Tool 9: Managing Roles and Responsibilities within a WSI

Identifying the right people for the right roles within a WSI enhances project efficiency and enables trust-based relationships among participants. Effectively managing roles also helps to avoid failures that could lead to inappropriate practice by individual participants, thus protecting the WSI from integrity risks. For example, a company with a keen interest in securing its own water supply vis-à-vis a WSI will likely not be a credible "neutral party." In addition to aligning participants' roles with their capabilities, effective delegation of roles ensures that all participants play a meaningful role and that one participant does not unduly dominate the development and implementation of the WSI.

Effective WSIs typically require fulfillment of a broad array of functions to achieve success. At the same time, **WSI participants** bring with them a wide array of expertise and resources, as well as areas in which they have limited experience and capability. As such, well-defined roles and responsibilities among **WSI participants** that build on participants' core competencies or are reflective of their main interests are critical to project success. Though some organizations may initially join a WSI without a clear understanding of their role in it, arrangement should be temporary and the WSI should look to clearly delineate responsibilities expectations for all participants.

Tool	A list of roles that typically offer value to WSIs.
Related Key Activity	Assign appropriate roles and responsibilities.
Questions Addressed	What kinds of roles does the WSI need to have, and who might be best placed to fulfill those roles?
Purpose	Ensuring the right people are performing the correct roles in a WSI will ensure that the WSI is not set up for failure or, more importantly, that a person or organization isn't given a role that might lead to conflicts of interests or illicit practice: ✓ Identify the right people for the right roles. ✓ Ensure all key responsibilities are assigned. ✓ Avoid failure of key functions. ✓ Ensure all participants have a role and there are no "free riders" who can damage the reputation of the WSI.
Possible Users	WSI participants.
Level of Effort	Preparatory work to assess interest and abilities should be completed during earlier phases (via a due diligence investigation, for example), so the actual assignment of responsibilities should be a simple and straightforward task.
WSI Phase	2: Formalization.

Partnerships do not deliver as fast as they should due to lack of public sector capacity, which has been the reason for the partnership in the first place. It still affects running a partnership. [Private Sector]

Corporations have generally no understanding of IWRM, the context, where it came from, the critique; many of them are ignorant of the whole technical and management complexity. There is a risk of reinventing wheels. [Civil Society]

(From Field Testimony)

[Guidance for implementation](#)

Step	Content
Step 1: Identify Key Functions and Responsibilities	• Identify priority responsibilities; the responsibilities are clustered around potential roles. • Table 9 provides examples of responsibilities and specifies characteristics that are typically required to fulfill them.
Step 2: Assign Roles among Existing WSI Participants	• WSI participants collaboratively assess their capabilities to establish how each participant can provide value while minimizing risks. • Previously conducted stakeholder mapping and due diligence investigation may provide additional information to support this process of assigning responsibilities to participants and establishing their roles.
Step 3: Identify and Reconcile Unfilled Roles	• If there are no suitable candidates to cover a key responsibility, three options exist to fill this gap: • Develop capacities within the group of **WSI participants**. • Seek new participants with capability and experience to fulfil this function(s). • Bring in external support (e.g., consultants).
Step 4: Continually Re-Assess and Adjust Roles and Responsibilities	• Revisit roles and responsibilities throughout the WSI's life cycle. • Reassessment reminds participants who is responsible for what and enables the team to make adjustments and clarifications to ensure key roles are fulfilled effectively. • At the same time roles can be assigned to new **WSI participants**.

Table 1: Examples of Roles and Responsibilities within a WSI

Role	Responsibilities	Key Characteristics	Questions to Ask
INITIATOR	• Attract attention to the need for collective action • Formulate initial objectives • Act as a catalyst to problem solving • Provide resources to jump-start the process	• Keenly aware of basin dynamics and challenges • Self-starting; action-oriented	• Does this individual or organization have knowledge of local basin issues (challenges and opportunities)? • Does this individual or organization have the resources and vision for action?
CONVENER	• Act as the lead party responsible for deciding to undertake WSI coordination	• Familiarity with key basin actors	• Does this individual or organization have the trust of local actors?

		• Credibility among diverse array of actors	
PROJECT MANAGER and/or COORDINATOR	• Provide primary day-to-day logistic and managerial support • Monitor partnership development and progress in achieving WSI goals	• Strong project management skills • Able to devote significant time on a daily basis • Knowledge of relevant languages	• Does this individual or organization have the resources and capacity to manage? • Is this individual or organization willing to continuously oversee the WSI?
NEUTRAL PARTY or FACILITATOR	• Facilitate discussions and relationships among interested parties • Ensure oversight and monitor compliance with agreements	• Strong facilitation skills • Has trust of all WSI participants and stakeholders • No **vested interest** that could bias the initiative	• Does this individual or organization have the trust of participants? • Does this individual or organization have any vested interest?
WSI SPOKESPERSON	• Identify effective communication channels • Develop a communication plan to reach external stakeholders • Ensure relevant information is available for all participants and external stakeholders	• Strong communication skills • Has trust of all participants	• Can this individual or organization effectively communicate the objectives and ongoings of the WSI?
EXPERTS	• Provide the technical and analytical capabilities required	• Strong research and analytical skills	• What kinds of external expertise are needed for the WSI (hydrology, political economy, etc.)?
FUNDERS or DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS	• Responsible for ensuring financial resources for the initiative • Might provide financial resources needed to support convening and implementation	• Access to significant financial resources • Able to find necessary funds for the WSI • Commitment to **public interest**	• What is the funding model for the WSI? Who is able to either provide the funds or has the ability to attract necessary funding? • Do these people or organizations have the public interest in mind? • Are they willing to provide funding without steering the WSI only in their own interest?

WSI AMBASSADOR	• Identify anchorage points for the WSI • Feed information into existing institutions • Facilitate uptake of the initiative after its completion	• Familiarity with key actors and political dynamics • Strong communication skills	• When is a WSI ambassador needed to engage and/or embed the initiative with local institutions? • Does this individual or organization have the required political leverage to effectively anchor the WSI outcomes in the sector?
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICERS	• Outreach to **affected stakeholders**, especially those who are typically under-represented	• Familiarity with key basin actors • Credibility among local communities • Ability to communicate with local communities	• Do these individuals have the knowledge, trust, and skills to engage with local community members?
PARTICIPANTS/IMPLEMENTERS	• Assist project manager(s) in operations	• Technical capacity to implement vision	• NA
WATCHDOG	• Oversee the WSI operations or implementation of specific agreements • Ensure that the **public interest** is guarded	• Degree of independence from the WSI • Strong understanding of local context and SWM	• Does this individual or organization have the resources and skills to provide independent oversight? • Does the WSI provide the avenues for the watchdog to perform the assigned functions?

Source: CEO Water Mandate, *Guide to Water-Related Collective Action* (September 2013), http://ceowatermandate.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/guide-to-water-related-ca-web-091213.pdf.

Further reading and references:

- Building Partnerships for Development (BPD). July 2011. "Power-Balanced Partnerships and Shared Incentives." Improving Partnership Governance in Water Services. (London: BPD Water and Sanitation). www.bpdws.org.

- CEO Water Mandate. September 2013. *Guide to Water-Related Collective Action*. http://ceowatermandate.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/guide-to-water-related-ca-web-091213.pdf.