National Waterway Report Card Network

Discussion Series: Governance
Version 2, January 2017

Introduction

Establishment and maintenance of sound governance arrangements are an important aspect to waterway report card initiatives. Governance arrangements vary significantly across waterway report card initiatives in order to address particular requirements and arrangements. The purpose of this document is to outline the structures and operating arrangements of the various report card initiatives, with a view to share cross promotion of ideas for consideration to improve existing governance arrangements as well as supporting report card start-ups with a useful resource.

Governance Structures:

Healthy Waterways SEQ (QLD):
- Committee & Member-based Steering Committee
- Executive Science Advisory Committee & Steering Committee
- Report Cards & budgets & other items approved by Executive Science Advisory Committee & Steering Committee

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (QLD):
- Multi-member partnership
- Partners Network is primary group. Partners pay membership fee to be involved
- Management Committee is a sub-committee made up of and elected by organisations in the Partners Network
- Independent Science Panel – skills based, appointed by the Management Committee
- Report Card is approved by the Science Panel and endorsed for release by management committee
- Annual Membership based funding, guided by project plans and the Strategic Plan
- Hosted by Fitzroy Basin Association

Further Reading:
About the FPRH: http://riverhealth.org.au/about/
Operating Rules: http://riverhealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Riverhealth-Operating-Rules.pdf
Strategic Plan: http://riverhealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FPRH-Strategic-Plan-2016-2021-100516.pdf
Paper Summarising Establishment: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301420713000081

Mackay Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership (QLD): <mark>to be updated as network contact sees fit</mark>
- Partnership with Independent Chair and 22 partners (from community, industry, science, tourism & government)
- Management Committee focused on operational matters
- Reef Water Quality Protection Plan Independent Science Panel provide role of the Independent Science Panel
- Technical working group provide assistance with data coordination, modelling, and report card methodologies and design
- Regional NRM groups provide technical and communication support
- Hosted by Reef Catchments Limited

Further Reading:
About Governance and link to governance charter: http://healthyriverstoreef.org.au/about-us/governance/

Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (QLD): <mark>to be updated as network contact sees fit</mark>
- 3 tiered structure of Governance

- o   Management Committee
- o   Independent Science Panel (ISP)
- o   Partners
- o   Follow governance charter and also have Community Reference Groups, Host Organisation (Fitzroy Basin Association) and Staff

Great Barrier Reef Report Card (QLD & Federal): ==to be updated as network contact sees fit==

- Governance – Please refer to Appendix 1 for the Governance structure for the GBR Report Card.

Wet Tropics (QLD): ==to be updated as network contact sees fit==
- Host organisation
- Partnership Network
    - o   Technical working group
    - o   Management Committee
- ISP (Independent Science Panel)
- Partnership staff, including independent Chair

Mid Coast Council (NSW):

Small scale Report Card developed and distributed by Mid Coast Council which is an action from the Great Lakes Water Quality Improvement Plan. This plan was developed in partnership with community and agency stakeholders.

- Scientific data collection and analysis by Office of Environment and Heritage (NSW Government) via a contract with Mid Coast Council
- Natural Systems Team develop the Report Card messaging, content and present the scientific data provided by the Office of Environment and Heritage with assistance from science communication consultant who undertakes the layout of the Report Card.
- Partners in our programs (on ground works) including Local Land Services and Great Lakes Karuah Landcare are acknowledged on the Report Card to recognise this ongoing partnership.

==Other report card initiatives to be added here if the network contact would like to provide a summary of their particular governance arrangements==

Reflections on waterway report card governance arrangements

1. Traditional governance arrangements typically set out more rigid requirements for meeting frequency and attendance. While greater meeting frequency may be required in start-up, stakeholder/science panel member burnout may occur if:
    a. Meetings are held for the sake of holding a meeting. In this case, consider deferring or cancelling meetings. Another option is to lessen the frequency of scheduled meetings and accommodate for a number of issue based meeting, to deal with items if/as they arise.
    b. The full panel/committee is called upon to deal with items that only require a select number of specialists. In this case, consider establishing sub-groups committees (either short duration – issue based or longer term for an ongoing item)
    c. Several individuals sit on multiple committees. In this case, consider holding back-to-back meetings

If suitable for a particular initiative, these arrangements can both reduce the burnout of committee members and also reduce the costs of meetings. This not only reduces the direct meeting and travel costs, but also administration costs incurred in preparing agendas, minutes, papers.

The risk of this approach is that members are not meeting regularly enough to provide strategic direction to the initiative or to build the level of ownership amounts members. There needs to be a sufficient number of meetings to ensure the various committees are setting strategic direction of the initiative and minimises the potential for operational to strategic creep. The opposite can also be true, where meetings occur too frequently and committees begin creeping into dealing with operational matters due when strategic matters

are in good order and there is little more on the agenda to discuss. The benefits and risks should be balanced in considering the above

2. Maintaining a stable income stream to facilitate report card delivery can be challenging, particularly when enthusiasm wanes after the first or second report card is released. Strategies to support income stability are often dependent on the organisations/partners involved in the particular initiative and may include:
   a. Aligning report card production with regulatory requirements or long term policy adopted by one/multiple tiers of government
   b. Maintaining strong ownership and buy-in from all members investing to the initiative, including the ability to influence and guide investment priorities
   c. Offering new and innovating reporting, education and engagement products and initiatives on an annual basis to ensure the initiative does not become stale.
   d. Invest into building internal skills capacity and expertise of the initiative that facilitates opportunity to explore revenue streams beyond the base membership/project
   e. Seek efficiencies in report card preparation, development and promotion so that the report card product can be delivered for less funding. This allows for funds to be redirected to other priority activities or for the report card to be delivered if income streams dry up in the future.
   f. Collaborate across initiatives and with other like-minded organisations to reduce costs. Hosting and mergers are potential examples.

3. Maintaining institutional memory regarding the initial motivations and drivers for report card development is a critical element of operations. In the Storming, Forming phase of report card development a great deal of effort is invested by partners/members to establish the report cards and associated governance structures/arrangements. As these initiatives move into the Norming phase, institutional memory is slowly eroded as both staff and members of various committees move on. If historic arrangements are not clearly documented and communicated, new staff and members may propose completing a body of work that has been largely completed in the recent past implement arrangements that may have proven ineffective for a particular circumstance. Strategies that may help reduce loss of institutional memory include:
   a. Documentation of meetings, decision points, governance arrangements and other material that can be used and referred to when topics that have been discussed and resolved resurface
   b. Staff and committee member succession planning to reduce shock of sudden loss of institutional memory
   c. Establishing/maintaining formal review processes every 3-5 years to allow time and resources for reflection and refinement of existing governance and institutional arrangements. There is nothing wrong with renewal and revisiting decision-making processes, when balanced with stability, other competing priorities of and capacity of staff/committee members.
   d. Preparation of documentation outlining systems, processes and procedures for use in hand-over for staff and committee members.

4. Operating under hosting arrangements with an MOU between Regional NRM Groups, Universities and Government can reduce the amount of effort and resources required to maintain financial, HR and administrative activities that are ancillary to the core objectives of the report card initiative. Examples include:
   a. Fitzroy Partnership for River Health and many other regional report cards in QLD are hosted by the associated Regional NRM Body under defined MOU that clearly articulates the rights and responsibilities of each party.
   b. Merger of Healthy Waterways and SEQ Catchments to Healthy Waterways and Catchments, with the goal of delivering administration, financial and operational efficiencies
   c. The joint Australian Government & Queensland Government GBR Report Card is hosted with the Office of the GBR

5. Waterway report card initiatives generally attract committee members and staff with strong science background, yet success of these initiatives is reliant on broader skills and abilities. It is often beneficial to explore getting the mix of staff, contractors and committee members more evenly balanced between scientific and other skills relevant to report card development. Some of these skills include:
   a. Member/Client/Partner relations
   b. Communications and Graphic Design (online and hard copy)
   c. Media and engagement

      d.   Finance, Administration and project management

Achieving a more balanced skillset in the team helps to ensure the focus of effort of a particular initiative does not become myopic. While it can be difficult for those with a strong science background to accept, knowledge transfer to the wider community and associated policy/decision makers is not directly correlated to the level of scientific rigour/quality of the report card product. Significant focus on communication and awareness raising aspects is required to help capitalise on scientific effort invested into report card products.

<mark>6.   Other Reflections to be added to the list as network contacts see fit</mark>

Reflections on changes to waterway report card governance arrangements

<mark>To be provided as network contacts see fit.</mark>
For example, if governance arrangements have changed over time, please provide details of the changes, why they occurred and any reflections

APPENDICES

Appendix 1   **Great Barrier Reef Governance structure for Australian and Queensland Governments**

APPENDIX 1 - Australian and Queensland Reef Governance Structure

Legend

New

Existing

Informal coordination groups

Minister Miles
(QG)

QG GBR Ministerial Water Science Taskforce
(12 months)

QG Inter Departmental Committee (IDC)
(EHP chair)

Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum (MinFo)
(AG/QG)

Standing Committee of Officials (SCO) - Expanded
(AG/QG)

RWQPP Executive Steering Committee incorporating Intergovernmental Operations Committee (ESC/IOC)

Reef 2050 Independent Expert Panel (IEP)
(DoE secretariat)

Reef 2050 Reef Advisory Committee (RAC)
(EHP secretariat)

Reef 2050 Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (IMRP)
(GBRMPA/EHP chair)
(GBRMPA secretariat)

RWQPP Independent Science Panel (ISP)
(EHP secretariat)

RWQPP Partnership Committee (PC)
(EHP secretariat)

IMRP Program Design Working Group
(AIMS)

IMRP Reporting & Synthesis Working Group
(GBRMPA)

IMRP Data Management
(GBRMPA)

RWQPP Management Practice Advisory Group (MPAG)
(DAF secretariat)

RWQPP Reef Coordination and Advisory Committee (CAG)
(EHP secretariat)

RWQPP Research and Development Coordination Group
(EHP secretariat)

Reef Core Communications Group
(EHP secretariat)