

Title:	Draft Strategic Action Plan
Prepared by:	Name: James Wisker Phone: 952.641.4509 Jwisker@minnehahacree.org

Purpose:

To reintroduce the 2024 Draft Strategic Action Plan, and to summarize the next steps for refinement and adoption.

Background:

Strategic Action Plan Purpose:

At its core, the Strategic Plan guides MCWD's collective efforts as an organization towards its mission, as it:

- Maintains Direction defines priorities, aligning actions and resources with our vison, mission, and values
- Adapts to Change allows for adjustment mid-ten-year plan cycle, based on the dynamic world around us
- Promotes Alignment ensures alignment, and that we remain working towards common objectives
- Drives Performance facilitates continuous improvement through clear goals, monitoring, and evaluation
- Facilitates Communications supports clarity of purpose and priorities to internal/external stakeholders

2024 Strategic Action Plan Process:

After almost five years of effort, implementing the prior strategic plan to realign the organization around a vision of <u>Balanced Urban Ecology</u>, between 2021 and 2022, the MCWD Board of Managers and Staff undertook processes to:

- 1. Extract insights and Principles of Success from MCWD's history to guide MCWD in the future
- 2. Conduct a status assessment of progress on strategic priorities since 2018
- 3. Crystalize MCWD's transparent, idea-meritocratic culture into a set of Core Values
- 4. Vision areas of organizational focus and priority for the next five years leading to the 2027 Plan

Summary:

5-Year Areas of Strategic Focus:

The 5-Year Areas of Strategic Focus identified by the MCWD Board and Staff included:

- 1. Expand Our Portfolio of High-Impact Capital projects Deliver projects that measurably enhance the watershed and enrich communities
- 2. Develop Meaningful Climate Action Policy for the Watershed Engage communities in creating evidence-based flood management strategies
- 3. Cultivate Strategic Partnerships and Grow Brand Advocacy Strengthen collaborative relationships with partners, and bolster support for our mission
- 4. Enhance Data Driven Decision Making *Use data to inform everyday decisions, shape outreach, and build trust*
- 5. Invest in People and Organizational Culture Strategically expand our team, nurture professional growth, and foster a culture of excellence

The information gathered through these workshops has been assembled by staff into an Objective and Key Result (OKR) framework and incorporated into a Draft 2024 Strategic Action Plan (Attached).

February 22, 2024, Policy and Planning Committee:

At the February 22, 2024, Policy and Planning Committee Meeting, staff will reintroduce the Draft 2024 Strategic Action Plan, and summarize the next steps in refinement towards adoption mid-year, including:

- Discuss at the March CAC Meeting
- Additional staff refinement
- Present refinements at April Committee Meeting
- Consider for adoption at May Board Meeting

Supporting documents:

• Draft 2024 Strategic Action Plan





2024 - 2027

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

[DRAFT]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PURPOSE	3
	3
PROCESS	4
VISION, MISSION, GOALS, STRATEGY, PRINCIPLES, CULTURE	4

5-Y	EAR AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS	8
1.	Expand Our Portfolio of High-Impact Capital Projects	9
	Deliver projects that measurably enhance the watershed and enrich communities	9
2.	Develop Meaningful Climate Action Policy for the Watershed	10
	Engage communities in creating evidenced-based flood management strategies	10
3.	Cultivate Strategic Partnerships and Expand Brand Advocacy	11
	Strengthen collaborative relationships with partners, and bolster support for our mission	11
4.	Enhance Data-Driven Decision Making	12
	Use data to inform everyday decisions, shape outreach, and build trust	12
5.	Invest in People and Organizational Culture	13
	Strategically expand our team, nurture professional growth, and foster a culture of excellence	13

	14
APPENDICES	15

INTRODUCTION

Situated in Minnesota's picturesque landscape, the Minnehaha Creek watershed is a vital ecological hub that has defined a region and been cherished by communities for generations. From the rural and developing upper watershed, to the waters of Lake Minnetonka, the communities along Minnehaha Creek, and the urban neighborhoods of Minneapolis, the watershed's diverse ecosystems sustain life, leisure, and livelihoods for the people and wildlife that call the area home.

As caretakers, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) recognizes the intricate interplay between these natural ecosystems and the built environment, and the need to carefully chart a course that continues to enhance the watershed and enrich communities for future generations.

To continue delivering outstanding results that achieve these goals, and honor its partners, the MCWD Board of Managers has committed to a cycle of strategic planning to serve as an organizational blueprint to address the challenges of the future with foresight while seizing opportunities for lasting environmental, social and economic prosperity.

PURPOSE

At its core, this strategic plan guides our collective efforts as an organization towards achieving a resilient, thriving watershed, by serving the following purposes:

- **Maintains Direction** defines priorities, aligning actions and resources with our vison, mission, and values
- Adapts to Change allows for adjustment mid-ten-year plan cycle, based on the dynamic world around us
- **Promotes Alignment** ensures alignment, and that we remain working towards common objectives
- Drives Performance facilitates continuous improvement through clear goals, monitoring, and evaluation
- **Facilitates Communications** supports clarity of purpose and priorities to internal/external stakeholders

STRATEGIC PLANNING CASCADE

MCWD's strategic plan fits inside the following cascade, underneath the overarching organizational framework, to the ten-year watershed planning cycles, setting three-to-five-year Objectives and Key Results (OKR). This then guides two-year workplans which provide initiative level detail in terms of milestones, timeline, budget and staffing.

Strategic Organizational Framework

MCWD Vision; Mission; Goals; Principles; Culture

10-Year Watershed Plan

• 10-Year Theme; Policy Environment; Capital Improvement Plan; Programmatic Direction

5-Year Strategic Direction

• Areas of Strategic Focus; Portfolio of Objectives; Key Results and Initiatives

2-Year Workplan Details

Breakdown of Initiatives to Achieve Key Results; Milestones and Timelines; Budget and Staff Needs

PROCESS

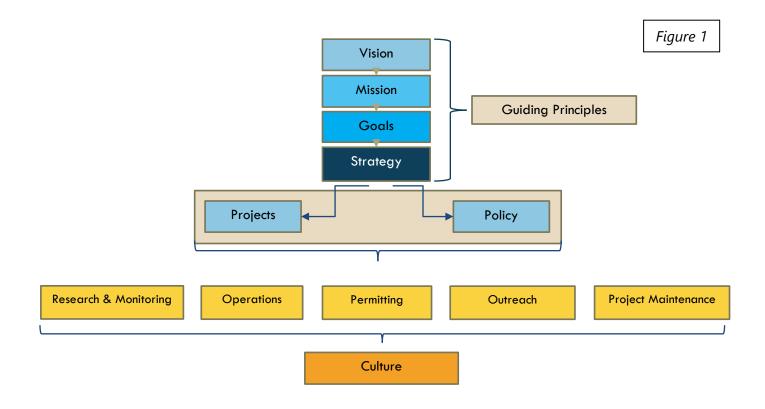
MCWD's previous strategic plan cycle completed in 2017 was oriented to realign the organization, its priorities, programs and people, around a vision of <u>*A Balanced Urban Ecology*</u>. After almost five years of effort, between 2021 and 2022, in preparation for this strategic plan cycle, the MCWD Board of Managers and Staff undertook processes to:

- 1. Extract insights and principles of success from MCWD's history that will guide us in the future (Appendix A)
- 2. Conduct a status assessment of progress on strategic priorities since 2018 (Appendix B)
- 3. Crystalize MCWD's transparent, idea-meritocratic culture into a set of Core Values (Appendix C)

Building off this foundation, through the middle of 2023, the MCWD Board of Managers and Staff engaged in a series of workshops to brainstorm areas of organizational focus and priority for the next five-years leading to the 2027 Plan, and the associated Objectives and Key Results.

VISION, MISSION, GOALS, STRATEGY, PRINCIPLES, CULTURE

The following sections set the strategic frame of Vision, Mission, Goals, Strategy, Principles, and Culture as depicted in *Figure 1*. Before then outlining the Five-Year Areas of Strategic Focus, and breaking down the associated Objectives and Key Results associated with each.



Vision

A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.

Mission

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

Goals

Water Quality

To preserve and improve the quality and surface and ground waters

Water Quantity

To manage the volume of stormwater to minimize impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters

Ecological Integrity

To restore, maintain and improve the health of ecological systems

Thriving Communities

To promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities

Strategy

MCWD's overarching organizational strategy, <u>*A Balanced Urban Ecology*</u>, recognizes the inextricable link between the natural and built environments, between land and water. This strategy emphasizes integration and partnership between MCWD and the public and private actors in the land use planning community.

MCWD's focus within this strategy is (1) Building high-impact projects that measurably benefit the watershed; and (2) Developing policy at the intersection of land and water planning to foster partnerships and influence development's impact on the watershed. This approach is supported by aligning programs and operations, including evidenced based decision making and outreach and engagement to cultivate watershed partners.

Principles

MCWD's guiding principles are below, with historical principles and core values listed on the following pages:

<u>Partnership</u>

We seek to understand others' goals so we can meaningfully integrate and add broader community value

Innovation

We are flexible and creative in our approach and strive for continuous improvement

Excellence

We commit to work that achieves outstanding results and honors our partners

Sound Science

We are a trusted source of scientific data and analyses that provide the foundation for wise decisions

<u>Service</u>

We are responsive and accountable to our communities and careful stewards of public funds

MCWD HISTORIC PRINCIPLES

Broader principles, distilled from research and analysis of MCWD's historic key events, are summarized below.

- 1. Know where you came from, and what is central to your identity
 - a. Flood mitigation is central to MCWD's mission, identity, and relationships
 - b. Gray's Bay Dam will always be a part of the conversation
 - c. Balanced Urban Ecology is the heart of MCWD's approach to watershed management
- 2. Devoting time and effort to vision and focused execution produces results
 - a. A clear vision is contagiously energizing
 - b. Success demands focus
 - c. Bold, creative, flexible, and integrated thinking are required
 - d. The success of bold visions demands an accurate accounting of risk
 - e. Verify that the desired results are being achieved, and learn from your mistakes
- 3. Rely on sound science to make credible, results-based decisions, and build trust
 - a. Value is delivered through science-based understanding that reveals practical solutions
 - b. Trust in MCWD has been built on sound science and partnership
 - c. A deep understanding of watershed hydrology is vital to MCWD's mission and credibility
- 4. Partnerships are a difference making ingredient in MCWD's continued success
 - a. Science is essential, but on its own is insufficient
 - b. Land use partnerships are essential, and Balanced Urban Ecology principles support them
 - c. Partnerships require clear messaging and strategic engagement with leaders, staff, and community
 - d. Partnerships can be challenging, time consuming, and require patience and persistence
 - e. Partnership is a process, not a posture
- 5. Statutory powers provide important authority, which must be used judiciously
 - a. Earning mutual respect can require speaking up or drawing a line
 - b. Lonely decisions rooted only in authority may create long-lasting consequences
 - c. With careful balance, MCWD can be perceived as a regulator and a partner
- 6. The Board sets the direction, bar, and tone of the organization
 - a. Leadership, excellence, and accountability flow from the Board
 - b. The Board of Managers has the authority to manage, but excels when it governs
 - c. To be successful, there must be a strong marriage between staff and Board
- 7. Success is driven by people, so get the people and culture right
 - a. People matter and hiring wrong is costly
 - b. People should be continuously developed, evaluated, and held accountable
 - c. Innovation and quality decisions comes from properly assessing the merit of all ideas
 - d. Trust in transparency

MCWD CORE VALUES

Transparency

Transparency brings issues to the surface, the good, bad, and ugly, and it allows the organization to draw on the talents and insights of all its members to solve them. An open, honest, and authentic environment builds the trust essential for meaningful relationships, and teams are more powerful than individuals.

- Be honest and authentic, even when it is hard, and expect the same from others.
- Do not hold critical opinions to yourself or in the shadows. Speak up and own it.
- Be enthusiastically open and invite critique. Remember, clear and direct feedback is a kindness.

Collaboration

Collaboration is essential to our idea meritocracy, and, coupled with transparency, ensure all ideas are surfaced and then the best ones advanced. Our work is best when others are involved and the strongest ideas come from stress testing, or "red teaming" for weakness and blind spots. Effective collaboration combines and draws on our unique strengths to bring a more complete and rich perspective to the work.

- Understand what you need from others, and when. Have a clear path to engage. Get and stay in sync.
- Ideas must be stress tested and for the strongest decision making. Pay attention to reasoning.
- Inexperienced people can have great ideas, sometimes better than people with experience. Test them.

Leadership

Leaders build trust and take people to places they would not have been gone on their own. We trust leaders when we see them acting selflessly, in the interest of the mission and team. Leadership is not defined by position. Leadership is not management. It's a choice, to take radical ownership over the organization, the initiative and all the results. Leaders see a need and fill it without being asked.

- Demonstrate radical ownership over the vision. Wear opportunity goggles. See a need and fill it.
- Embrace responsibility. Hold yourself more accountable than others can. Be an inspiring example.
- Find the potential in people and have the courage to help them develop it in service of the mission.

Innovation

Innovators find and solve problems. They cultivate many small insights over time, through deliberate hard work, consistently thinking about a problem and generating a high volume of ideas. They know that innovation is messy, requires collaboration, muddling, and iteration through the transparent exchange of ideas. Innovators know change is hard, takes time, requires grit, and they leverage the team to accomplish more than they could alone.

- Step back often and evaluate what is or isn't working. Spot problems that need solving.
- Make time to write down as many insights and ideas as possible. Approach innovation as a practice.
- Share, build and stress test your ideas with others through collaboration.

Grit

Nothing worth doing in life is easy. This is why we find inspiration in those who do the hard things, in the face of insurmountable odds. Below the surface of neatly packaged success lies struggle, doubt, time, effort, criticism, disappointment, and failure – that has been met in equal parts with courage, discipline, hard work, passion and perseverance, and the help of others. This is grit.

- Find the joy and satisfaction in the journey more than the destination. Celebrate the little wins.
- Find a purpose or passion in the work, and don't quit. When the going gets tough, enlist help.
- Embrace discomfort and stress, as these are signals that personal and professional growth is happening.

5-YEAR AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

- **1. Expand Our Portfolio of High-Impact Capital Projects** Deliver projects that measurably enhance the watershed and enrich communities
- 2. Develop Meaningful Climate Action Policy for the Watershed Engage communities in creating evidence-based flood management strategies
- **3. Cultivate Strategic Partnerships and Grow Brand Advocacy** *Strengthen collaborative relationships with partners, and bolster support for our mission*
- **4. Enhance Data-Driven Decision Making** Use data to inform everyday decisions, shape outreach, and build trust
- **5. Invest in People and Organizational Culture** *Strategically expand our team, nurture professional growth, and foster a culture of excellence*

1. Expand Our Portfolio of High-Impact Capital Projects

Deliver projects that measurably enhance the watershed and enrich communities

MINNEHAHA CREEK – LAKE HIAWATHA

Progress to delist Lake Hiawatha; Reduce flooding on the Creek; Expand and connect the Creek corridor

Complete MCWD's Greenway Projects and Assess Remaining Partner Driven Opportunities

- Complete 325 Blake Road project by 2028, reducing loading downstream by over 300 lbs
- Complete Cottageville Phase II by 2027, establishing the Greenway as a regional feature
- Complete Cedar Trail Connection by 2026, completing the connection of the Greenway
- Evaluate opportunity to advance Meadowbrook Golf Course via Three Rivers trail planning
- Evaluate Opportunity for Public-Private Partnership at Bremer Bank Site based on developer interest
- Identify potential acquisition priorities to connect Greenway, with City support, by 2025

Forge Minneapolis Partnership, Build Pilot Projects, and Develop System Plan to Guide Future

- Approve Cooperative Agreement in 2024, establishing a new governance structure for water planning
- Complete 3 Minnehaha Creek Projects by 2028, achieving 30% reduction in Hiawatha waste load
- Complete Minneapolis systems plan by 2027, establishing long-term funding and role clarity
- Identify and initiate feasibility for next phase of projects by 2027

SIX MILE CREEK – HALSTED BAY

Delist Wassermann Lake; Progress to delisting Auburn/Turbid/Lundsten/Halsted; Expand nature-based places

Implement Projects in Queue, Partner on Western Growth Area, and Advance Halsted Planning

- Monitor Wassermann for need for final alum dosing, and advance delisting with MPCA, by 2026
- Partner with Victoria to Complete Small Area Planning for Western Growth Area by mid-2025
- Implement Auburn Wetland Restoration by 2026
- Complete technical, operational, and funding feasibility for Halsted Alum by mid-2025
- Identify and implement a Turbid Lundsten Corridor project by 2027

LONG LAKE CREEK – TANAGER BAY

Progress towards delisting Long Lake and Tanager Bay

Implement First Three Projects and Identify Next Phase

- Complete County Road 6 Retrofit by end of 2025, reducing loading by 60 lbs
- Partner with Long Lake to implement Holbrook Ponds by end of 2026, reducing loading by 40 lbs
- Support private implementation of Holy Name Wetland Bank by 2025, establishing 19 acres of credit
- Enter agreement for first landowner project funding through Land and Water Partnership by 2026

PAINTER CREEK – JENNINGS BAY

Progress to delisting Jennings Bay

Complete Painter Subwatershed Diagnostics and Implementation Plan for Integration into 2027 Plan

2. Develop Meaningful Climate Action Policy for the Watershed

Engage communities in creating evidenced-based flood management strategies

UNDERSTAND AND PREDICT

Expand data collection and analysis to predict future flooding and assess watershed vulnerabilities

Develop tools to predict the impact of climate change on the watershed

- Assess the climate mitigation and adaptation benefits of MCWD projects by end of 2025
- Expand real time water level monitoring by 2025
- Improve short-term flood forecasting with machine learning by 2026
- Conduct greenhouse gas audit of MCWD operations to inform 2026 budget
- Create a GIS based equity lens for planning by end of 2024
- Build a watershed wide 2D flood risk model by 2025
- Evaluate flood risk, vulnerability, and resilience by 2025
- Assess the benefit of various project and policy solutions (e.g. wetland storage) by 2026

CONVENE AND PLAN

Collaborate with local, regional, and state agencies to develop a cohesive watershed-wide climate strategy

Build partner consensus on project and policy strategies to address the changing climate

- Develop a flood action plan to guide real time response to flooding by end of 2024
- Modernize Dam operations linking forecasts, RESNET and machine learning by 2027
- Initiate climate conversations with agency partners by 2025
- Develop climate action roles with community partners by end of 2025
- Evaluate flood risk scenarios with partners by mid-2026
- Assess project and policy strategies with partners by 2027
- Gain partner consensus on MCWD's climate strategies for the 2027 Plan

IMPLEMENT, MEASURE AND ADAPT

Coordinate actions with partners for measurable progress and implementation of the 2027 Plan

Deliver the 2027 Plan and implement agreed upon project and policy strategies

- Implement greenhouse gas audit recommendations for MCWD operations starting in 2026
- Modernize Dam operations linking forecasts, RESNET, and machine learning by 2027
- Implement flood action plan successfully during the next major flooding event
- Begin 5-Year flood mitigation capital improvements in 2027
- Adopt new climate action policies by 2028

Strengthen collaborative relationships with partners, and bolster support for our mission

BUILD COALITIONS OF PARTNERS FOR MCWD'S PRIORITY PROJECTS

Increase awareness and support of partners and the public for MCWD's priority projects

Build a coalition of public-private partners that celebrate and maintain the Minnehaha Greenway

- Conduct celebratory ribbon cutting of 325 and Cedar Trail, and Greenway walk with partners by 2028
- Establish Greenway coalition, to sustain the vision, activate place, and support ongoing investment

Position MCWD as trusted convener and leader of water planning in Minneapolis

- Convene Steering Committee annually; maintain policymaker alignment; secure sustained funding
- Develop a strategy to effectively engage and communicate across partners, public and media
- Establish legislative support for the Minneapolis capital improvement program
- Policymaker, staff, and resident support for MCWD's balanced upstream-downstream approach

Maintain and expand support for MCWD's role in Six Mile – Halsted Bay

- Convene all public partners to ensure support for updated Six Mile Halsted Bay CIP before 2027
- Cement MCWD as a value-added partner in the sustainable westerly growth of the City of Victoria
- Maintain support of Carver County for MCWD program and use of master finance agreement
- Implement a strategy to secure local, regional, and legislative support for Halsted Alum Facility

Establish and maintain support for the Long Lake Creek Roadmap

- Obtain and maintain of support for individual projects and the Long Lake Creek Roadmap in 2024
- Develop cycle of presentation to city council and planning commission
- Implement a targeted strategy to generate new LWP projects in north subwatershed by 2025

Develop and implement an engagement strategy for Painter Creek – Jennings Roadmap

FOSTER COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND TRUST IN MCWD INITIATIVES

Be widely regarded as a trusted source of facts and solutions

Strategically engage a cross-section of public-private audiences to build trust and support

- Engage partners to build broad support for MCWD's role in climate action and the 2027 Plan
- Expand Land and Water Partnership outreach to land use community to increase project participation
- Build an engagement framework using demographic data from the GIS equity lens, to ensure inclusion

ENSURE POSITIVE PERMITTING EXPERIENCES

Be viewed as a resource, partner, and leader within the land use planning community

Cultivate positive relationships with the land use community through clear, proactive, value-added service

- Develop a program of cyclically engaging municipal staff and the private development community
- Implement new outreach strategies, protocol, and training for permitting processes
- Routinely monitor and report on stakeholder perspectives and program outcomes

Use data to inform everyday decisions, shape outreach, and build trust

IMPLEMENT DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Implement technology systems to eliminate data silos and enable seamless data capture, storage, and use

Finish deploying technology solutions that align programs with the MCWD mission

- Build geospatial inventory of all capital projects to guide maintenance and support communications
- Implement a system to track, measure and report outreach and engagement actions, and outcomes

BUILD A DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE

Foster data literacy and integration

Create an environment where all data is accessible, understandable, and actionable

- Establish a technology and data governance framework by 2025, to enhance access and management
- Implement staff education and engagement to build capacity and increase data literacy by 2025
- Create collaborative cross program workgroups to:
 - o Discuss data utilization challenges
 - Drive workflow improvements
 - Build organizational agility
- Establish specialized data story teams, to:
 - o Deliver impactful narratives supported by data insights
 - Drive organizational understanding and action

CREATE TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WATERSHED AND OPERATIONS

Unlock data insights that support high quality decision making

Realize the investments in technology and data driven culture to drive next generation planning

- Develop tools (e.g. 2D Model) to understand climate dynamics and inform planning around:
 Flood risk exposure, vulnerability, resilience, and project and policy strategies
- Implement subwatershed diagnostics for initiatives in key areas of Minneapolis and Painters-Jennings
- Create a GIS equity lens, integrating demographic and watershed data, to inform planning
- Establish clear, measurable goals for watershed health and community well-being to guide 2027 Plan
- Create integrated work planning system to track/report initiative budget, timeline, and staff allocation
- Build a framework for monitoring project efficacy for troubleshooting and communications
- Collaborate with partners to refresh foundational data sets (e.g. Wetland, Floodplain, Stream, etc.)
- Develop regular reports of permitting data to better understand the impact of regulatory policy
- Develop regular reports of relationship data to understand the outcomes of outreach strategies

5. Invest in People and Organizational Culture

Strategically expand our team, nurture professional growth, and foster a culture of excellence

STRATEGICALLY EXPAND OUR TEAM

Build capacity to shape the future

Strategically expand organizational capability, to drive sustainable growth in watershed outcomes

- Achieve full team capacity within 24 months across key functional areas
- Board and staff leadership regularly assess resource allocation and organizational alignment
- Develop succession strategies and plans for critical organizational roles

NURTURE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Ignite potential and fuel the development of the team

Empower individuals to reach their full potential through continuous learning and development

- Develop and implement an organizational onboarding and socialization model by 2025
- Identify key skills and competencies for each work area, and provide comprehensive positional training
- Enhance use of StrengthFinder and other assessments, promote self-awareness and coach growth
- Create and align development plans for each employee based on role, goals, and MCWD priorities
- Refine MCWD Career Ladder to facilitate growth, with clear paths, criteria, and regular feedback
- Routinely benchmark compensation to ensure market competitiveness
- Provide salary growth and promotion based on merit, demonstrated contributions and results
- Establish a leadership development program to:
 - Provide training, and experiential learning opportunities to develop practical leadership skills
 - Pair emerging leaders with mentors or coaches to provide guidance, support, and career advice

FOSTER A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

Promote excellence in every endeavor

Create a culture that inspires everyone to take pride in their work and strive for excellence in everything they do

- Ensure transparent leadership, that upholds the idea-meritocracy and high standards of excellence
- Embed MCWD Values into daily life, and use them to assess performance of initiatives and people
- Cultivate strong relationships and open communication among the Board, Staff and CAC
- Actively involve and support employee participation in MCWD initiatives and decisions
- Develop programs to foster collaboration and learning across teams
- Host regular retreats to promote team building, strategic alignment, and a strong culture
- Continuously refine performance management systems for real time, quarterly and 360 annual feedback
- Recognize, celebrate, and reward outstanding performance, while maintaining personal accountability

IMPLEMENTATION TABLES

Tables to be inserted breaking down the Objectives and Key Results on preceding pages

APPENDICES