MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

Meeting: Citizens Advisory Committee
Meeting date: 11/10/2026
Agenda Item #: 5.1
Item type: Discussion

Title: 2027 Watershed Management Plan Update

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Purpose:
At the November 10, 2026, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, staff will provide a brief review of the 2027 Watershed Management Plan (WMP or Plan) scope, share updates on the engagement process, seek CAC feedback on upcoming resident engagement strategies, and provide an overview of MCWD's approach to the flood risk assessment, to support future CAC conversations.

Background:
The current Watershed Management Plan (Plan) was approved in 2017 and is due for an update every ten years under Minnesota Rules 8410. The 2017 Plan update marked a significant shift in MCWD's approach to watershed management, anchored on MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology (BUE) policy.

In December 2024, the Board adopted a framework to guide the development of MCWD's 2027 Plan, which carries forward MCWD's BUE vision and focus on integrated planning and partnership. The scope of work for the 2027 Plan is organized around four areas:

- *Subwatershed Planning*: developing tailored, actionable implementation plans for each subwatershed
- *Land and Water Partnership*: identifying policy tools and best practices to support integrated planning
- *Flood Management Strategy*: assessing flood risk and mitigation strategies to establish a regional framework
- *Metrics of Success*: building an evaluation framework to measure and communicate progress

2027 Plan Engagement Process:
The 2027 Plan is being developed through a collaborative process involving the engagement of the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Citizens Advisory Committee, as well as the broader public.

Advisory Committees:
The Plan's Advisory committees meet every 2-3 months and discussions are focused on establishing a common understanding of local conditions, aligning priorities across communities and disciplines, assessing strategies and approaches that serve shared goals, and developing actionable plans for the future.

In the three TAC and PAC meetings to date, committee members have vetted the Plan scope; provided feedback to shape the development process; and discussed community water resource priorities, implementation approaches, challenges, and opportunities. TAC members also participated in a pre-meeting survey in July 2026, to gather input on local water resource priorities and management efforts. Survey results informed discussion at the July TAC meeting and September PAC meeting.

Key insights from these discussions include:

- Water resource management is a high priority for the watershed's cities, but competing priorities limit resources for planning and project implementation beyond state requirements.

- Proactive and integrated water planning can allow communities to achieve significant water resource improvements while supporting parks, transportation, infrastructure, and community development goals, but these types of projects take clear priorities, long-term planning, and funding alignment.

- Communities value shared spaces for regional water resource learning, such as water governance trainings, and subwatershed coalitions, where regional partners can discuss water planning across the system, build alignment across municipal boundaries, share learnings, and drive action toward shared, regional goals.

- Flood management priorities are variable across the watershed, with more built-out communities in the lower watershed noting higher levels of concern and more active implementation actions compared to the upper watershed, where communities are generally earlier in their flood risk reduction planning, focused on modeling and risk assessments.

- Across both water quality and flood risk reduction work, communities see MCWD's biggest value-add as a planning and funding partner, as well as a technical resource. MCWD could provide significant support by helping communities identify and prioritize largescale project opportunities, integrate these projects into their planning processes, and support implementation with funding contributions or help securing grants.

Land Use Community Engagement:
To supplement public partner engagement through the 2027 Plan process and gather insights to inform the Land and Water Partnership area of work, MCWD has also been engaging peers and partners in the land use community. A series of interviews with peer watersheds, developers, consultants, and municipal development staff are supporting MCWD's understanding of how the land use community perceives watershed regulation and partnership, and informing opportunities and refinements to better integrate land and water planning in MCWD programs in the next Plan cycle.

Preliminary findings from the interviews conducted so far have exposed the wide-range of permit intensity and developer approaches across the metro, highlighted common engagement patterns between permitting agencies and developers, and identified some best practices for success in both watershed permitting and land use integration.

Resident Engagement:
To develop the 2027 Plan, MCWD is also conducting targeted resident engagement in specific geographies, and watershed-wide. With support from a consultant, MCWD has hosted multiple park intercepts in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway to solicit resident and park user perspectives on the value of past watershed projects to the community, and how amenities and water resources support visitor experiences.

In 2027, MCWD will also seek public input on the Plan through various engagement opportunities, including open houses, community events, and an online survey released in Spring 2027. The online survey will build on and apply themes from the Advisory Committee discussions and land use community interviews to understand how residents value water resources in their community, their perceptions of water resource governance and the roles of various actors and assess their perspectives on key priorities and effective projects.

Staff are currently working to refine questions and content for the online survey, and will seek feedback from the CAC on the following potential survey sections:

- Familiarity with MCWD
- Progress over the last decade
- Water Resource Values
- Water Resource Roles and Governance
- Future Visision

Flood Risk Assessment:
As part of the 2027 Plan, MCWD is working to improve its understanding of flood risk across the watershed and develop a shared approach to reducing flood risk and increasing climate resilience.

This work includes three steps:

1. Assess current and future flood risk using new watershed modeling tools
2. Evaluate how different management strategies affect flood risk
3. Use the results to identify priority areas, management approach, and roles for MCWD and partners

The first step, the flood risk assessment, is currently underway and involves simulation of a range of scenarios, including:

- Current and future precipitation events (1-yr, 10-yr, 100-yr, and future 100-yr design storms), as well as longer-term continuous simulations of historic wet and dry periods to evaluate the influence of groundwater.
- Current and future (2040) land use plans to assess the impact of changes in impervious surface.

These scenarios are being assessed for a range of potential impacts to both the built and natural environment, including structure flooding, road flooding, stream velocity, waterbody bounce, and creek baseflow.

This assessment will be completed in late November and discussed at the December 8, 2026, TAC meeting. The findings will be used to inform the identification of management strategies and scenarios that can be tested in the model to compare their relative effectiveness at reducing flood risk.

November 10, 2026 CAC Meeting:
At the November 10, 2026, CAC meeting, staff will provide an update on recent 2027 Plan engagement, provide an overview of MCWD's flood risk assessment approach, and solicit feedback from the CAC on areas of resident engagement for the 2027 Plan, specifically the online public survey.

CAC members are asked to contemplate the following questions in advance of the meeting:

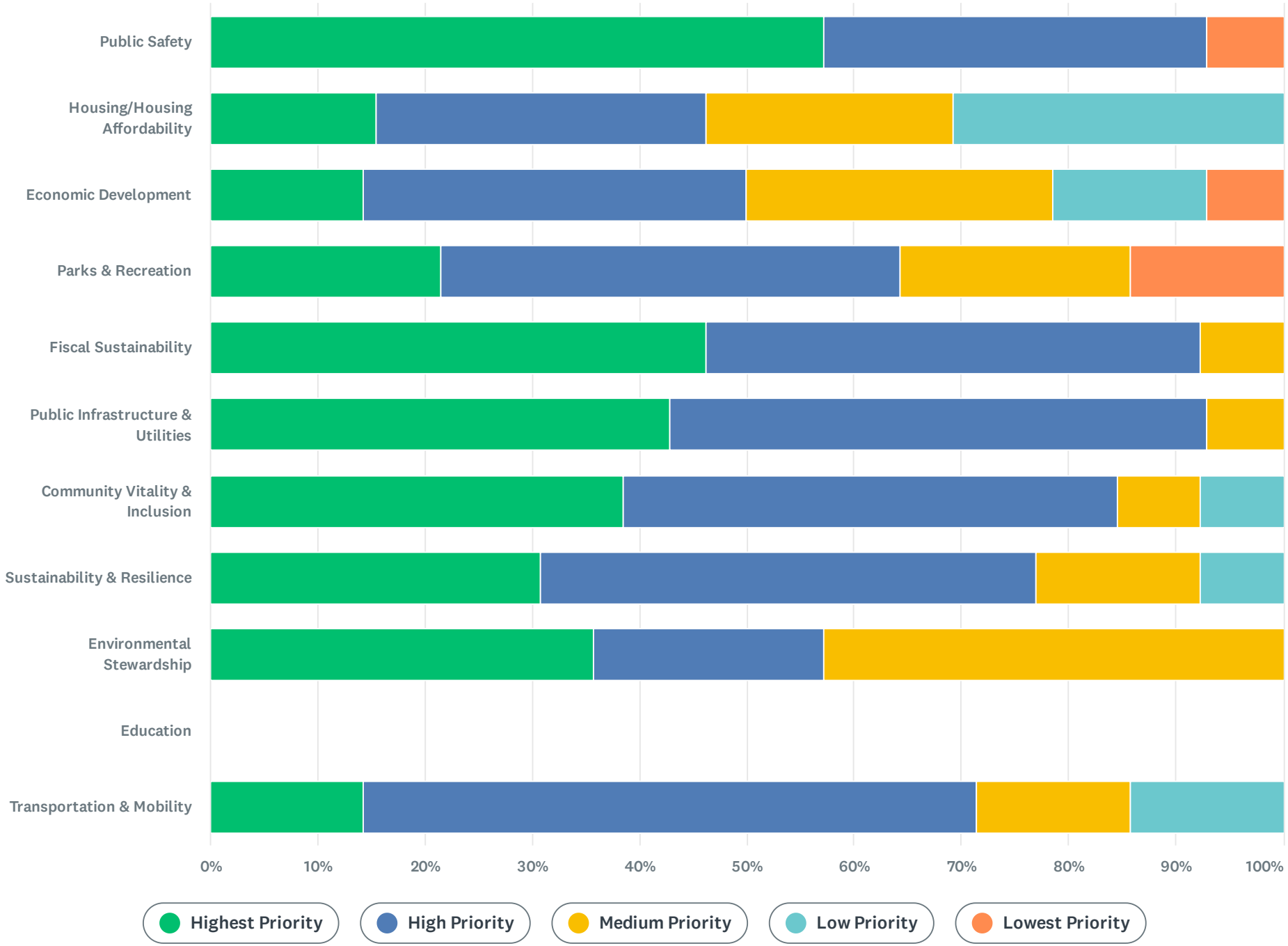
- Based on what you've learned about the 2027 Plan process and focus areas, where could residents provide the most meaningful feedback?
- How can MCWD best structure feedback opportunities for the public?
- What do you anticipate the public survey may reveal about resident perspectives?
- What questions and topics are most important to include in the public survey?
- What policy questions might MCWD's flood risk assessment help answer?

Attachments:

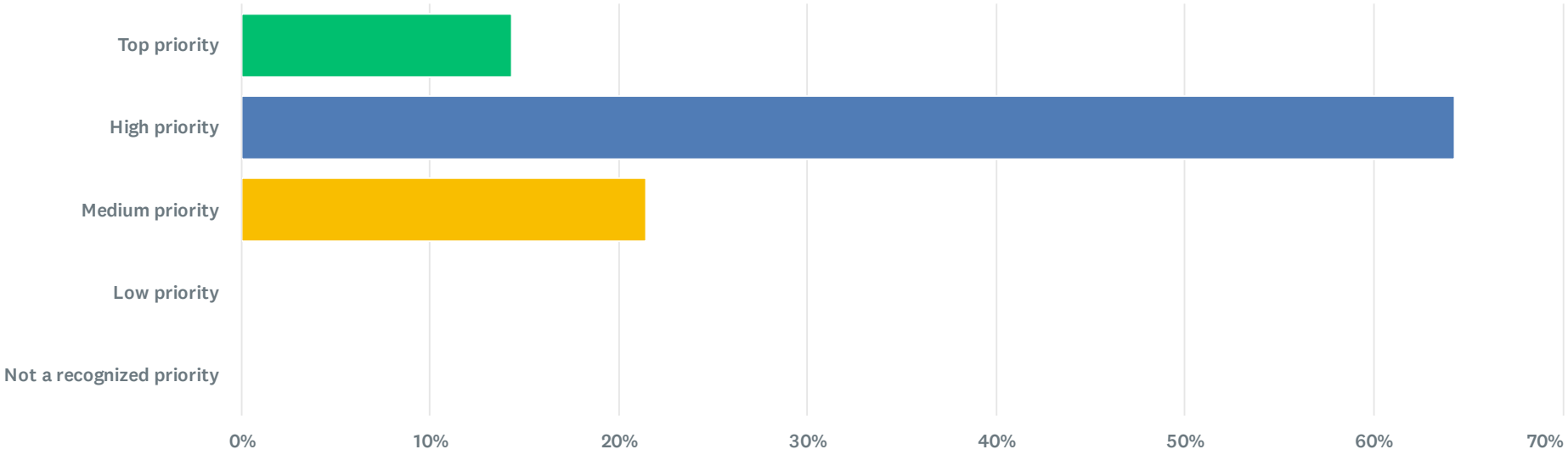
- July 2026 TAC Member Survey Results

2027 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN TAC #2 PRE-MEETING SURVEY

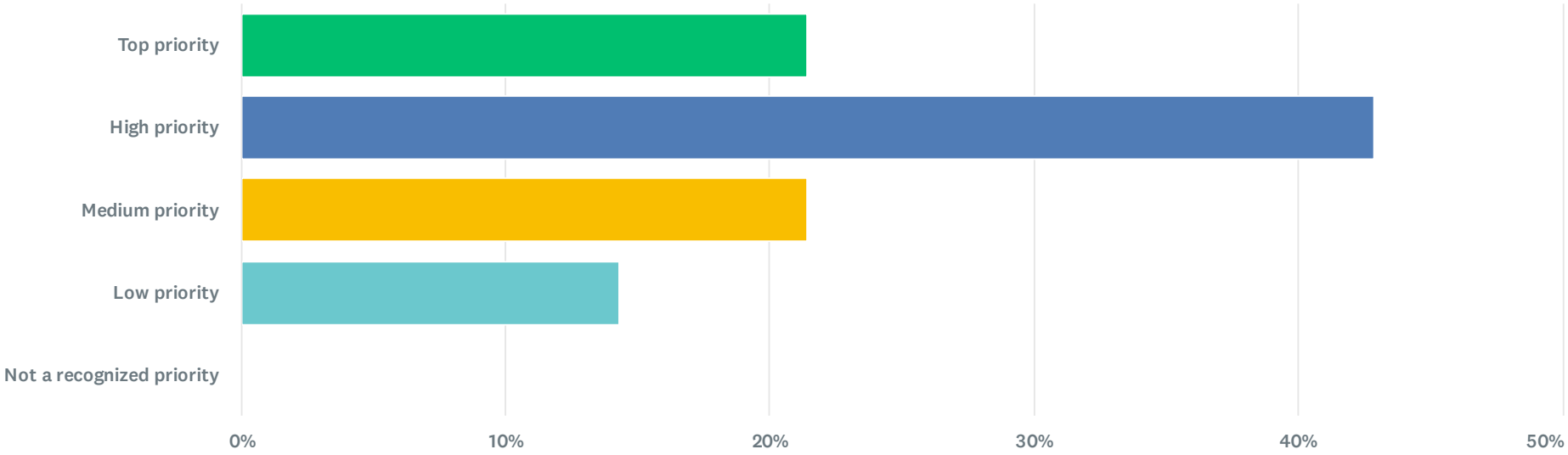
Please rate the level of priority your organization prescribes for the following planning and implementation areas.



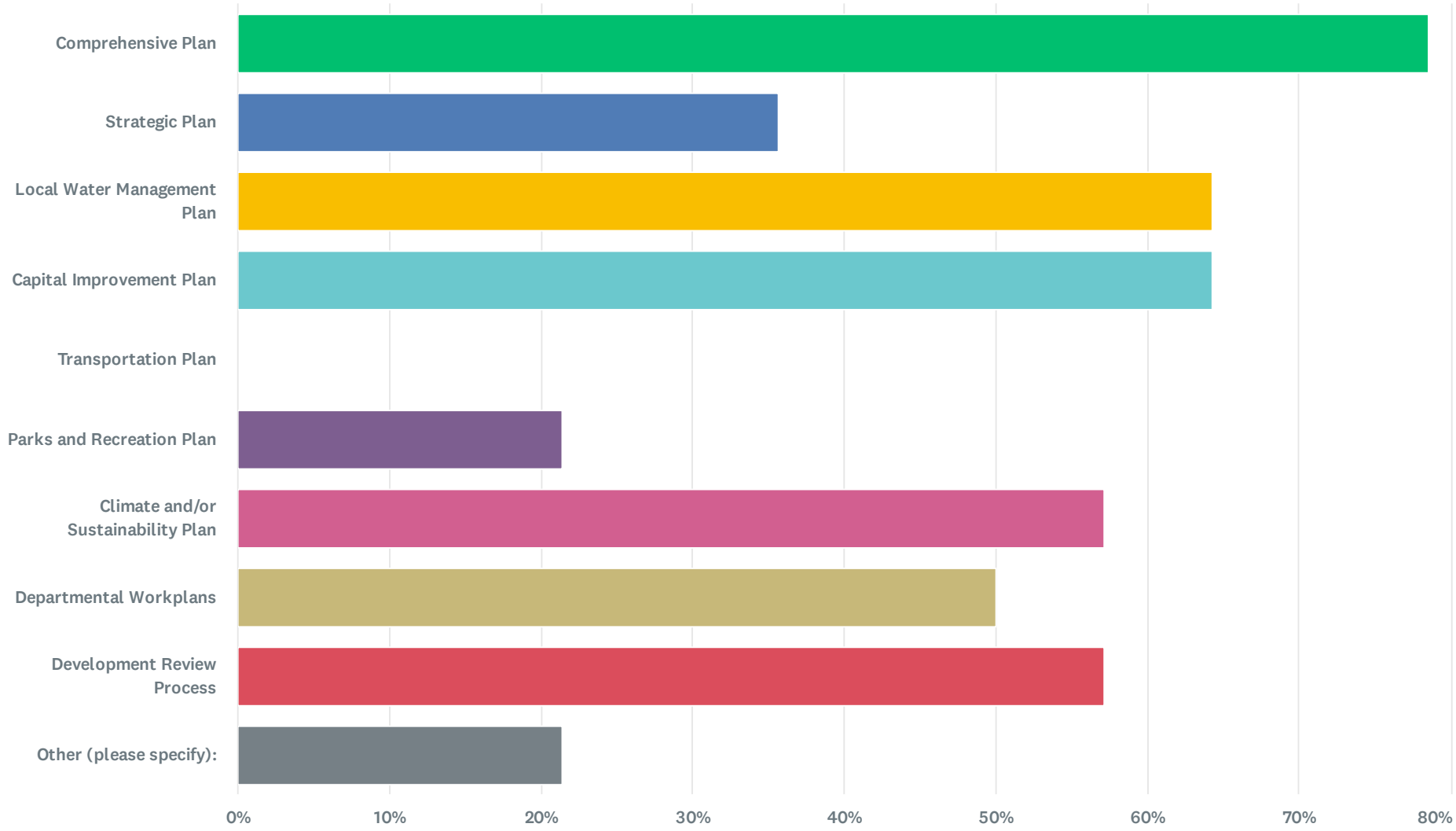
Where does surface water quality rank among your organization's priorities?



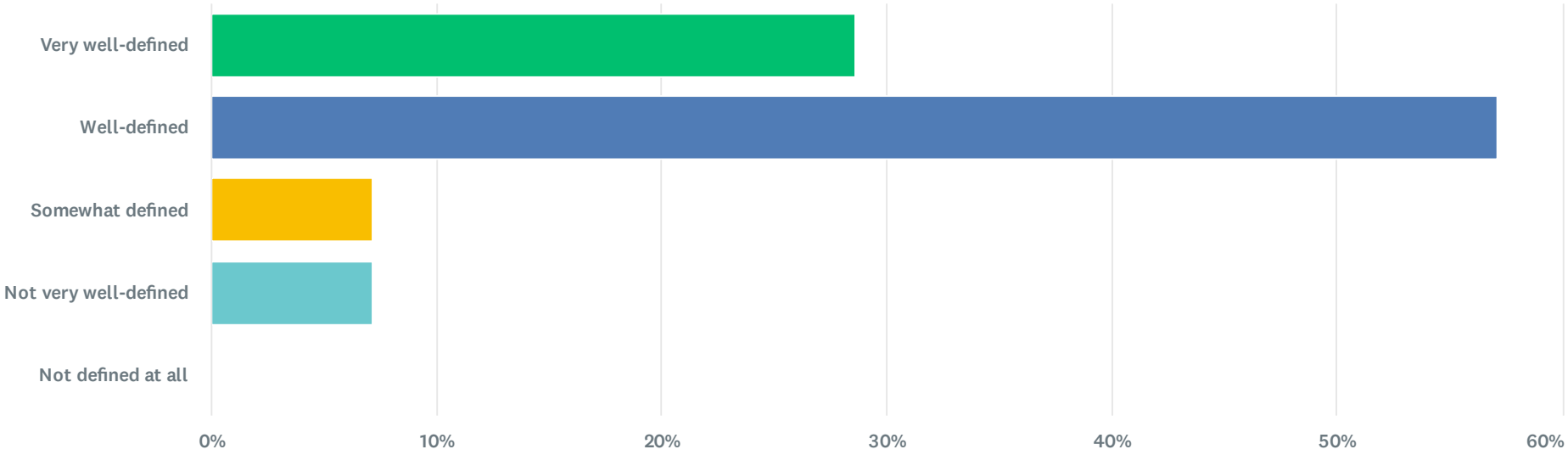
Where does flood risk reduction rank among your organization's priorities?



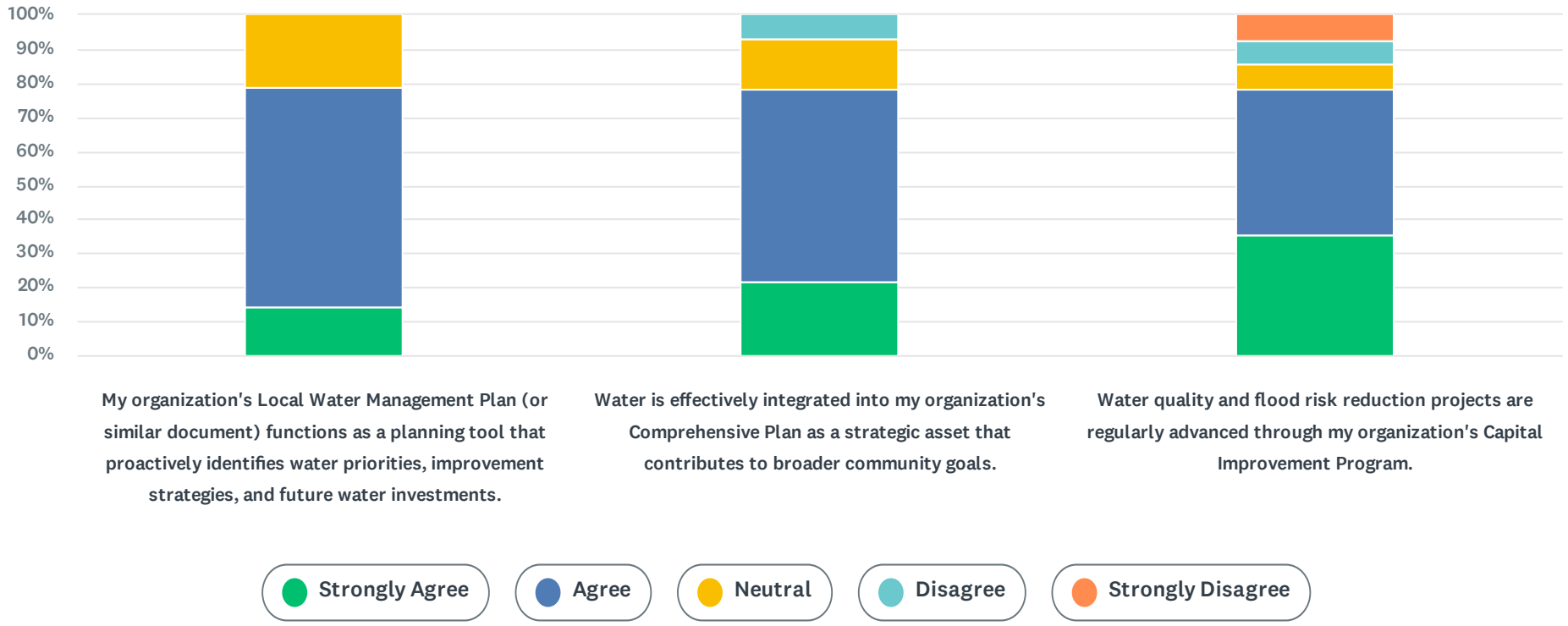
Where are your organization's water resource goals and priorities memorialized today? Select all that apply.



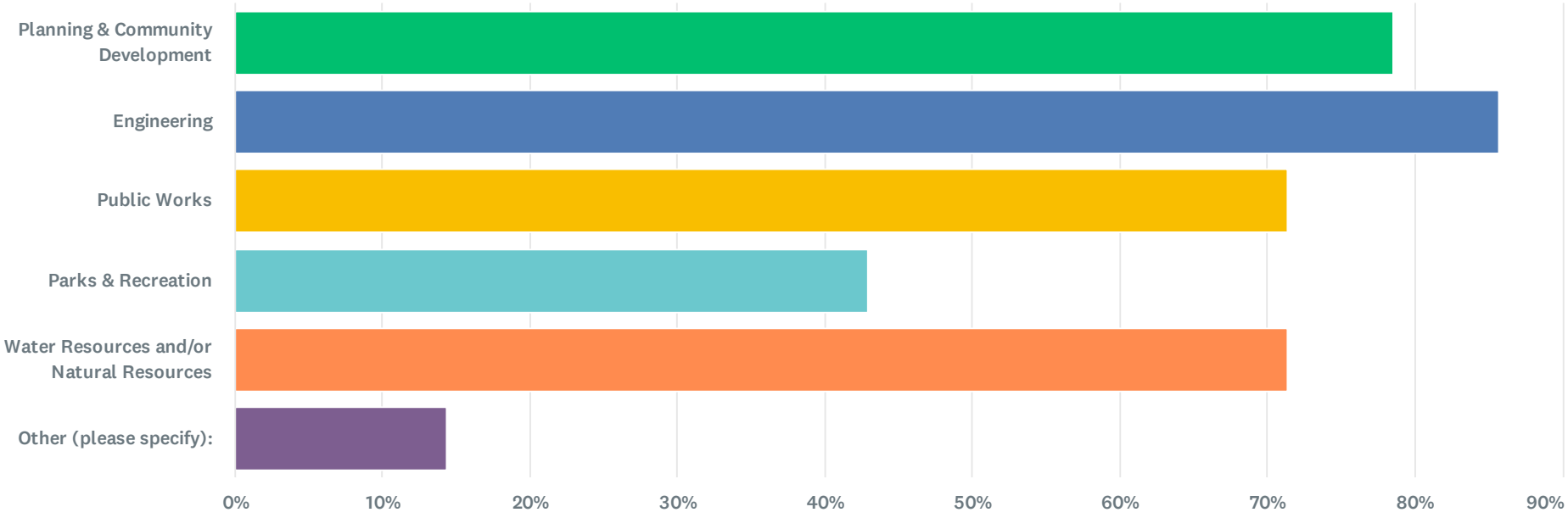
How defined are your organization's water resource goals and priorities?



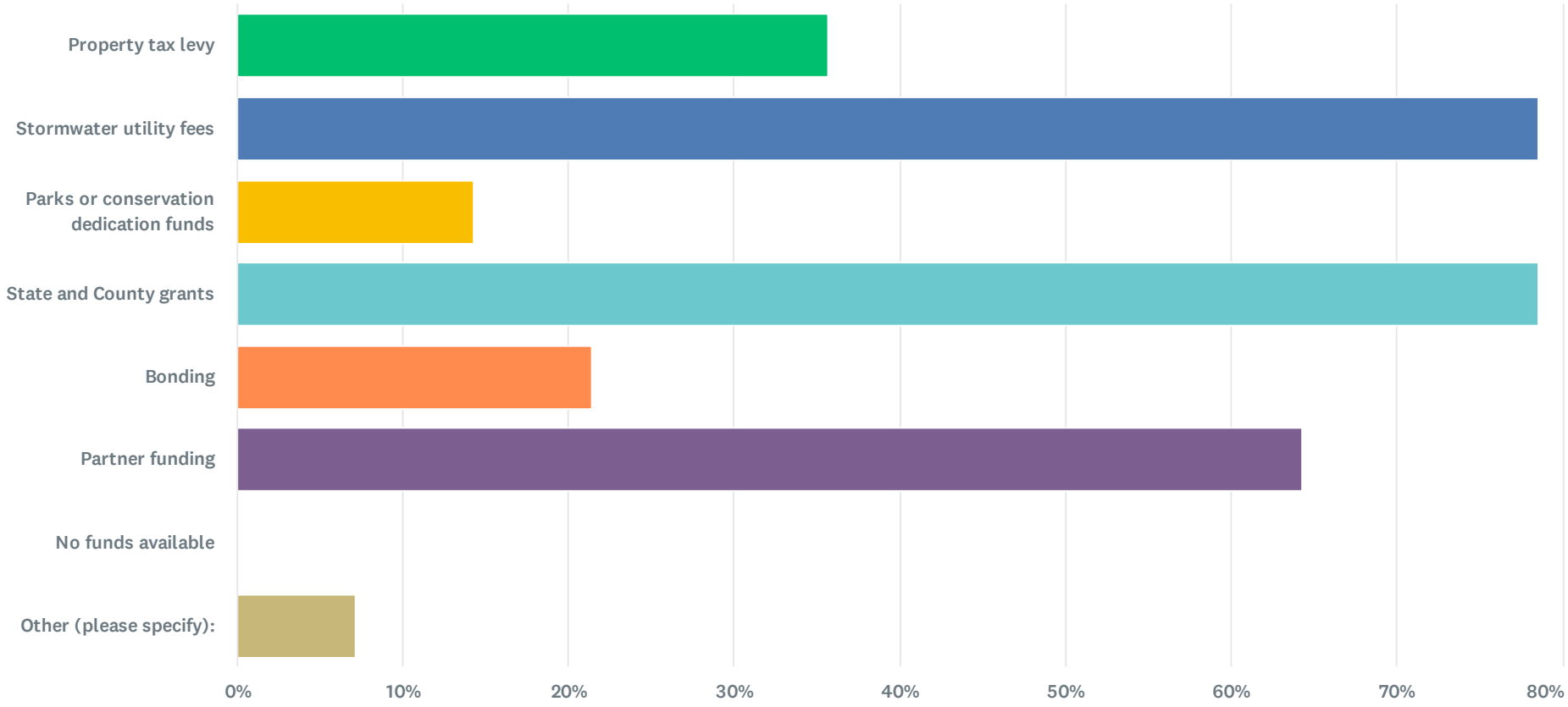
Please note your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.



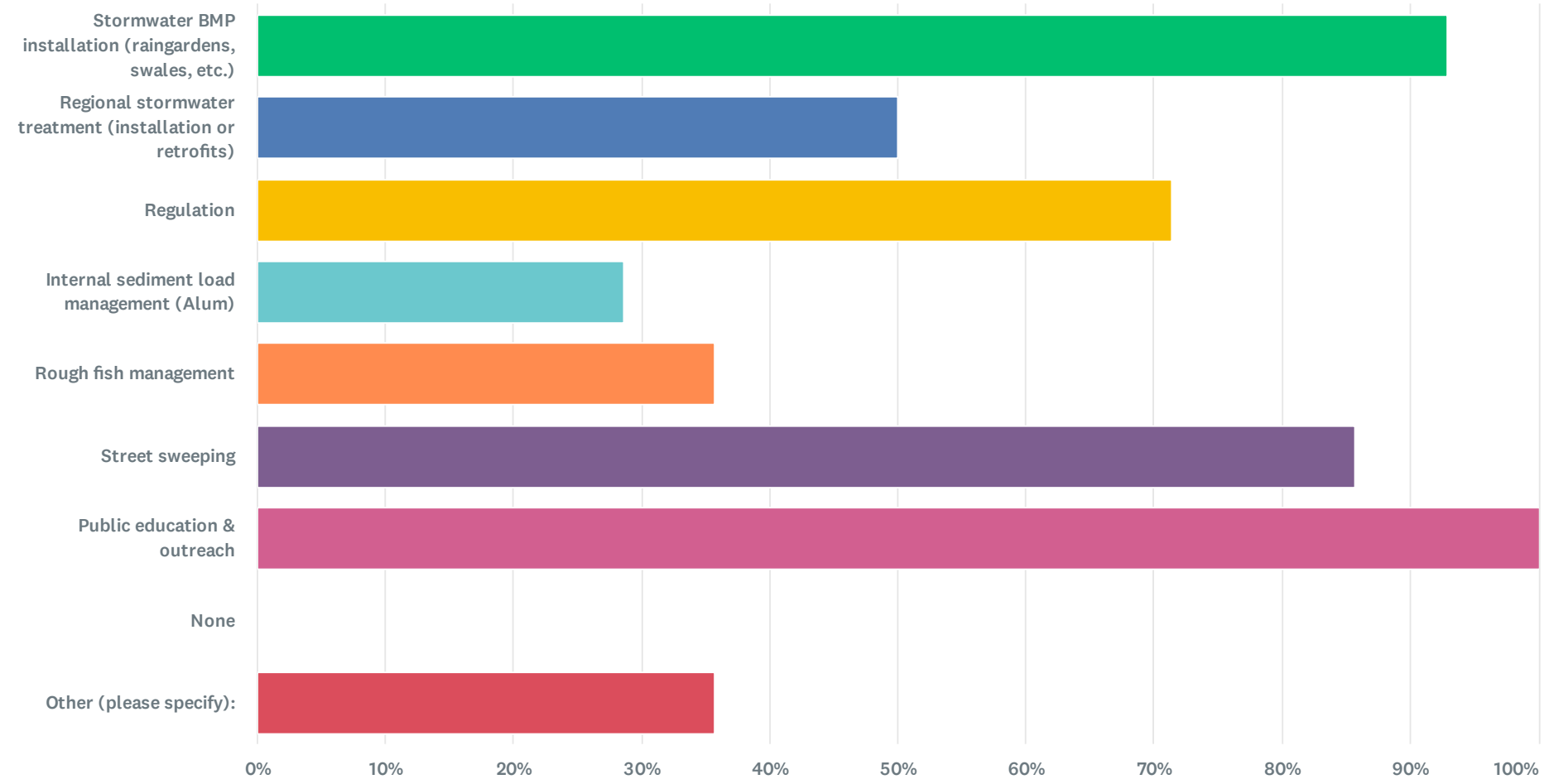
Which programs or departments are involved in water resource activities and programming in your organization?



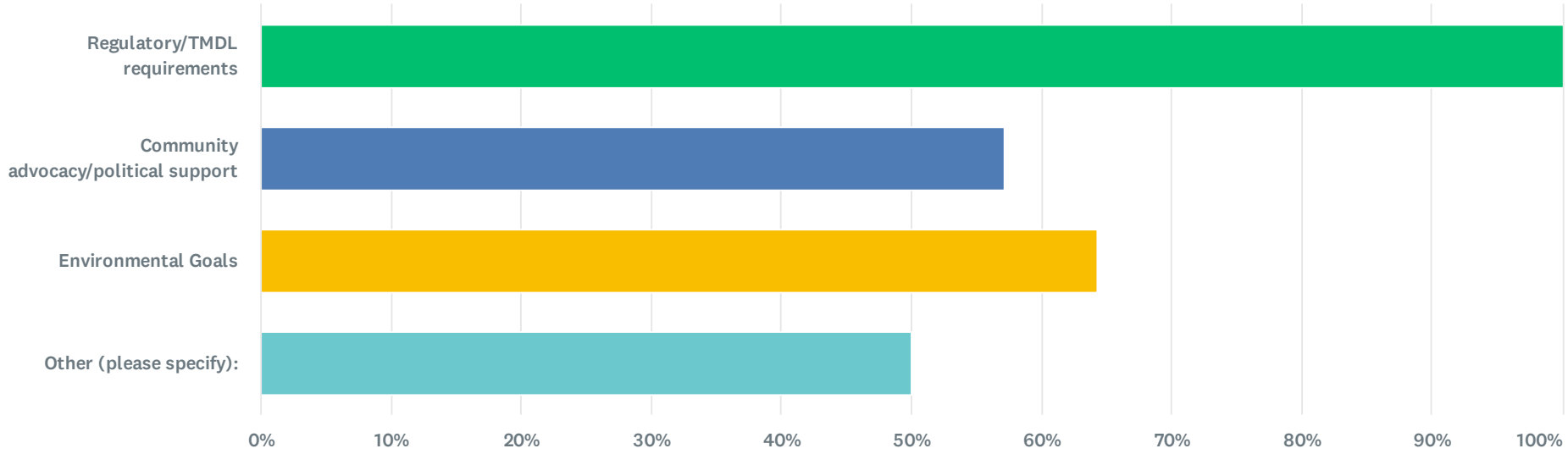
How are water resource projects and activities funded for your organization? Select all that apply.



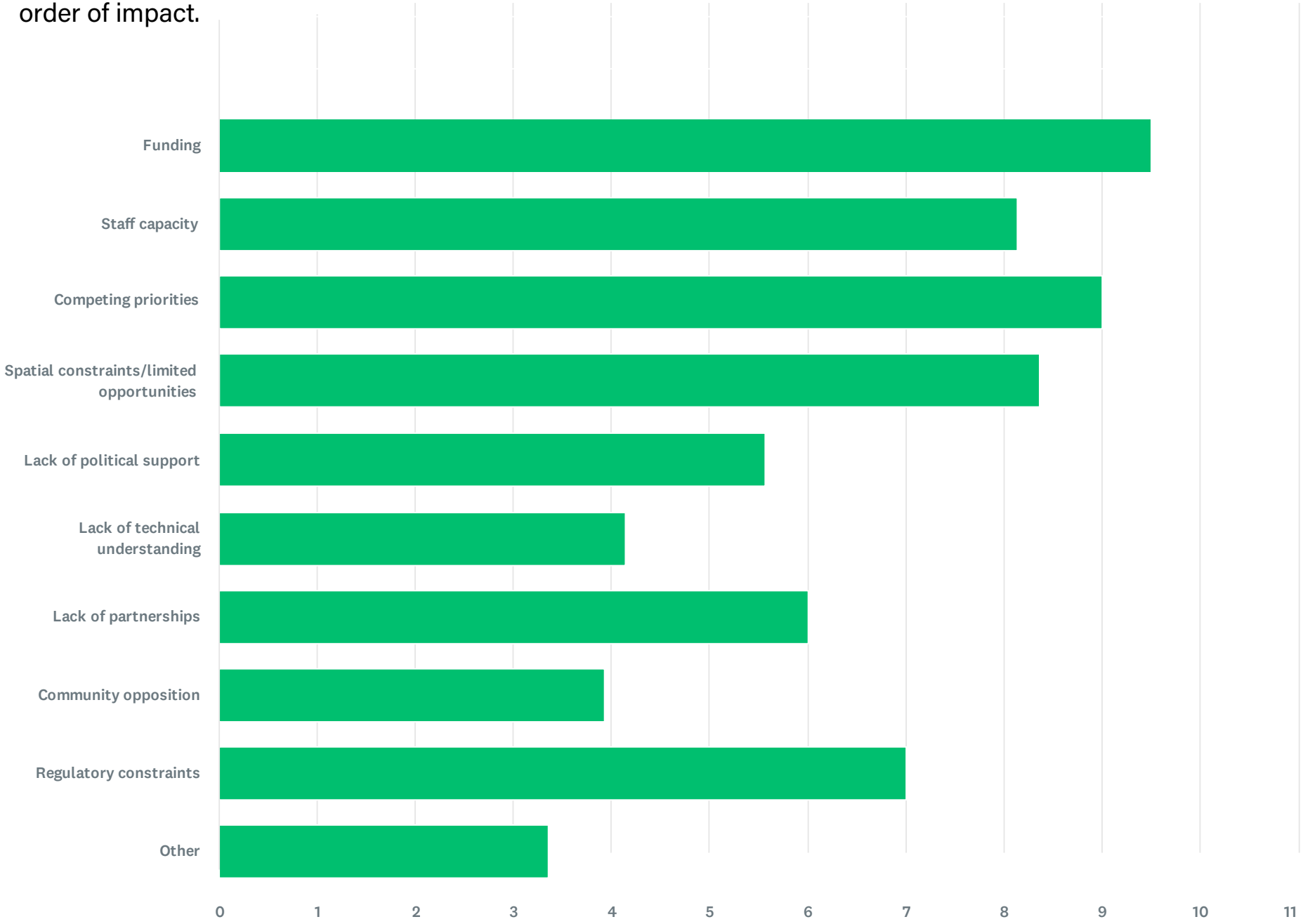
What actions are being taken by your organization to make progress toward its water quality goals?



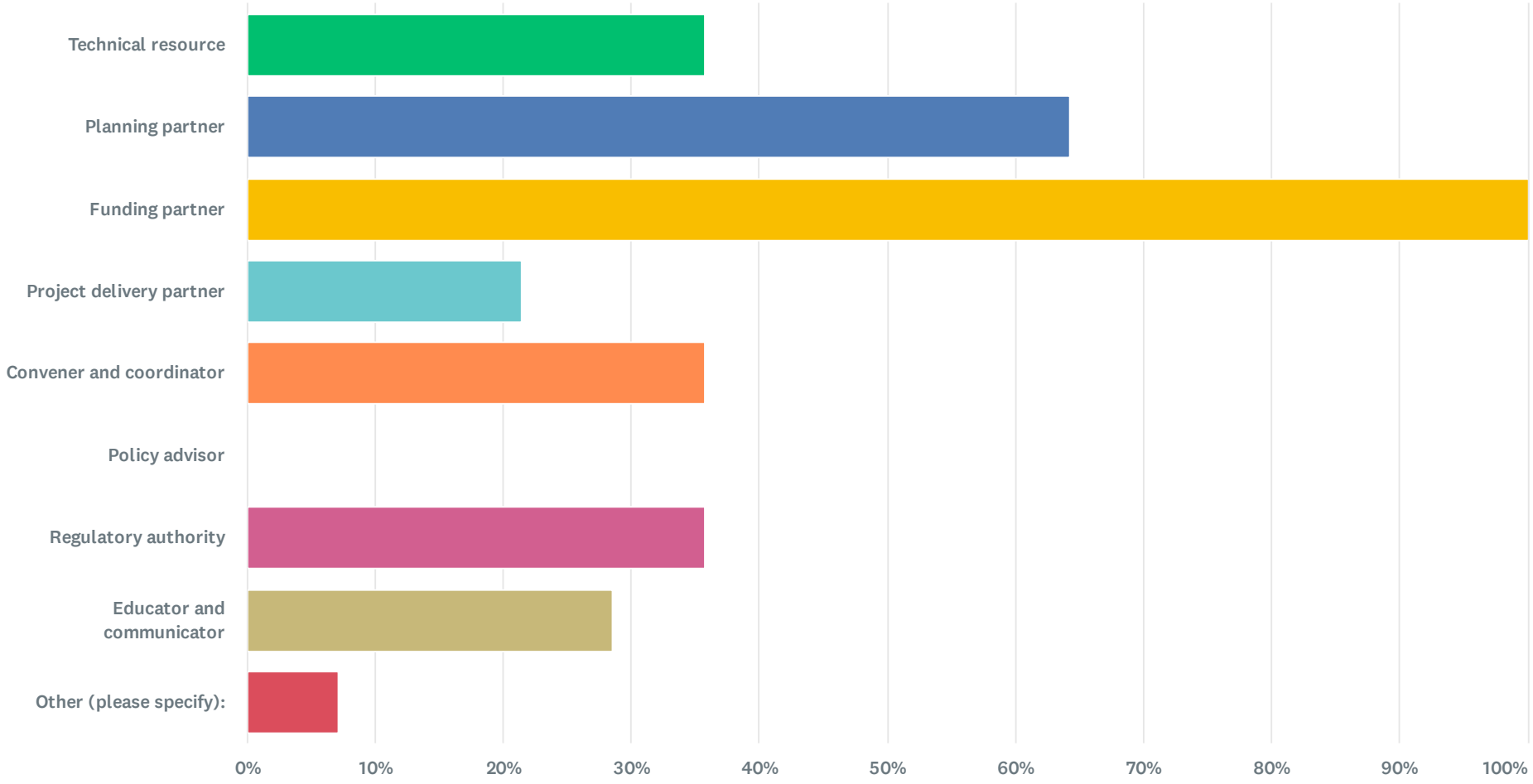
When water quality projects are implemented, what typically drives them?



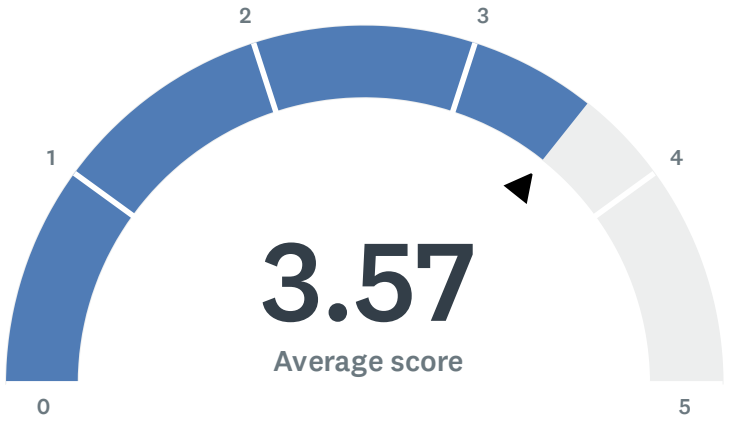
What challenges or limitations constrain your organization's water quality improvement actions? Rank them in order of impact.



What role should MCWD play to add the most value in supporting your organization in reaching its water quality goals? Please select up to three top roles for MCWD.

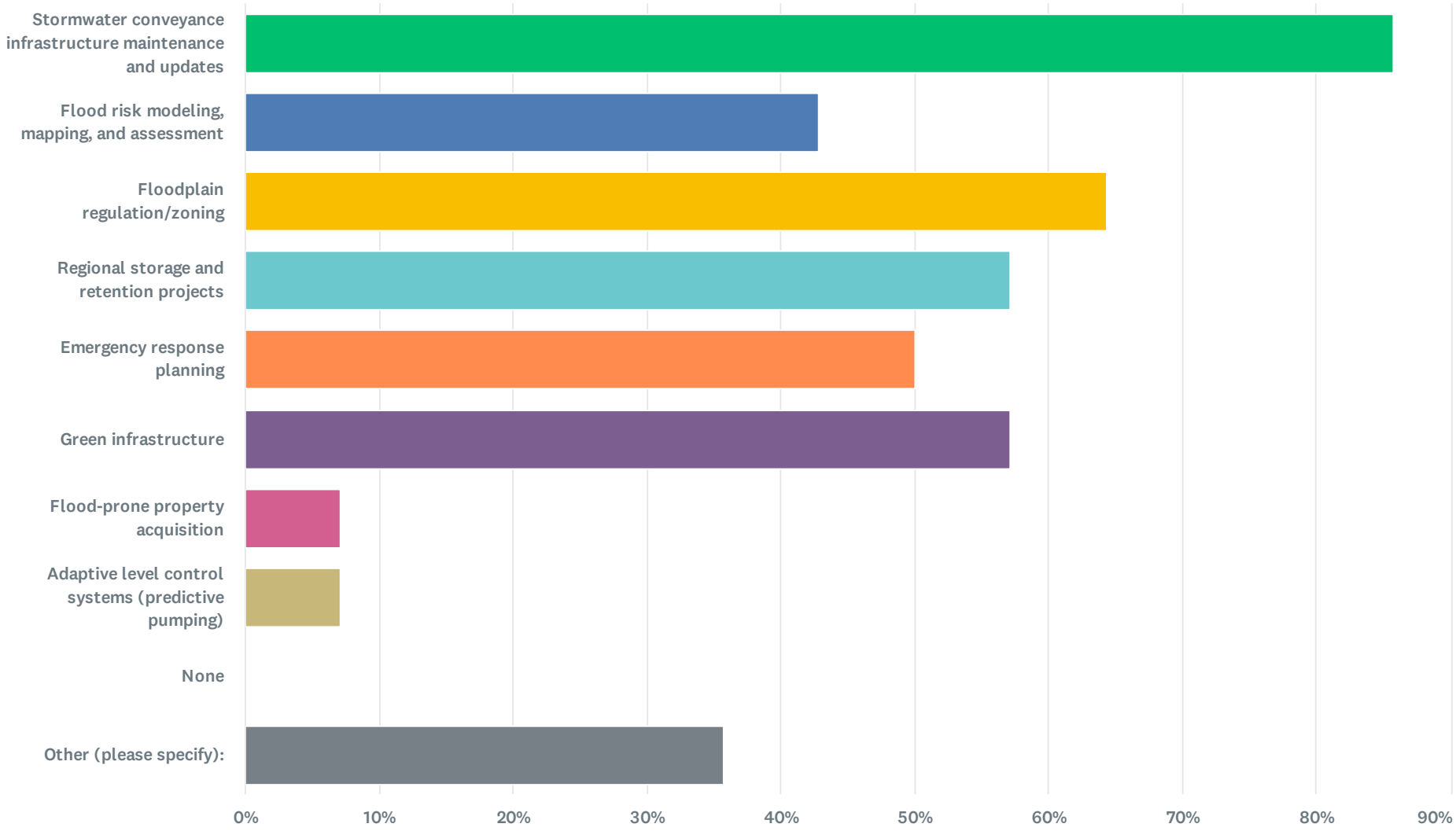


On the scale below, rank your organization's level of concern related to current and future flood risk?

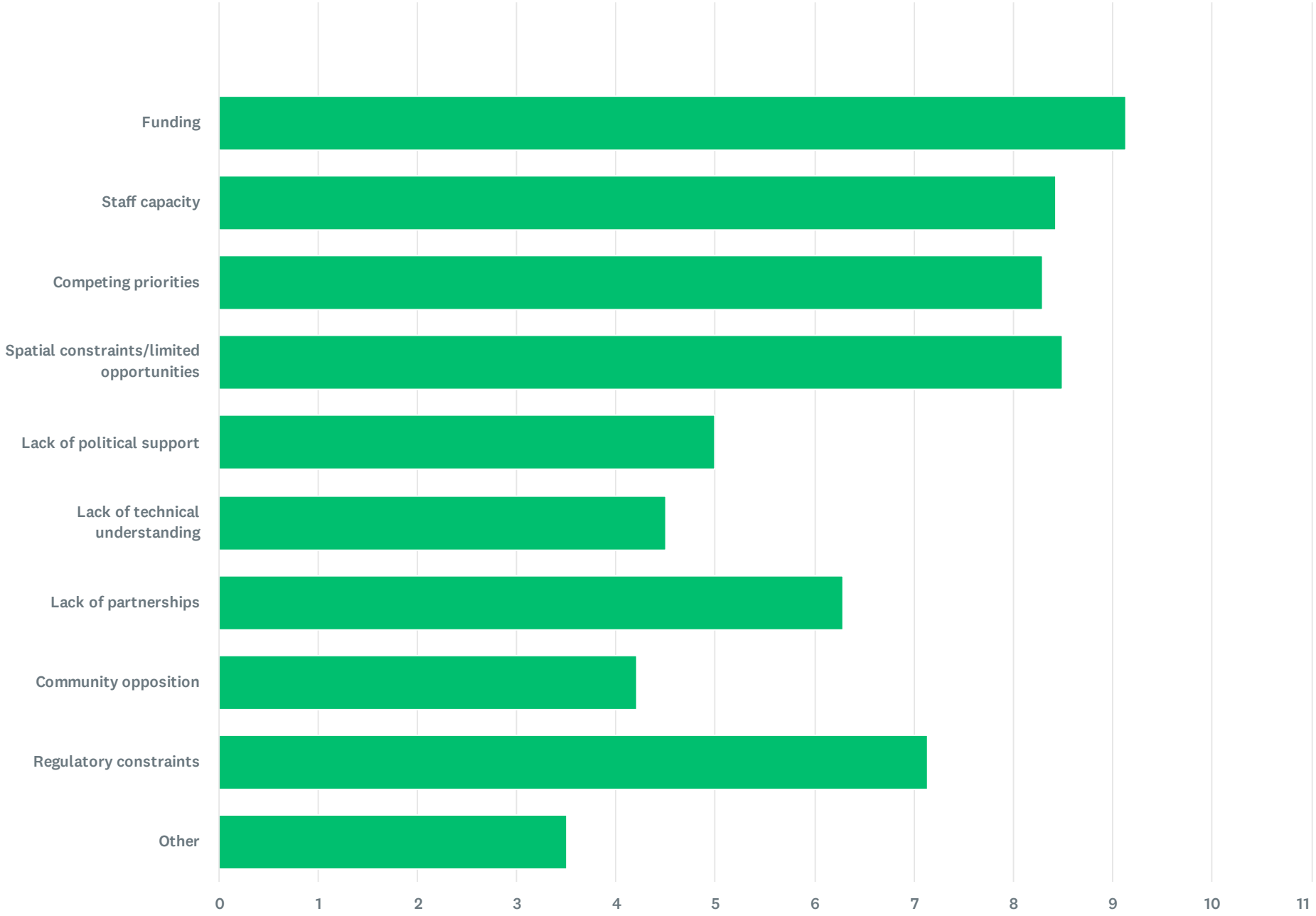


Basic statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	5.00	4.00	3.57	1.12

What actions are being taken by your organization to make progress toward its flood risk reduction goals?



What challenges or limitations constrain your organization's actions on flood risk reduction goals? Rank them in order of impact.



What role should MCWD play to add the most value in supporting your organization in reaching its flood risk reduction goals? Please select up to three top roles for MCWD.

