



## Water Program PLANNING Checklist

**T**his detailed checklist offers suggestions and questions to help you determine what your program goals are and how to meet them. It represents the best advice of over 40 outstanding youth water program managers from programs throughout the country. It has been reviewed at a national symposium of water education program managers<sup>7</sup> and tested at specific program sites. Checklist sections include:

1. Program planning overview/review
2. Assessing community water education needs
3. Identifying networks and partners
4. Reviewing organizational support
5. Determining goals and objectives
6. Designing your program
7. Choosing a program delivery strategy
8. Evaluating your program



DONE    PLAN TO    NO PLAN  
       

### Who should use this checklist?

One of the first checklist users is likely to be a natural resource professional, community leader, education professional, or other person who wants to go beyond individual activities to develop a coherent, successful, continuing, community-based youth water education program.

It may be used again by a planning group. This group could include representatives of community groups and natural resource agencies, college or university specialists, public and private schools, people who will work directly with the youth, and the young people who will participate.

### How to use the checklist

Use the checklist as a worksheet. Each checklist section begins by identifying the key success elements it addresses (see page 6). There is a brief explanation followed by one or two general questions, then the detailed planning questions. It concludes with a summary question.

Skip, emphasize, or combine questions as appropriate for your specific program. Information in the Resources section of this book and in other guidebooks in this series may also be helpful. You may use some sections more than once as you refine your ideas or involve partners.

Start with each section's general questions, then look at the more detailed planning questions which follow. Make notes as needed and indicate for yourself in the margin whether you have already  DONE this part of the plan, whether you  PLAN TO do it or whether you have  NO PLAN to do it at this time. Then summarize what you learned in the summary question. You can use this information to enhance your responses to the questions in Program Planning, section 1.

7. See endnote 6 on page 10.



## 1 Program planning overview/review

Before you turn to the other sections in this checklist, take a moment to consider your program as a whole. Use the questions listed here. This will help you summarize your ideas before you begin. Make copies of this planning section. Jot down your preliminary thoughts on the copies and note which items (if any) you have already completed.

After you and your partners have worked through the other checklist sections, return to this page. Use it to help you summarize your work and reflect on each program planning component. Highlight any ideas that have changed.

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*1. What are your program goals? Keep in mind the primary community water education need, audience qualities, and other needs to be met through this program. Planning Checklist sections 2, 3, and 5 address this question.*

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*2. What groups in your community are already meeting some or all of these goals? How will that affect your program planning? See Planning Checklist sections 3 and 4.*

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*3. Where is this program going to “happen”? Can you plug into something that already exists? See Planning Checklist sections 3 and 4.*

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*4. What will the youth actually do? Think about program content, design and specific daily activities. Planning Checklist sections 5, 6 and 7 deal with this.*

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5. *What resources do you need to conduct the program? Planning sections 2-7 will contribute helpful details.*

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6. *How will the program be managed? Have you considered safety issues? How will you manage permissions and releases (insurance, health, emergency, parental permission)? Planning sections 4, 6 and 7 can help.*

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7. *How will you market the program? See sections 6 and 7.*

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8. *What are the evaluation plans and how will evaluations be used? See Planning section 8.*

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9. *What will you do after the program is over for future marketing, recognition and reflection? Section 8 can help.*

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10. *Visualize how the program will look, sound, and feel as it is occurring. How does your vision relate to your previous answers? Do you need to revise any previous thoughts?*



## 2 Assessing community water education needs

People experience and manage local water issues as part of their community. An effective water education program helps young people relate to and work on identified community or regional needs. It also helps them develop a sense of place and to feel responsible for stewardship of that place.

A needs assessment helps you understand your community well enough to organize your program around something that needs to be accomplished. It also helps you identify which young people might be interested in such a problem, what skills they need to work effectively on a project, and what will encourage them to join and stick with a program.

Success element  
addressed (see p. 6)

2

Community  
water issues

4

Youth needs

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*Why have you chosen to implement a community water education program at this time?*

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*What knowledge and skills will youth in your community need to enable them to help improve water quantity or quality?*

DONE    PLAN TO    NO PLAN  
       

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*What community or regional water education need have you identified?*

■ *How did you identify it?*

DONE    PLAN TO    NO PLAN  
       

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*What gap in local youths' education about water have you identified?*

■ *How do you know?*

DONE    PLAN TO    NO PLAN  
       

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*Who are the youth in your target audience? Identify them clearly as to:*

- Age
- Interests
- Educational needs/gaps
- Recreational/fun interests

DONE    PLAN TO    NO PLAN  
       

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*Which of the following methods of involving a community in identifying needs could work in your community or have been accomplished already and could be involved in your planning process?*

- Youth input (by survey, informal discussion, etc.)
- Citizen input (by survey, informal discussion, etc.)
- Public discussion of important local issues (reported by local news or brought to referendum)
- Advisory group input
- Grant or funding agency requirement(s)
- Educator or natural resource specialist(s) input
- School-identified water education needs

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*What did you learn from including community input into the needs assessment process?*

Go on to any other section of the Planning Checklist. Sections 3 and 5 are related to this one and together 2, 3, and 5 can help you expand or modify question 1 in Planning section 1.



Success element  
addressed (see p. 6)

6

Community  
partners

### 3 Identifying networks and partners

Many citizens and teachers, agencies and organizations in every community are already involved in youth water education. Program success depends on working effectively with them.

Partnerships with schools and individual teachers help ensure that your program works educationally for the ages and abilities of your target youth. Schools teach the biology, ecology, chemistry, math, political science, and local history youth need to properly investigate local water concerns and interpret results. They also teach the investigative skills (choosing questions, creating and interpreting graphs, analyzing and explaining results) which are critical to effective programs.

Partnerships with natural resource professionals help ensure your program is based on and teaches accurate environmental and water resource information. These professionals also know about and have access to community or natural settings where youth can investigate water resources or issues and practice their skills.

Partnerships with existing, stable, community-based agencies (see Planning Checklist section 4) give the program a home base and help give your program continuity and longevity. This helps lead to measurable long-term impacts on community water resources.

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*Who currently conducts some type of youth water education program in your area? Identify each teacher, school, organization or agency and list what resources each has that could be useful to your project.*