discussions and decisions around river management.
2-3 Track engagement	Our community tracks stakeholder engagement.

2-1 IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Including multiple voices when developing your vision will help your community balance priorities and discuss trade-offs, ultimately creating collaborative solutions. This collective approach may take more time but ultimately will help ensure the longevity and success of your efforts.

Take time to thoughtfully consider which voices should be included in the process. Consider representatives from the different sectors and geographies covered by your river, especially those that represent the land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health sectors. Consider those who have regulatory authority over the river and those who depend on it for their livelihoods. Especially consider individuals whose voices are often left out of conversations and decisions. Thoughtfully identifying stakeholders and creating a stakeholder engagement plan will help you structure your work in a way that works for as many people as possible and captures as many voices as possible.

Sector stakeholders

Sector stakeholders offer a particular perspective or area of knowledge. They are individuals who have certain areas of expertise important to your process. "Expertise" may include anything from job-related experts such as a hydrologist to someone with deep connection to the area and its people, especially indigenous voices. Many sector stakeholders may be part of your river planning team (see *1.2 Define a river smart community vision*), but there may also be others who participate less frequently or around limited topics. Many of these individuals participate as part of their professional capacity. Ideally these individuals live in the community, but smaller communities especially may have to look outside their community for certain areas of expertise. If possible, strive to include stakeholders from land use management, hazard mitigation, water resources management, and river health as frequently as possible. Sector stakeholders may also include peer communities who are also undergoing or have completed similar integrated river management efforts.

Sector stakeholders also include regulatory stakeholders, those who have the authority or regulatory responsibility for the river. In many cases, these individuals might be different for different stretches of your river, so consider federal, state, and local levels of government where necessary.



Community stakeholders

Community stakeholders live in the community and represent community interests. These individuals participate on their own, do not represent an organization, and may participate on a volunteer basis.

In many ways, including community voices is even more critical to success than sector stakeholders because they are the people who will most likely be impacted by river management. When you meaningfully include community stakeholders, you build trust which, in turn, secures the community's ownership and buy-in of your efforts, resulting in projects that have multiple benefits. Trust can also foster understanding in difficult situations.

Having a diversity of voices is necessary to become a River Smart Community but even more important is approaching community stakeholders with sensitivity to ask for their time or experience. In many cases, Indigenous communities and those of color may have been historically marginalized in your community. Some of these harms may be visible, such as having experienced a flood, while others may be invisible, such as asking for their input but not incorporating it into policies or speaking to communities in a way that dismisses their lived experiences. Take time to listen and learn about the context people bring. If you have not already built trust in a community, consider partnering with established trusted community groups such as non-profits or Registered Neighborhood Organizations who are already embedded in the community. As much as you are able, compensate community stakeholders for their time and expertise by offering food, child care, gift cards, or similar items. For more information, visit River Network's *Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Resources for Nonprofits.*

When identifying community stakeholders, consider what communities are or could be affected by river management and the types of voices you want represented in your River Smart Community conversations. This can help you target outreach and participation.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] Identify sector stakeholder groups or representatives. Consider those within and outside of city government whose work can affect the river corridor, including city council members, non-profits, the private sector, and registered neighborhood organizations. The **Guidebook** can help you identify stakeholders as it contains numerous examples of how stakeholder engagement informs water planning across each sector. Searching for the term "stakeholder" in the **Guidebook** illuminates several "In Practice" examples and other resources such as what groups of stakeholders might be included in different contexts.

- [ ] Ensure your sector stakeholder representatives include the land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health sectors, and include interests such as agriculture, recreation, and environmental. Refer to the **Guidebook** to help you identify these individuals for each sector.

- [ ] Take time to research and understand the historical context of marginalized communities and how that might affect their willingness or ability to participate. When community stakeholders do join your conversation, honor their time and trust by ensuring you include their needs and voices in your plan. Recognize and acknowledge community members in a way that feels meaningful to them.

- [ ] For community stakeholders, consider who is affected by river management. Even if you are not aware of specific groups or individuals, begin by identifying general types of groups or neighborhoods.

- [ ] Partner with trusted community organizations who will be able to represent communities or ensure you have a diverse set of voices that represent the various interests in your community, especially those that are not often represented in decisions.

2-2 CREATE AN ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Although it is important to gather input from a diversity of voices throughout the river management planning process, not all stakeholders need to participate to the same degree. Once you have identified stakeholders (see *2-1 Identify stakeholders*) **create a stakeholder engagement plan which will help you identify which stakeholders need to participate, to what degree, and at what stages of the process.** The engagement plan will help you organize your engagement efforts, streamline your resources, and build trust by respecting people's time.

To create a stakeholder engagement strategy, consider dividing your stakeholders into different degrees of involvement. Grouping stakeholders can help you understand the needs and desired type of engagement for each stakeholder group, from which you can build an effective engagement plan. Table 2.1 below presents an example of how you might group stakeholders. You may want to add additional columns, such as motivations (e.g., a desire to reduce flooding or a desire to improve their public image), current areas of interest or engagement (e.g., they already attend the forest health collaborative), or what their potential barriers to engage might be (e.g., day care, transportation, or food). For stakeholders whose participation is necessary, but who might not have available bandwidth to engage with your efforts (e.g., decision makers), consider what might motivate them to be involved or how can you help facilitate their participation. What are their benefits for collaborating in the process? How can you engage them within a structure they already work in to help lower their bar for participating?

TABLE 2.1. EXAMPLE OF HOW TO GROUP STAKEHOLDERS IN A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Type of engagement	Role	Examples	Frequency	Methods
Inform	Keep updated on progress	Department heads, mayors, or public	Regular, e.g., monthly or quarterly	Emails, social media, outreach events
Consult	Ask for input to broaden understanding or help inform decisions	Experts, community representatives, partner communities (i.e., other communities also doing integrated river management)	Seldom, infrequent	Surveys, informational interviews
Collaborate	Invite to share experiences or bring into the decision-making process	Planning team, community members, experts, or other partners	Frequent, ongoing	Regular meetings, facilitated workshops
Empower	Give decision-making authority or be a spokesperson for the work	Team leads, trusted community partners	Ongoing	Facilitated workshops, one-on-one meetings

Based on the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation

Engaging stakeholders thoughtfully, deliberately, and consistently will increase the quality of your engagement. Creating a strong network of stakeholders improves partnership, opens new avenues for collaboration, builds trust, creates local support, and brings new perspectives and ideas to the discussion, elevating all voices. A thoughtful stakeholder engagement process can be especially helpful to plan for and guide particularly difficult discussions or decisions. Taking the time to build relationships based on trust and mutual understanding will help diverse interests in your community come together to find solutions that work for everyone.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: CREATING AN ENGAGEMENT PLAN



This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] Group stakeholders by your desired type of engagement, for example:
    - Inform
    - Consult
    - Collaborate
    - Empower

- [ ] Identify the characteristics of each individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders, depending on your context, for example:
    - Their area of knowledge
    - How much time they are able to contribute

- [ ] Identify the detail of engagement you hope to have with each stakeholder or group, for example:
    - Early, high-level input and feedback
    - Update or inform
    - Broaden your understanding
    - Opportunities for regular input to help with planning
    - Occasional feedback for major decisions
    - Time-limited engagement to help inform specific projects

- [ ] Identify how frequently you intend to engage with each stakeholder or group.

- [ ] Identify how you intend to engage with each stakeholder or group, for example:
    - Survey
    - In-person workshop(s)
    - One-on-one meetings
    - Virtual meetings
    - Outreach events
    - Email
    - Social media

- [ ] Consider barriers to engagement and identify options to reduce them, for example:
    - Limited time
    - Trust
    - Politics
    - Language
    - Transportation
    - Childcare

2-3 TRACK ENGAGEMENT

As part of your stakeholder engagement process, **develop a system to track engagement such as which stakeholders you engage, the method of engagement, meeting agendas and main takeaways from the discussion, and when the engagement took place.** Your system may include a database to record and share information. Publish stakeholder engagement opportunities in the organization's website or on a public calendar before they occur so people can easily identify how to get involved. This information is important to the integrity of your efforts and can also be helpful when applying for grants or other funding opportunities.

Honor stakeholders by practicing prudent data security and not releasing names or contact information publicly, unless given permission by the stakeholders. In instances where stakeholders do not want you to publish their information publicly, track metadata such as the number of residents from a given zip code or neighborhood.

CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: TRACKING ENGAGEMENT

This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- ☐ Develop a system for tracking stakeholder engagement and identify who is responsible for updating it.
- ☐ Publish stakeholder engagement opportunities widely, in a timely manner, and in a central location.
- ☐ Publish high-level stakeholder engagement metrics in the resource library.



IN PRACTICE

GATHERING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
MIDDLE COLORADO WATERSHED COUNCIL, CO

As part of their IWMP process, the Middle Colorado Watershed Council conducted a recreational use survey to find out how people were using the river, what their experiences on the river were, and better understand what kind of experiences they wanted. The survey was developed by their consultants with input from their recreational stakeholder focus group which included representatives from local governments and private recreation companies. The survey was available for 6 months and received around 100 responses from community members and recreationalists. The survey results reiterated concerns raised by the stakeholder focus group, providing alignment and public buy-in for projects to address stakeholder and community concerns.

Colorado SMP. 2020. Using Recreation Surveys to Understand Community Preferences. Ask a Practitioner. Available: https://www.coloradosmp.org/2020/08/26/using-recreation-surveys-to-understand-community-preferences/
For more information on the Middle Colorado IWMP, visit: https://www.midcowatershed.org/iwmp/

OUTPUTS

When this principle is applied, your community will have:

- A solid understanding of your stakeholder network, and a plan for whom to engage when.
- A trusted network of people aligned around your river smart community vision.
- Strong partnerships, even among diverse interests.
- Newly opened avenues for collaboration.
- Local support and community trust.
- New perspectives and ideas to the discussion, elevating all voices.
- A consistent approach to track stakeholder engagement.





PRINCIPLE 3. CREATE A ROADMAP

Your community's river smart roadmap articulates how your community intends to achieve your vision, including gathering existing information from scientific studies, community plans, and best practices; conducting assessments of current conditions that establish baselines and fill in data gaps; and prioritizing recommended next steps. Creating a clear river smart community roadmap will create resource efficiencies to maximize their impact. Although a roadmap will take different forms for different communities, at its most basic it identifies your community's vision and provides details about how your community plans to accomplish that vision.

The sections in this principle detail how to create a roadmap, outlined in the box below. Each section is cross-referenced to the relevant Readiness Quiz statements to help direct you to the aspects of creating a roadmap you wish to work on (if a question was not relevant to your community, it may not have been included in your Readiness Quiz).



Section	Related Readiness Quiz Statements
3-1 Develop a process to create your roadmap	Our community has an established roadmap or plan that details how we will achieve our vision for integrated river management.
3-2 Establish baselines	Our community has assessed our current integrated river management practices.
	Our community has assessed our current river management resources and created a comprehensive inventory of those resources.
	Our community has identified metrics that measure our integrated river management practices.
	Our community has used the metrics to identify a baseline of integrated river management.
	Our community has established metrics that measure river health.
	Our community has used the metrics to identify a baseline of river health.
3-3 Set goals	Our community has set data-informed integrated management goals that align with our vision.
	Our community has set data-informed river health goals that align with our vision.
	Our community has identified priority areas or projects for our river corridor that align with our goals.
3-4 Monitor and evaluate outcomes	Our community has assessed our integrated river management metrics over time.
	Our community has assessed our river health metrics over time.

3-1 DEVELOP A PROCESS TO CREATE YOUR ROADMAP

Creating a roadmap will help you adopt integrated management efficiently and practice it effectively. **Before creating your roadmap, plan out your approach.** Creating your roadmap may be an outcome of a workshop designed and led by a facilitator using this Companion and attended by the core planning team (see *1-3 Build a team and create a planning process*). Alternatively, the core planning team may want to start by gathering existing information from sector-specific plans and then identifying a vision through stakeholder engagement (see the Yampa Case Study on pages 112-114 of the **Guidebook**). Whatever approach you decide to use to create your roadmap, tailor a process that matches your available resources and needs. The roadmap can then serve as a guide for the planning team's work moving forward.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: DEVELOPING A PROCESS TO CREATE YOUR ROADMAP



This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- ☐ Identify key voices and what role they should play – Involving more people requires more time and resources but can create more buy-in and ownership. Involving fewer people can streamline the process but can forego an opportunity to create collective ownership.
- ☐ Create a roadmap workplan – How will you create your roadmap? Does someone in your team have the skills to guide your process, or would you prefer to hire an outside facilitator? Would you like to create your map during one longer workshop or a series of shorter sessions?
- ☐ Establish a timeline – When will you complete the roadmap, and do you plan on updating it at regular intervals?
- ☐ Determine how you will make decisions – Who will get to provide input? Will votes need to be unanimous or majority rules? What is your agreed approach to addressing conflict?
- ☐ Provide as many details as possible – How will you identify and prioritize the activities you identify, perhaps according to their levels of effort and timelines? Once you plan your activities, consider how you will measure them and agree on a reporting system so your team can track progress and celebrate when you meet your goals.
- ☐ Create a stakeholder engagement plan as part of your roadmap process, both for the roadmap and for future stakeholder needs.

3-2 ESTABLISH BASELINES

Before setting a route to your destination, know where you are starting from. Establishing baselines will help your community clearly define and understand its current situation both for river health and practicing integrated management. **Baselines identify different quantitative and qualitative metrics that give you an understanding of current conditions from which you can measure progress over time.** Identify metrics that align with your goals so they can help you track your progress.

Integrated planning baseline

To establish a baseline for integrated planning, first identify if there are any existing networks or groups that address river health issues in your community, or if there are established groups on adjacent topics such as forest management.



Additionally, conduct a resource audit to identify which of your community's existing resources affect or may affect river management. Resources could include plans, policies, projects, partnerships within and outside of government, non-profits, or regional collaboratives. To help you conduct the audit, use the resources map from the **Guidebook** (see Guidebook Figure 6.1 for an overview) as a starting point. The **Guidebook** also provides examples of the types of plans, regulations, and policies that may exist in your community for each of the four sectors: land use management, hazard mitigation, water resource management, and river health (see Guidebook Table 1.2 for a high-level summary).

From your resource audit, identify if and where there is any overlap between the resources. Where are multiple sectors working together for the co-benefit of river health? Do the resources share language or cross-reference each other? Are there resources that contradict each other, or do any sectors have competing values? Highlight documents that identify projects and management strategies.

Once you have surveyed existing resources, consider what other information would help you understand how well you are integrating river management practices. What data gaps remain? What indicators do you want to track that you don't have information for? Are there any resources where it would be beneficial to have language about integrated river management, but it is missing? Are there sectors that could strengthen their consideration of their impact on river management? You can then create a master list of indicators and create a plan for how to obtain missing data.

Use this information to create your community's resource map modeled after Figure 6.1 in the **Guidebook**. You can also create a common database to identify and track integrated resources and publish the map and list in your resource library. This will also serve as a directory for future efforts. The results of your resource audit will help inform your work in *4-1 Integrate Plans, Policies, and Regulations*.

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

ASSOCIATED FUNCTION(S)	ROLE IN INTEGRATING RIVER MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
	Decisions around land use can significantly affect river corridors. Integrating practices and land use management provides communities an opportunity to incorporate their goals for healthy rivers with land use planning and regulations.	**Planning** Comprehensive plans Subject or area-specific plans (e.g., public health or special district) **Regulations** Land use regulations (e.g., zoning) Other regulations (e.g., codes, permits, overlays) **Incentives & funding** Development incentives Density bonuses Land acquisitions Conservation easements

HAZARD MITIGATION

ASSOCIATED FUNCTION(S)	ROLE IN INTEGRATING RIVER MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
	Integrating local hazard mitigation provides the opportunity to leverage a river's natural ability to reduce hazard impacts and also help minimize the damage a river may experience from natural hazards.	**Regulations** Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Colorado floodplain regulations **Planning** *Federal resources:* FEMA, Other federal agencies *Colorado resources*: Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Colorado Resiliency Office (CRO) **Actions** *Federal funding resources*: Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC), Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA), Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Colorado funding resources, Water Plan Grants, Healthy Rivers Fund

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ASSOCIATED FUNCTION(S)	ROLE IN INTEGRATING RIVER MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
	Aligning water resource management with broader community goals for river health ensures that people and ecosystems have access to clean and sufficient water supplies, and use it efficiently for municipal needs, agriculture, environmental flows, flood control, transportation, and recreation.	**Planning** Water supply plans Water efficiency plans Water infrastructure master plans Stormwater plans Integrated Water Management Plans OneWater **Infrastructure** *Supply*: Municipal, Agriculture *Stormwater*: Gray stormwater infrastructure, Green stormwater infrastructure

RIVER HEALTH

ASSOCIATED FUNCTION(S)	ROLE IN INTEGRATING RIVER MANAGEMENT	RESOURCES
	Aligning river health practices can help align stakeholders around a common vision and ensure proven stream health practices are implemented along a stretch of river, even if it crosses jurisdictional boundaries.	**Planning** Watershed management plans, Stream Management Plans, Wildfire Ready Action Plans, Habitat restoration plans, Environmental flow management plans, Water quality pollution control plans, Riparian buffer plans, River recreation plans **Planning** *Federal programs:* Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Healthy, Watersheds Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) *State programs*: Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), CWCB, Colorado's Strategic Plan for Climate-Smart Natural and Working Lands **Practices** Assessments, Watershed protection, River/stream restoration, Riparian and aquatic habitat restoration, Environmental flow restoration, Recreation improvements, Public education

Sector baselines

In addition to creating an integrated planning baseline, you may also want to compile existing data or collect new data to evaluate baselines within each sector identified in the **Guidebook** (i.e., land use management, hazard mitigation, water resources management, and river health). These baselines should be indicative of conditions that you want to maintain or improve. These data may already have been collected and published in existing resources. In that case, identifying where they live and who owns the process will be an important element to include. In other cases, you will need to conduct an original assessment.

Table 3.1 provides examples of sector-specific indicators you may want to compile, and the resources where that information may already exist. Each sector is likely to have several indicators. The **Guidebook** can help you identify additional sector-specific baselines. River health baseline metrics such as those collected through an ecological assessment may be particularly important to your integrated management efforts. Table 1.1 on pg. 8 of the Guidebook provides example indicators that can measure each of the four healthy river functions. Also see the *In Practice: Park County Wetland and Stream Inventory* on page 94 of the **Guidebook** for one example of a baseline stream health assessment.

TABLE 3.1. SECTOR-SPECIFIC INDICATOR EXAMPLES

Sector	Example of sector-specific baseline resource	Example of sector-specific indicator
Land use management	Land cover or use survey	Riparian land by use type, e.g., agriculture, industrial, housing, recreation
Hazard mitigation	Federal Insurance Rate Maps	Number and type of structures built in the regulatory floodplain
Water resources management	Water infrastructure survey	Quality of grey infrastructure; number and type of green infrastructure installations
River health	Ecological assessment	Number and type of animal and plant species in river channel and riparian areas

Where possible, identify indicators for which you already have data that are relevant to your vision. Depending on the context, consider how recent the indicator is and if it is easily replicable. Once you have surveyed existing resources, consider what other information would help you understand your community river management picture. What data gaps remain? What indicators do you want to track that you don't have information for? You can then create a master list of indicators and create a plan for how to obtain missing data.

As you gather indicator data, collect it in a common database and make it publicly available through the resource library. Include the procedure and methods for collecting each indicator so that it can be repeated in the same way in the future to monitor changes over time.

CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR:
ESTABLISHING BASELINES

This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] To establish an integrated planning baseline, review the key plans that affect river health to identify overlaps, omissions, or contradictions in river management approaches and goals.
- [ ] Identify indicators that will measure the strength of cooperation between different sectors.
- [ ] Create a list of potential indicators that align with your community goals and can help you measure the integration of your river management.
- [ ] Conduct audits of existing data on indicators from each of the four sectors that are relevant to your vision:
    - Land use management
    - Hazard mitigation
    - Water Resources Management
    - River Health
- [ ] Identify data gaps.
- [ ] Create a plan to obtain the missing data.
- [ ] Collect data, including methods, in a central database and publish it in the resource library.



3-3 SET GOALS

Once you understand where you are (*3-2 Establish baselines*) and where you want to go (*1-2 Define a community vision*), then you need to define how you will get there. Following a strategic planning process is a good approach to doing so and there are different approaches to strategic planning so you can create the approach that works best for your community. In general, you will want to break your vision into smaller pieces, such as:

- **Goals** – the intended broad focus areas that will accomplish your vision
- **Actions** – the specific, tangible strategies and projects that you will undertake to accomplish your goals. Accomplishing actions will result in your desired goals. The actions you include in your strategic planning define the work you carry out in *4-1 Integrate Plans, Policies, and Regulations* and *5-1 Identify Strategies and Engage in Projects*.

To brainstorm goals and actions, review the checklists and outputs within each principle of this Companion. The **Guidebook** can also provide ideas, for example Table 1.1. lists healthy river indicators that can translate to goals related to river health.

Visually, you can lay out your vision, goals, and actions in a structure like that in Figure 3.1. You could also consider creating additional, sector-specific tables.

Figure 3.1



Your goals and activities should be as in-depth or detailed as your community resources allow. Some communities may only have one goal and a few actions; others may have several. No matter how many you include in your roadmap, setting "SMART" goals and actions will strengthen your roadmap and help make your vision actionable. Setting SMART goals and action can help you achieve them, which is attractive to funders and provides enthusiasm and motivation for your efforts.

SMART goals are:

- **S**pecific – written in active and detailed language (see a list of details to include below).
- **M**easurable – include metrics that specify how you will know when you've achieved the desired output.
- **A**chievable – consider your available resources and capacity.
- **R**elevant – tie directly back to your vision.
- **T**ime bound – include a specific time when they will occur.

For specificity, include as many additional details as possible, especially for each action. Consider including details such as:

- Ownership – Who is responsible for achieving each action?
- Key partners and stakeholders – Who else needs to be involved?
- Links with other efforts and plans – What other efforts in your community overlap with or might impact your work? How can you partner or create streamlines?
- Timelines – How long will the activity take? Are there other time frame considerations such as the best time of year to do the work, or is there another activity that needs to be accomplished first?
- Level of effort and resources needed – How many people, dollars, time will the activity take?
- Ideas for funding – Do you have the resources available, or will you need to find them? If so, what are potential sources of funding? (See the **Guidebook** for ideas)

4-1 Integrate Plans, Policies, and Regulations and *5-1 Identify Strategies and Engage in Projects* present additional details and examples about establishing successful integrated river management actions.



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: SETTING GOALS



This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] Define SMART goals and actions that will meet your vision.

- [ ] Consider include details including:

    - Ownership
    - Key partners and stakeholders
    - Links to other efforts and plans
    - Timelines
    - Level of effort and resources needed
    - Ideas for funding

- [ ] Develop a timeline to plan out the sequencing of your activities.

- [ ] Identify how you will measure progress.

- [ ] Celebrate when you accomplish an activity!

- [ ] Design an approach to create your roadmap, considering:

    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Process
    - Timeline
    - Rules of engagement and decision making
    - Engaging stakeholders

3-4 MONITOR AND EVALUATE

As part of your roadmap, create a monitoring and evaluation plan for reevaluating the indicators you used to establish your baseline on a regular interval. While creating a baseline using the indicators you've identified establishes a static picture of your community's river health and integrated river management; repeating those indicators over time allows you to create a story about the progress being made. When you have multiple data points for your indicators, you can begin to chart your progress, identify what is working, and where there are areas for improvement. Your plan should detail how and when you intend to repeat measurements for the same baseline indicators and what change you hope to see. Some indicators that are easier to gather can be monitored more frequently, but you may only be able to repeat others on a longer timeframe.

Then check in on your indicators at the planned point in time and consider how to share results in a consistent and user-friendly way, including them in your resource library. Sharing your progress with stakeholders, decision makers, and the public narrates a story of your work and can help you raise support for it. Including reevaluations as part of your roadmap goals will also help ensure monitoring progress stays a priority.

CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: MONITORING AND EVALUATION



This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- ☐ Create a schedule to reevaluate indicators over time.
- ☐ To the extent possible, follow the same methods that were used to gather the baseline measurements for consistency.
- ☐ Make your results publicly available and easy to understand.

IN PRACTICE

ESTABLISHING BASELINES

UPPER SAN JUAN WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT PARTNERSHIP (WEP)

Shortly after the WEP formed in 2018, they conducted a review of existing information from which they could build on when conducting their technical needs assessment. The review cross references existing resources within the WEP watersheds with specific water quality and quantity data areas. The graphic below is the crosswalk of data needs and reports.

Report #	Report Title	Year	Page
1	Conservation Strategy for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	2006	3
2	Colorado's 2015 State Wildlife Action Plant	2015	3
3	Conservation Agreement & Strategy for Roundtail Chub, Bluehead and Flannelmouth Suckers	2006	3
4	East Fork of the San Juan Restoration	2019	3
5	Fire Risk to Water Supplies Assessment	2015	3
6	Lower Blanco River Restoration Project	2010	3
7	Navajo River In-Stream, Riparian & Wetland Improvement Project	2015	4
8	San Juan Planning for Biodiversity Model Project, Phase II	2006	4
9	San Juan River Historical Ecology Assessment	2015	4
10	San Juan River Workgroup Final Report	2011	5
11	Southwest Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan (BIP)	2015	5
12	State Water Supply Inventory (SWSI)	2010	6
13	Stollsteimer Creek Watershed Master Plan	2006	6
14	Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Archuleta County	2006	7
15	Town of Pagosa Springs San Juan River Improvement Project	2020	7
16	Water & Soil Resource Management Considerations	2011	7

Data Type & Report Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Agricultural Water Supply						X				X	X	X	X			
Biology/Ecology	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Conservation/Restoration	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Development								X		X	X	X	X			
Fire Risk					X					X						X
Geology/Geomorphology				X		X			X	X			X	X		
Hydrology						X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Protections/Regulations										X	X	X	X	X		
Modeling/Mapping									X				X	X		
Municipal Water Supply					X					X	X	X	X		X	X
Soils				X					X				X			X
Treatment Infrastructure				X						X			X	X		X
Vegetation							X	X	X	X			X	X		X
Water Rights						X				X	X	X	X	X		
Water Storage										X			X			X
Wildlife/Fish	X	X	X			X		X		X			X	X		
Workgroup Process										X						

Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership. 2019. Existing Information Review. April. Available: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k1DW1AsWD1iLhdgcCVOrafR8-Lf3lVqT/view

OUTPUTS

When this principle is applied, your community will have:

- A plan for how you will create your river smart community roadmap.
- A baseline understanding of the degree to which your river management is currently integrated.
- A baseline evaluation of sector-specific river health management, especially for land use management, hazard mitigation, water resources management, and river health.
- A roadmap for your community's work that includes goals, actions, and outcomes that align with your vision.
- An approach and timeline for monitoring your river health and integrated management progress.
- A clear and easily accessible presentation of your ongoing evaluation.



PRINCIPLE 4. INTEGRATE PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

INTEGRATE PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The many plans, policies, and regulations (hereafter referred to broadly as "plans") that can influence river health — such as comprehensive, climate or sustainability, water-related, and hazard mitigation plans — are typically developed in silos by different agencies or organizations. This can result in omissions, conflicts, and redundancies. For example, a transportation project that does not account for drainage into waterways, a flood attenuation measure in one jurisdiction that could have negative consequences for a downstream jurisdiction, or redundant stakeholder engagement efforts.



River Smart Communities strive to work across these silos. As such, one of your goals is to incorporate your proactive planning for holistic river corridor health into other plans. Doing so can identify and fill gaps in management, including spreading responsibility equally and clearly among multiple shareholders. Aligning plans can help address conflicts by bringing multiple stakeholders together, creating plans built off the same information, and creating consistent management guidelines. It can also create consistency and efficiencies by streamlining and consolidating river health background information. Finally, incorporating your community's river smart community vision throughout multiple plans aligns approaches and highlights potential partnerships and collaborations.

This section will help you find the most efficient route when integrating holistic river health elements in other plans, policies, and regulations as reflected in the following Readiness Quiz statements (if a question was not relevant to your community, it may not have been included in your Readiness Quiz).

Section	Related Readiness Quiz Statements
4-1 Integrate plans, policies, and regulations	Our community has evaluated the connections and crossovers between our existing river health and/or management resources.
	Our community has identified opportunities where we can leverage our resources across sectors to achieve our vision.
	Our community has identified areas where key partners and/or stakeholders can collaborate.

4-1 INTEGRATE PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The resource map you created as part of your integrated planning baseline (*Section 3-2 Establish baselines*) will help you understand the planning and regulatory landscape that affects your river. This principle will build on that work by identifying the specific opportunities to fill gaps in, align, and integrate those resources. The goals and actions you identified as part of your roadmap (*Section 3-3 Set goals*) may also have revealed some specific opportunities to integrate your river smart community vision vision into plans, policies, and regulations.

Through your engagement of stakeholders from the four sectors (Section 2 *Engage Stakeholders*), you created relationships and understanding of your river smart community vision. As you put this principle into practice, consider scheduling follow-up individual or small group sessions to dive into further details and identify specific areas of overlap. Identify shared goals around river health so that you can identify opportunities for partnership to solidify collaboration and share resources.

One approach to integrating plans is to identify their renewal cycles and work to include relevant aspects of your community's vision and roadmap in the updates. Also track opportunities to advocate for integrated management in new policies and regulations.

Building relationships through regular conversations is an intangible but critical component of this work and is especially central to this principle. Investing in people will help you see their perspective, establish mutual trust, and elevate potential collaboration opportunities. Strong relationships can also help you identify other opportunities to incorporate your river health vision throughout your community.

The heart of the **Guidebook** is a compilation of plans, policies, and regulations that can affect river health. If you are not familiar with a specific sector or type of plan, searching for it in the **Guidebook** will provide you with an introduction to it and how it intersects with river health. The In Practice examples offer peer learning opportunities to showcase how communities have incorporated aspects of integrated management in their plans, policies, and regulations. They are meant to inspire ideas and collaboration.

CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: INTEGRATING PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] Identify the factors that affect river management, considering:
    - Plans, policies, and regulations
    - Local, regional, state, and federal regulations or influences
    - Organizations and stakeholders that have the potential to influence river health
- [ ] Strengthen stakeholder relationships by holding ongoing listening sessions or opportunities for connection.
- [ ] Identify opportunities to incorporate your vision into plans, policies, and regulations such as during plan renewals.
- [ ] Identify common goals around which you can partner and align resources.

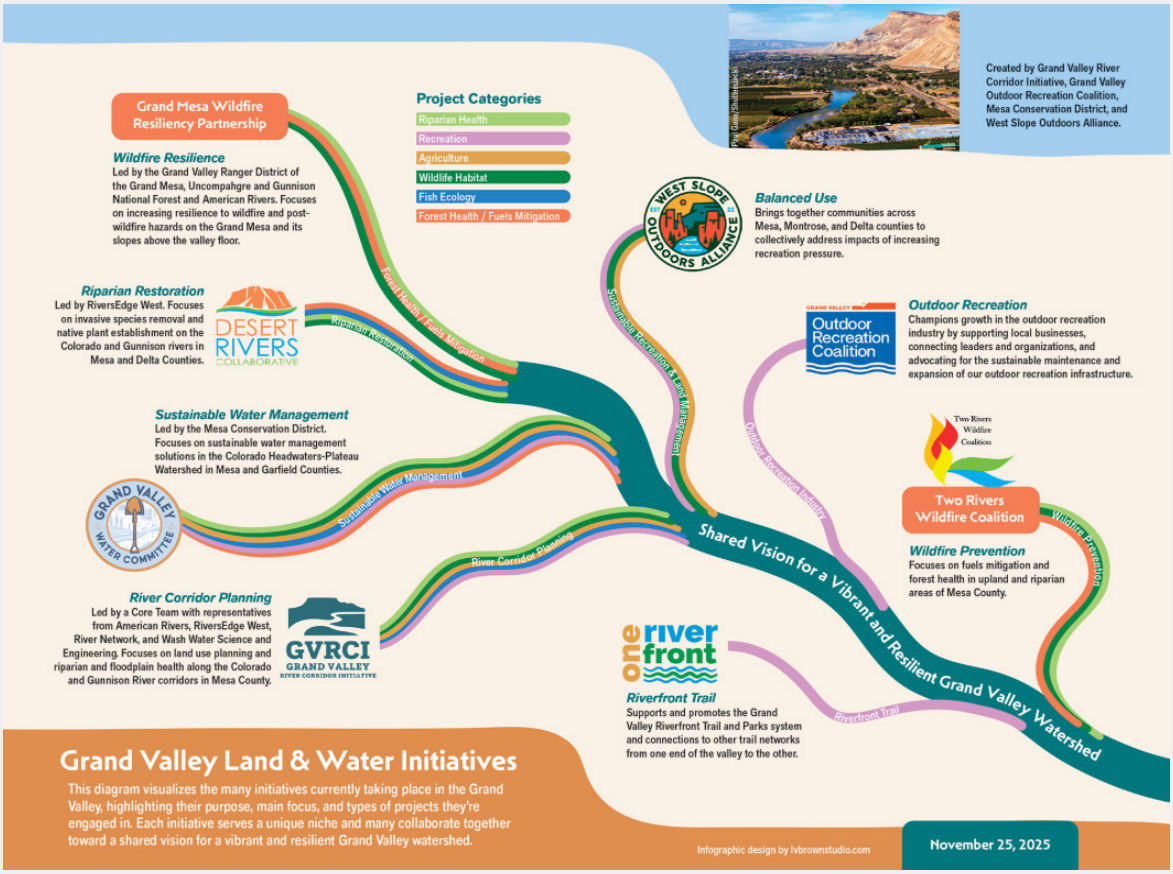


IN PRACTICE

INTEGRATING EFFORTS

GRAND VALLEY RIVER CORRIDOR INITIATIVE (GVRCI), CO

The Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative (GVRCI) focuses on creating a unified, valley-wide approach to stewarding a stretch of the Colorado River and its tributary, the Gunnison River. The GVRCI seeks to identify shared priorities among a variety of stakeholders and identify projects that project the corridor. There are several related initiatives in the Grand Valley, and GVRCI recognizes their role in supporting integrated planning among the efforts. This diagram, from the GVRCI webpage, maps out the different initiatives, their roles, and focus areas.



Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative Who We Are webpage, available: https://www.gvrci.com/who-we-are

OUTPUTS

When this principle is applied, your community will have:

- Integrated your vision statement throughout sector-specific plans, policies, and regulations.
- Embedded common goals across multiple sectors.
- Established strong relationships across agencies and organizations.
- Established a routine of regularly consulting with your planning committee when new plans, policies, or regulations begin so that your community's vision is included, and goals are aligned.



PRINCIPLE 5. IDENTIFY STRATEGIES AND ENGAGE IN PROJECTS

This principle translates the actions from the roadmap into tangible efforts (see *3-3 Set goals*). Although this principle is "last" in the framework wheel, implementing strategies and projects is an ongoing and iterative principle. This is the work that will result in tangible changes for your river corridor and move you closer to meeting the river health aspects of your vision.

What is a Strategy?	What is a Project?
Strategies are activities that occur at a smaller scale than a plan, policy, or regulation but also do not have the formal structure of a project. Strategies can include incentives or practices such as conservation easements or timed reservoir releases.	Projects are specific activities bound by a scope, budget, and timeline. They can include anything from river health assessments to riparian replanting to hard or grey flood control infrastructure to nature-based solutions.

Similar to the issues raised in *4-1 Integrate Plans, Policies, and Regulations*, strategies and projects are also frequently completed in isolation — led by one group without wide consultation — often because of limited resources and budgets. This fragmented approach to river management is inefficient and can result in unintentional consequences, like those that occur when plans are created in silos. Projects can duplicate work already done by other partners, including stakeholder engagement or gathering indicator data, or cause unintended negative consequences for another part of the river or for another partner.

Sector partners integrate river management by collaborating on strategies and projects that tie-in to the roadmap and align with your river smart community vision. Integrated projects address multiple needs, complement other efforts, elevate resources, open doors to new funding, create more buy-in and awareness, generate excitement and political leverage, and produce multiple benefits that sustain or advance holistic river management. These types of collaborative projects are often referred to as "no regrets" or "win-win." Because they draw from shared knowledge and resources, they save time and money, reduce redundancy, and build consistency.

This section is where your planning comes to fruition. The work you do under this principle will help you move along the route you planned in your roadmap to meet your vision and goals (see Section 3. *Create a Roadmap*), as illustrated in the following Readiness Quiz statements (if a question was not relevant to your community, it may not have been included in your Readiness Quiz).

Section	Related Readiness Quiz Statements
5-1 Identify strategies and engage in projects	Our community has created a priority list of future projects that align with our vision.
	Our community has identified potential funding opportunities for key projects.
	Our community has identified lead partners and stakeholders for key projects.
	Our community has identified opportunities to scale-up existing or previous successful projects.
	Our community has identified opportunities for sustained funding for projects.
	Our community has codified practices that protect the river corridor and integrated management.
	Our community has implemented best practice approaches to our projects.

5-1 IDENTIFY STRATEGIES AND ENGAGE IN PROJECTS

To implement strategies and projects that will support your river smart community, begin with the vision, goals, and actions from your roadmap. Also consider projects that your partners already have on their radar or are in the beginning stages that may overlap with other efforts or benefit from collaboration. The **Guidebook** also has multiple examples of collaborative projects such as:



- Parks or open space, emergency management, and planning agencies working together to establish setbacks that create open space for recreation, allow rivers room to return to their natural streamflow, and reduce flood risk. These types of spaces can also increase nearby property values (see Guidebook Section 2 *Land Use Management*).
- Communities and non-profits working with riparian landowners, especially agricultural producers, to establish conservation easements that allow landowners to maintain ownership of their land but set it aside for conservation, often in exchange for something, such as a zoning exemption, land exchange, or tax benefit (see Guidebook Section 2 *Land Use Management*).

Once you have identified strategies and projects, develop an implementation plan. For each strategy and project, identify specific implementation details such as ownership, timelines and resources, as discussed in *Section 3-3 Set goals*. Creating detailed strategies and project plans will provide clarity around shared projects. Because each strategy and project is part of the roadmap, everyone understands how it aligns with the river smart community vision and similar strategies and projects or those in the same geographic area can find opportunities to collaborate and share resources.

What distinguishes integrated strategies and projects is their emphasis on collaboration and partnership throughout all stages of the project, including the planning, design, and implementation. Although this approach may initially require more time, in the long run it offers communities the multiple benefits that integrating river management provides.

If you did not already do so when you created your roadmap, evaluate the list of strategies and projects you identified and prioritize them according to timelines, funding opportunities, and buy-in. Identifying "quick win" projects can help your efforts maintain momentum, gain traction, and raise awareness.

The **Guidebook** includes several examples of integrated strategies and projects. Although the **Guidebook** is divided by sectors, the projects listed within each sector provide opportunities for collaboration across sectors. The In Practice highlights throughout the **Guidebook** offer peer-to-peer learning through examples of communities that have implemented integrated management strategies and projects. The **Guidebook** also has information on funding resources (search on "funding" in the **Guidebook**.)



CHECKLIST OF IDEAS FOR: IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES AND ENGAGING IN PROJECTS

This checklist is meant to summarize the ideas covered in this section and spur ideas of how your community could address them, but not every community needs to complete every item, nor are these lists exhaustive. Use these ideas to create a checklist that works for your community.

- [ ] Review the **Guidebook** for additional project ideas.
- [ ] Align your strategies and projects with the goals from your roadmap.
- [ ] As you identify new projects that are not already part of your roadmap, ensure they align with the river smart community goals and are collectively agreed upon by the broader river smart communities team.
- [ ] Engage partners and stakeholders — in some cases, it may be necessary to conduct targeted stakeholder engagement beyond what you conducted when establishing your vision and creating your roadmap.
- [ ] Focus on shared priorities — like crafting your overall community vision, identify shared priorities and the co-benefits for the project and keep them at the center of your work.
- [ ] Articulate community benefits — clearly identify the benefits to the community which will help you raise visibility for your work and gain political leverage with key decision makers.
- [ ] Explore different or unique funding opportunities — opening the door to new partnerships can also open new funding opportunities that may not have been available to you without partnerships (see the **Guidebook** for specific funding ideas).
- [ ] Set up clear roles and responsibilities for project leads and stakeholders — especially when working with new partners to reduce confusion and ensure efficiencies.
- [ ] Identify existing projects that have the potential to be expanded or scaled-up.
- [ ] Look to existing community peers and similar programs for best practice examples.
- [ ] Look for opportunities to codify practices where possible.
- [ ] Prioritize projects and identify opportunities for “quick wins.”

IN PRACTICE

IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES

MANCOS WATERSHED STREAM MANAGEMENT PLAN (SMP)

The Mancos Watershed Group completed a community-driven SMP at the end of 2025 that identifies community values, existing conditions, management goals and objectives, and recommended actions. The SMP includes 75 actions to implement the plan, supporting the watershed's goals and objectives. The actions are grouped into projects, studies, and initiatives and categorized by goal. Each action has a summary sheet that includes:

- Project name
- Description
- Goals and objectives met
- Watershed region
- Private, public, or tribal
- Potential lead partner(s)
- Barriers to implementation
- Timeframe (project length)
- Feasibility considerations
- Estimated costs

An example of an action summary sheet

Mancos Watershed Group. 2025. Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan. Produced by the Mancos Conservation DistrictFor general information on the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan, visit the Mancos Conservation District's webpage: https://www.mancoscd.org/streammanagementplan

The complete list of the 75 actions and their summary sheets are available in Appendix A: Recommended Actions Direct FINAL and Appendix B: Recommended Actions Indirect FINAL

Project ID: **PROJECT CU2** Project Name: **Mancos Creek Farm Improvement Project**			
Description	Improve irrigation infrastructure at the Mancos Creek Farm on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation. Improving infrastructure will increase water use efficiency and availability for agricultural use as well as support the economy of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.		
Goals & Objectives Met	**Goal 2**: Preserve the unique identity of those living in the Mancos Watershed, ensuring agriculture and traditional and historical knowledge remain a central part of the community. **Objective C**: Explore and promote innovative land management strategies on Tribal lands that support livestock grazing and forage production, decrease invasive species, support culturally important riparian plants, and increase the efficiency of water use to benefit Tribal members as well as the ecosystems they are connected to. **Goal 1**: Support a thriving, adaptable agricultural system that supports local food systems, exports, and the ecosystem, and is valued by the community. **Objective A**: Explore and promote innovative land management strategies on agricultural lands that increase the amount of organic matter in the soils, decrease dust on snow, increase ground cover, and increase the efficiency of water use to benefit producers and the ecosystems they are connected to. **Goal 5**: Support water use efficiency and river health by improving the functionality of water management infrastructure. **Objective H**: Improve water management infrastructure, such as diversions, reservoirs, culverts and road crossings to benefit water users, aquatic organisms, and river health at a range of flows.		
Watershed Region	Lower	**Private, Public, or Tribal**	Tribal
Potential Partners	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farmers Conservation Alliance, Colorado State University		
Barriers to Implementation	- Technical & engineering support needed		
Timeframe (Project Length)	Short		
Feasibility Considerations	User Group Conflict: 2 Planning Difficulty: 2 Permitting Difficulty: 1 Data Availability: N/A	Linkage to Outside Efforts: 1 Ecological/Biological Conflict Potential: 1 Available Funding Sources: 2 Labor Acquisition Difficulty: 1	
Estimated Costs	Initial Costs: $50,000 - $100,000 Maintenance Costs: $5,000-$10,000 yearly		

OUTPUTS

When this principle is applied, your community will have:

- Multiple collaborative integrated river management strategies and projects that meet your community's vision, creating a strong network of aligned river health projects that result in benefits throughout the river corridor.
- Demonstrated how to implement collaborative projects successfully.
- A strong network of river management partners.

CONCLUSION

Use this Companion, along with the Readiness Quiz and **Guidebook**, to customize your own community's approach to developing a river smart community roadmap. Your roadmap will organize your community's effort around creating a holistic approach to river management by bringing stakeholders and the community together to understand where you are, where you want to go, and how to get there.

