



Title: Stakeholder Relationship Management Discussion

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Purpose:

Provide background information to support a discussion of opportunities to improve MCWD's stakeholder relationship management processes and systems at the February 27, 2025, Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) meeting.

Background:

On February 27, 2020, the Board adopted [Resolution 20-018](#), approving a new Strategic Direction for Outreach. The Strategic Direction aligned the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District)'s Outreach approach with its Balanced Urban Ecology (BUE) philosophy, which refocused the District's resources to cultivating partnerships that implement high-impact capital improvements and integrate land and water planning through policy change.

The Strategic Direction positioned land use decision-makers as the primary audience to advance MCWD's mission. This direction has moved the District toward relationship-based outreach that builds targeted support for the organization's key initiatives, and away from broad-based awareness and education. Beyond refocusing audience, the Strategic Direction also emphasized that the most effective channels for building support within the land use community are through context-specific, interpersonal communications delivered by MCWD's "relationship managers."

To support strategic action planning efforts, on January 12, 2023, MCWD's Board of Managers adopted [Resolution 23-007](#), accepting Historic Insights and Principles of Success. This document memorialized several principles to guide the implementation of a strategic outreach approach, including:

- Technical understanding integrated with political and community support produces superior and sustainable results to working alone;
- Balanced Urban Ecology means integrating water resources with landowner priorities, to deliver environmental, social, and economic value;
- MCWD is most successful when it frames a clear, data-driven visual story, and then strategically engages partner agencies and the community at respective levels;
- Partnership dynamics require proactive management, time, patience, and persistence;
- Relationships are a prime commodity in MCWD's success, and every interaction is an opportunity to build or erode MCWD's brand with a prospective partner.

Outreach Implementation Progress:

These principles and the Strategic Direction have continued to guide the Outreach Program's focus and activities, to support of the District's mission. Since 2020, the Outreach Program has made progress toward implementing the strategy outlined in the Strategic Direction with added staff capacity, new tools to support high-quality communications and engagement, and targeted campaigns to advance key projects and policy initiatives.

While empirical evaluation data is not readily available with the program's current systems, relationships with the watershed's communities remain strong, with open communication, broad support for MCWD's approach, and targeted support for specific initiatives.

To support continuous alignment and improvement of the District's Outreach Program, over the past year, staff conducted discovery sessions with each department to identify the relationships staff manage, key workflows and methods for managing relationships, and opportunities for the Outreach Program to better support MCWD's relationship managers through new tools and systems.

February 27, 2025, PPC Meeting:

At the February 27, 2025, PPC meeting, staff will present findings from these discovery sessions and facilitate a discussion with the Board of Managers to identify new tools and systems that evaluate organization-wide engagement and support relationship managers in their efforts to cultivate high-impact partnerships.

The following questions are offered in preparation for the discussion:

- How has the District's strategic outreach approach served MCWD over the past five years?
- How can the Board assess the success of the District's outreach efforts?
- What role does the Board play in building and managing stakeholder relationships?
- How can the Outreach Program better support the Board and staff in managing stakeholder relationships?
 - What workflows, tools, or systems would be most beneficial?

Supporting documents:

- [2020 Outreach Strategic Direction](#)
- [Partnership Principles – Historic Insights and Principles of Success](#)