



Building Community Capacity to Protect our Water Resources: A Civic Governance Approach

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2011

Impaired Water & Impaired Community





**What Role Do You See Yourself Playing
in Protecting Your Water Resources?**



Interstate Civic Governance Organizing Agency
A Citizen Approach (2013)



Civic Governance Standards

- ▶ All impacted by the problem are stakeholders and help define the problem in light of civic principles and the realities of their situation.
- ▶ All stakeholders are accountable for contributing resources (leadership/time, knowledge, constituencies & dollars) to solve the problem.
- ▶ All stakeholders are engaged in decision-making and policy-making that contributes to the common good.
- ▶ All stakeholders implement policies grounded in civic principles in the places where they have the authority to act.



Key Elements in Civic Governance

- ▶ Transparency
- ▶ Non-Partisan (But Politically Astute)
- ▶ Utilize One-on-One Conversations
- ▶ Determine Jurisdiction Where You Have Authority to Act
- ▶ Define Your Role as an Active Citizen
- ▶ Track Outcomes
- ▶ Develop a Civic Imagination



Evidence: Civic Governance Works!

- ▶ Dunn County Directional Plan-Adopted March 2016
- ▶ Lower Chippewa Invasive Partnership
- ▶ Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association
- ▶ 2016 Dunn County Land and Water Resources Plan Update
- ▶ EPA Approved Red Cedar River TMDL Implementation Plan-
Approved January 2016
- ▶ 2016 Dunn County Land and Water Resources Plan Update
- ▶ Red Cedar Assessment for Water Quality Improvement-
\$600,000 Grant



Dunn County Highest Priority-Environmental Policy

To include environmental impact in the decision making process. In particular, to develop an Environmental Policy including emphasis on water quantity and quality, to prevent contamination of groundwater and surface water, addressing both point and nonpoint sources, and to preserve public water provided by aquifer systems.

A New Outlook and Direction on Invasive Species

- ▶ Non-existent role in invasive species education, outreach and awareness in West Central Wisconsin before 2011
- ▶ Now LCIP is taking an active role and responsibility towards a community effort that continues to grow exponentially





Aligned Initiatives

- ▶ Red Cedar: Land, Water and People Conference, 2011-2017
- ▶ National Science Foundation: LAKES: REU Project at UW-Stout, 2014-2016



Impact of Civic Governance?

- ▶ Expands Community Capacity to Address Complex Problems
- ▶ Heightens Collaboration and Partnerships
- ▶ Assists Citizens to Understand Their Role
- ▶ Builds Trust
- ▶ Leverages Resources (Experience, Knowledge, Time, Money, etc)

Please take time to read and evaluate this document before the next exercise

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO PROTECT OUR WATER RESOURCES A CIVIC GOVERNANCE APPROACH Ron Verdon October 17, 2016

For years' citizens, organizations, communities and agencies have wrestled with how to protect our water resources. Ensuring a sustainable, healthy and abundant supply of water for families, farms, businesses, recreation and wildlife has been challenging. Even though considerable time has been directed to this effort, often we have failed to recognize the importance of building community capacity to leverage knowledge, resources, policy, time and governance that is necessary to have a lasting and positive impact on the quality and quantity of our water resources. There is significant evidence that working as an individual or as a singular organization/agency, we have failed to produce the outcomes necessary for a healthy future for our waters. Building community capacity requires a new mindset and new approach.

Building greater community capacity through civic governance offers an opportunity to address complex, challenging problems through an authentic citizen engagement process that promotes productive results for the common good. This civic governance approach depends on a non-partisan, citizen-centered, transparent environment that builds trusting relationships. This approach recognizes the important role citizens play in tackling community problems as they accept greater responsibilities to achieve purposeful outcomes. Citizen participation is guided by democratic practices, civic governance principles and standards. Essential to the success of this process is the recognition that each person is a citizen and a policy maker, no matter what agency, organization or position one holds. Civic Governance encourages stakeholders to suspend judgment, exercise civic imagination and cultivate their civic leadership while leveraging existing resources to find productive solutions to problems. This approach can help ensure long-term sustainable results for the common good.

Civic governance requires a humanistic approach that is respectful, accountable and active. This dynamic process builds broader stakeholder participation and responsibility. Through strategic listening and openness to diverse points of view, one learns to appreciate constructive tension that fosters progress. Organizers of civic governance activities encourage citizen participation within a framework of group alignment, agreement and accountability. Astute political awareness and engagement is key to the success of civic organizing. This approach, however, is not affiliated with any political party. This process recognizes the need to negotiate and compromise, while remaining accountable.

By working one-on-one with key stakeholders, citizens begin to gather and learn about other points of view in order to shape actions to address community problems and to get work done. Organizing purposeful and strategic group meetings that include an evaluation process can foster productive outcomes as it demonstrates a respect for people's time and the need to achieve common civic goals. Providing a written summary of outcomes from each meeting ensures participants have a chance to accurately reflect on meeting activities, their role in addressing the purpose and their responsibility in meeting the group's desired outcomes. This reporting-out process establishes an accurate record, reduces redundancy, inspires accountability and guides purposeful actions.

The Interstate Civic Governance Organizing Agency (ICGOA) has accumulated numerous examples of success where the civic governance process shows promise. By building trusting and strategic relationships, the ICGOA is witnessing greater civic commitment and greater individual leadership in addressing complex problems. Through reflection, experimentation, collaborative dialogue and practice, the ICGOA is progressively refining this approach. You will find the Civic Governance Policy Document* on the reverse side that outlines standards and principles being utilized to build a responsive civic governance process.

By practicing civic governance standards and principles, active citizens can expand their capacity to govern, to influence public policy and to productively address complex problems for the common good. As citizens build more trusting and collaborative relationships through civic governance, they are able to achieve a greater level of cooperation and influence within their jurisdiction(s). By utilizing a civic governance approach, greater community capacity is achievable to improve our water resources.

*Published by Civic Organizing, Inc., 2013

Civic Governance Policy Document*

Civic Governance Identity Statement- *Civic Governance is a new approach to policy making that produces the civic infrastructure needed to govern for the common good and sustain democracy as a just system of governance.*

The Purpose of the Civic Governance pilot is to develop the civic imagination, and organize the civic infrastructure needed to make a case for Civic Governance.

The Civic Governance Identity is grounded in the following Civic Principles:

Human Capacity (to govern for the common good)

- *Every individual is a policy maker and has the capacity to know what is good, to grow in that knowledge, to govern for the common good, and to be a co-producer of justice in the world. Civic Leaders are obligated to organize the infrastructure to achieve this outcome.*

Democracy (A system of governance that requires citizens to govern for the common good)

- *Rule by "the people" is the best system of human governance. All stakeholders organize a civic infrastructure to govern for the common good and produce justice in the tension between individual and diverse interests.*

Active Citizenship (Civic Leadership) (Role that obligates all stakeholders to govern for the common good)

- *An active citizen is a governing member. In a democracy, citizens are obligated to govern for the good of the whole. In return for their contributions, citizens share in the rewards of a just society. Civic Leaders are obligated to organize the infrastructure needed for individuals to be active citizens in institutions of family, faith, community, work, learning and governance.*

Political Competence (mindset and skill needed to carry out obligation of active citizenship)

- *Politics is the "work of the citizen". All citizens are responsible to develop the political competence to define problems, produce solutions, and establish policies in light of civic principles and standards while achieving their particular goals. This mindset and the civic skills needed to carry out the role of active citizenship is dependent upon civic leaders who organize the capacity for key stakeholders in their jurisdiction to carry out the obligation of active citizenship.*

Institutional Efficacy (Societal structure needed to sustain democracy and develop active citizenship)

- *In a democracy, institutions of family, faith, work, community, learning, and governance sustain the democratic values of our society and ensure the capacity to govern for the common good. Civic leaders and active citizens know they are obligated to produce the civic institutions and infrastructure necessary to sustain democracy as a just system of governance.*

Civic Standards guide all decision-making

- All those impacted by the problem are stakeholders and help define the problem in light of civic principles and the realities of their situation.
- All stakeholders are accountable for contributing resources (leadership/time, knowledge, constituencies & dollars) to solve the problem.
- All stakeholders are engaged in decision-making and policy-making that contributes to the common good.
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Civic Governance: A Process to Expand Community Capacity

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