



## 6 Designing your program

Success elements addressed (see p. 6)

4

Youth needs

5

Youth as partners

Your program design helps answer the central water education question: How do we attract youth and keep them involved? Fortunately education about water offers an almost unique diversity of education opportunities. Water education can take place anywhere and never has to depend on talking or reading for transfer of information. If young people cannot be taken to water, water can be taken to them. These qualities make it easier to help youth feel connected to the program goals and activities.

Using design (and successful implementation), you can structure ways to meet your program goals. How you design the program will also help to ensure its quality and accessibility.

Specifically, this section helps you answer questions like: What will your program actually look like? How will water themes be included and who will decide? Should you organize a festival or start a water camp? Should you create a new program or incorporate your goals into an ongoing event? How will you connect to school programs? You can get ideas for design from the companion book *Educating Young People About Water: A Guide To Unique Program Strategies*.

You must also decide: How will the intended audience know about the program and how will they participate? How will you ensure program continuation in the future?

The answers to all these questions come from the results of your work on assessing community needs, working with partners, and connecting the program to a stable organization. They also come from the people who have been involved in helping set your program goals.

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*What do you want your program to look like? What information do you need to help you accomplish this?*

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*Which delivery opportunity or strategy will work best for water education in your community? (See also section 2, Assessing community water education needs and section 3: Identifying networks and partners.)*

- Campaign
- Day or residential camp
- Club, organization
- Community service learning
- Festival or fair
- Museum
- Nature or environmental education center
- School enrichment

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*What will you do to ensure a program of high quality?*

■ *Are the people who conduct the program involved in its design?*

■ *Are the people who evaluate the program involved in the program design?*

■ *Are the participants involved in its design?*

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*If this program is derived from a pre-existing program, has it been successfully adapted to your particular audience or needs?*

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*Does the program content and/or delivery target the learner and the learner's situation?*

■ *Location (rural/urban)*

■ *Income level*

■ *Social conditions*

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*When youth do the planned activities, will they be able to meet activity objectives and overall program goals?*

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*Before implementing the program, have you tried it with a subgroup or pilot group?*



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How will you ensure the program is stable?

■ Is this water program consistent and predictable?

■ Will youth be able to participate more than one year/season?

■ Does program design or content change each year, as appropriate to conditions?

■ Are there opportunities to involve community partners in the program such as:

Volunteer teachers/leaders

Oversight committee members

Funders

Program evaluators/ reviewers

Planners or contributors

Providers of in-kind services/  
special resources

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Can your target audience get to the program? (Access)

■ Is the program location convenient for targeted learners?

■ If not, can the program be brought to the learner?

■ Is the setting accessible for people with disabilities?

■ Are fees a limiting factor to potential participants?

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How will youth feel connected to program goals and activities?

■ What elements of local and of personal interest will be included?

■ Which activities offer opportunities for youth to have fun?

■ What will help youth feel they are learning something?

■ How will youth be involved as full and valuable partners?

■ How will you acknowledge youth contributions?

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Which of the following general recommendations derived from successful water programs will you choose to emphasize? Note how you will incorporate them.

- Water and its ecosystem are a central topic and feature
- A fun/recreation component
- Opportunities to physically interact with and/or manipulate water
- An interdisciplinary format around a water topic
- Relationship of water to many aspects of life and world
- Opportunities for youth to relate to water issues, develop a sense of place, and an attitude of stewardship
- Use of critical thinking skills to establish a personal connection to local environment and ecosystems
- A variety of options for youth involvement in program
- Activity choices that relate to youth interests (e.g. read a book, keep a field notebook, write a story, create a mural or videotape, etc.)

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Which of the following specific recommendations for teaching water programs will you use?

- Incorporate water science
- Create a knowledge base for effective action directly or through partners (e.g. schools provide the background on stream ecology while the 4-H program provides an opportunity to monitor water quality)
- Address real water concerns in the community. (e.g. landfill leachate into groundwater, nitrate contamination in well water, PCB and toxic metals contamination in fish, or other water quality issues)



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■ *Work on restoration/stewardship of local water resources within your watershed (stream-bank stabilization, beach clean-up, exotic plant removal, etc.)*

■ *Create opportunities for youth to use skills gained through the program in their homes and communities*

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*How will the program be marketed to target participants?*

■ *Direct mail*

■ *Announcements at schools and youth meetings*

■ *Local group newsletters*

■ *Posters at community centers*

■ *Public service announcements on TV and radio*

■ *Newspaper articles or announcements*

■ *Paid media advertising*

■ *Word of mouth through partner organizations*

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*List key components of your program design resulting from discussion of ideas in this section. Design components should address: quality, stability, access, connection, program considerations, and marketing.*

Go on to any other section of the Planning Checklist. Information from this section can expand your responses to questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 of section 1.