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MODEL FOREST TOOLKIT

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MODEL FOREST TOOLKIT

THE MODEL FOREST TOOLKIT IS A HOW-TO MANUAL FOR NEW AND EXISTING MODEL FOREST MANAGERS AND OTHERS INTERESTED IN THE PRACTICE. LEARN HOW TO SET UP A MODEL FOREST, UNDERTAKE STRATEGIC PLANNING, ORGANIZE AND RUN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES, COLLECT AND DEMONSTRATE IMPACT, AND SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES WITH DONORS, PARTNERS AND FOLLOWERS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- CHAPTER 1 — STARTING A MODEL FOREST
- CHAPTER 2 — MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING
- CHAPTER 3 — MODEL FOREST GOVERNANCE
- CHAPTER 4 — MODEL FOREST WORK PLANNING
- CHAPTER 5 — MODEL FOREST MONITORING AND EVALUATION
- CHAPTER 6 — MODEL FOREST COMMUNICATIONS

CHAPTER 1

STARTING A MODEL FOREST

Starting a Model Forest means: 1) defining a physical area where there is an opportunity to jointly manage resources and sustainable development, 2) bringing together all the stakeholders involved to make those decisions in a participatory, equitable and transparent way, 3) developing and implementing a strategic plan, and 4) going through the steps to become a member of the IMFN.

MODEL FOREST APPROACH

No two Model Forests are the same. While all share common principles and attributes, the cultural, geographic, institutional, political and other circumstances make each Model Forest unique. The activities and approaches undertaken by Model Forests differ in light of this diversity. In some Model Forests, for example, conservation issues are paramount, while in others economic diversification, conflict management, wood value chains, watershed management or other issues are more prominent.

It is important for your Model Forest to build an approach and program of work that is relevant, inclusive, technically sound and achievable, and one that reflects your stakeholders' priorities, circumstances and customs. This can be done by following the six Model Forest Principles as described below.

MODEL FOREST PRINCIPLES

Many land and resource management strategies already reflect some of the core elements of the Model Forest concept — for example, participatory forestry, forest landscape restoration (FLR), ecosystem-based management, collaborative networks and landscape approaches. However, the following six principles are unique to all Model Forests:

1. Landscape
2. Partnership
3. Commitment to sustainability
4. Governance
5. Program of activities
6. Knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking.

Regardless of the specific ecosystems or tenures involved in your Model Forest, the six principles have the following effects:

- Facilitate experiments in sustainable development
- Maintain broad program coherence
- Create a clear link between landscape-level applications and national and international policy issues
- Help each Model Forest maintain its conceptual focus and program integrity throughout its development
- Ensure that each Model Forest has the autonomy to design an initiative that reflects local priorities
- Create a mechanism for convening a broad range of stakeholders and a foundation for networking at the local, national, regional and international levels.

How to apply the Principles to initiate a Model Forest is described in greater detail below.



Photo: Prince Albert Model Forest, Canada

DEFINE THE LANDSCAPE

There is no minimum or maximum prescribed area for a Model Forest. For some, boundaries correspond to an existing administrative unit such as a municipality or multiple administrative units. Others are defined by an ecological boundary, such as a watershed or multiple watersheds. Alternately, boundaries may be determined by a particular issue stakeholders wish to address, such as species at risk or landscape restoration, as examples. The key element is to ensure a diversity of interests, land uses and stakeholder representation within the area selected.

In other words, a Model Forest must be large enough to represent the full range of landscape uses and values in the surrounding area. At 20,750 hectares, the Carood Watershed Model Forest in the Philippines is one of the smallest while Chiquitano Model Forest in Bolivia covers 20 million hectares. Most Model Forests range from 300,000 to 500,000 hectares. A site may start out smaller and grow in size over time as new issues or priorities arise (though growth in area is not required).

IDENTIFY MODEL FOREST STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have determined the issue(s) you wish to address in a particular landscape, the next step is to understand who needs to be involved. Model Forest stakeholders are individuals, groups or institutions that are interested in, are affected by or can affect (positively or negatively) a Model Forest's decisions about resource management and programming priorities. Stakeholders need not reside within the physical boundaries of your Model Forest. In fact, many Model Forests involve organizations from outside, such as universities and research institutions. As well, although some stakeholders remain constant throughout the life of a Model Forest, others change over time as issues, programming and needs change.

The stakeholders who voluntarily work together to identify a common vision and address issues of mutual interest, and who are formally recognized in the Model Forest's governance structure, are referred to as “partners.”

Your initial stakeholder group may be small, but it will likely grow over time. Partners should encourage new stakeholders to participate as gaps are identified in knowledge, issues or representation. Other organizations may become interested in participating when they learn more about Model Forests and their activities.

A Model Forest partnership does not have legal authority over the land base and, therefore, must include key land users, managers and other stakeholders.

Here are some examples of stakeholders:

- Industry
- Community groups
- Indigenous peoples
- Government agencies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Academic and research institutions
- National parks
- Private landowners.



Photo: Campo Ma'an Model Forest, Cameroon

SOME FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS:

- **Influence:** Influence goes beyond how much power a stakeholder wields to bring about change. It also includes the absence of influence. Consider the needs and interests of those who may be affected by decisions but have no power to influence them.
- **Responsibility:** Examine a potential stakeholder's responsibilities. These may include regulatory responsibility for compliance with laws, policies and regulations; contractual or legal responsibility to other organizations; financial responsibility to donors or others that provide resources; and ethical or moral responsibility to those that are affected by, or that can affect, decision-making in the Model Forest.
- **Representation:** Consider not only the different values and uses of the landscape that the Model Forest should represent, but the legitimacy of a representative and the number of interests represented. The groups the stakeholder representative claims to speak for should support that person as their representative.



Photo: Reventazón Model Forest, Costa Rica

Often Model Forests are formed to address conflicting interests, making them complex in practice. Therefore, the partnership often includes stakeholders who do not typically work together or agree with one another. To engage local participation and expertise, the partnership needs to recognize that its many points of view have common elements and have a place in the decision-making process.

It is strongly recommended that you conduct planning exercises in the form of workshops and meetings to help stakeholders reach consensus about the Model Forest's strategic directions, including its vision, objectives and expected impacts, and ongoing activities. These elements should form the foundations of your strategic plan, which ultimately seeks to apply and demonstrate natural resource management practices that are environmentally sound, socially acceptable and economically viable. Identifying commonalities rather than focusing on differences is a helpful way to start. Different approaches may be needed for different stakeholders to ensure their full participation.

More information about strategic planning is available in Chapter 2 of this guide.

ASSESS YOUR MODEL FOREST

These key questions will help you assess your Model Forest plans and approaches against the six Model Forest Principles during its development period:

ASSESSING YOUR LANDSCAPE

- Does your landscape area contain significant forest and other natural resources, including unique environmental features?
- Is your area reflective of social, cultural and other community considerations?
- Are a range of issues and values represented on the landscape?
- Is there a diversity of landscape types (ecosystems, land uses, etc.) within your area?
- Is your area reflective of your broader geographic region?
- Is there a clearly articulated rationale for the area selected?

ASSESSING YOUR PARTNERSHIP

- Can most of the population access the Model Forest through a stakeholder who represents their principal activity, value or area of interest?
- Does your Model Forest have a diverse partnership of stakeholders who identify goals, set priorities and development targets, and establish policy guidelines for the overall program?
- Are any values or resource uses under-represented or not represented in your partnership?
- Are there stakeholders or other groups not currently involved that could help achieve your goals?

ASSESSING YOUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

- Does your partnership have an agreed-upon strategy for determining progress toward sustainability? Is there a commitment to developing and implementing this strategy?
- Does your partnership have a long-term commitment to the concept of sustainable development? Will it support research and technology transfer on the subject?
- Does your Model Forest have the support of national, regional and local authorities (public or private) with jurisdiction over the land and resources?
- Does your Model Forest's program relate to an overall national or regional forest plan?

ASSESSING YOUR GOVERNANCE

- Does your governance structure encourage, in practice, meaningful participation by the stakeholders?
- Is your Model Forest managed by a partnership of stakeholders representing a diversity of interests (e.g., industry, community groups, government agencies, non-governmental environmental and forestry groups, academic and educational institutions, national parks, Aboriginal groups, private landowners)?
- Is your Model Forest managed by consensus and is the decision-making structure transparent?
- Has your Model Forest established technical or advisory committees to develop your program and report to the stakeholder committee?
- Does your governance structure exclude or inhibit involvement by any groups?

ASSESSING YOUR PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

- Does your Model Forest reflect the majority of local and national forest values as defined in a national forest program or similar documentation?
- Is your Model Forest concerned about the needs of local and indigenous people, as well as about the conservation and wise use of the forests and natural resources?
- In its programming, does your Model Forest consider the range of forest values identified as being important? Does it consider social, economic, ecological and historical dimensions of sustainable management of the forest-based landscape and natural resources?
- Does your Model Forest demonstrate the most environmentally appropriate management practices and techniques, and does it support, to the degree possible, scientific research and the application of new technologies?
- Does your Model Forest carry out education and training within the area to make local communities more aware of the program?

ASSESSING YOUR KNOWLEDGE SHARING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

- Do you make your commitment to knowledge sharing known through network activities, demonstration projects, linkages to other Model Forests and participation in global processes (e.g., the development and application of local-level indicators of sustainable forest management)?
- Will your Model Forest be an active partner in the IMFN and share experiences, successes and failures with other Model Forests?



Photo: Kōdagu Model Forest, India

CHAPTER 2

MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING

Undertaking a strategic planning process and developing a Strategic Plan for your Model Forest ensures that everyone involved shares the same vision for managing the landscape and implementing activities. It also helps assess your direction over the years in response to a changing environment, and ensures projects are consistent with the Model Forest's agreed mandate.

The value of the strategic planning process cannot be overstated. The planning process typically involves several workshops (and possibly meetings between smaller groups). If stakeholders do not feel sense of ownership or see themselves reflected in the plan, the chance of success is low. Take the time necessary to discuss issues, negotiate trade offs and move the process forward while building trust.

STEP 1: STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Undertake an analysis of your Model Forest's operating environment by exploring the needs, issues and challenges faced by your stakeholders. This will help identify the barriers, constraints, contexts, and opportunities that can inform how you develop and operate your Model Forest. Answer the following questions:

- What challenges do you face concerning the sustainable management of the landscape? What are the common elements?
- What do you require to be effectively involved in sustainably managing the forested landscape? What are the common elements?
- What sustainable development challenges currently exist on the Model Forest land base? What concerns do you have regarding the sustainable management of natural resources on the land base?
- What are your country's and district's priorities in relation to the national forest program and natural resource management?
- What international agreements, treaties and conventions are of interest to or apply to your Model Forest?
- What constraints or impediments do you face in developing and operating an effective Model Forest?
- What do you need or expect from stakeholders' involvement in the Model Forest?
- Who is already working on areas that interest your Model Forest? What are they doing? Are they already involved in the Model Forest, or can they become involved?
- What is the potential niche or area of expertise for your Model Forest?
- What is the timeframe of your strategy? (typically the timeframe is 5 years)

RESULT: A prioritized list of critical issues, needs and challenges that you and your stakeholders plan to address.

STEP 2: SET YOUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Using your strategic analysis as the basis, establish consensus on the vision, mission, objectives and expected impacts of your Model Forest.

Vision: Your vision should describe how the Model Forest area would be better or different if you achieved your expected long-term impacts.

Mission: Your mission should define how your stakeholders want to operate to achieve the Model Forest's vision. The mission can be framed around your common values, for example:

1. The core priorities in your culture or way of operating (e.g., consensus decision-making, broad participation, transparency)
2. The landscape elements that are important to each stakeholder (e.g., biodiversity, water, non-timber forest products, forest productivity, livelihoods).

The first set of values can help you choose a governance structure and a set of operating principles for your Model Forest. The second can help you identify issues and challenges, then prioritize them.

Objectives: Objectives outline what is expected to be achieved over the period of the strategic plan. The objectives should be limited in number (e.g. three to seven) and should clearly support the expected impacts.

Impacts: Impacts are the sustainable changes resulting from your activities, taking place in the short, medium and long term and corresponding to the vision and objectives of your Model Forest.

You may find it helpful to present your Model Forest's expected impacts in the form of a logic model, which is a flow chart that shows the relationships between programs and activities, outputs, outcomes and expected impacts. See Model Forest Monitoring and Evaluation for more details.

RESULT: Agreement on the vision, mission, objectives and expected impacts of your Model Forest.

STEP 3: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance structure of your Model Forest enables effective decision making involving all stakeholders. Questions related to Model Forest governance include:

- What is the most effective way to involve people, undertake activities and achieve your strategic directions?
- Do you have a transparent and accountable organizational structure that allows full and open participation by interested parties?
- Does your governance structure include effective ways of involving new stakeholders over time?
- Should any of your existing structures be changed? Are any additional structures required?

Read more: *Chapter 3: Model Forest Governance*

RESULT: Identification of an accountable, transparent and effective governance structure that suits your Model Forest context and complies with the laws of your jurisdiction.

STEP 4: PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

A work plan outlines the program areas and activities that will lead to achieving the strategic directions over the life of the Model Forest. Ask yourself: What can our Model Forest do to achieve our vision and long-term impacts? What activities will accomplish this?

Your work plan should contain the following:

- Overview of the general approach being used to achieve your strategic directions
- List of program areas and activities
- Identification of who will be involved in the activities
- Overview of the outputs of the proposed activities
- Timeline for implementation (such as a Gantt chart).

Program areas might include: Partnership development and maintenance; Applied research; Community sustainability and livelihood development; Communications and public awareness; Knowledge transfer; Networking; Monitoring and evaluation; and Management and administration.

Read more: *Chapter 4: Model Forest Work Planning*

RESULT: Identification of, and agreement on, the program areas and types of activities the Model Forest will undertake to achieve its strategic directions.

STEP 5: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

You should prepare a financial plan or budget to identify the resources needed to implement your strategy as well as sources of funding. A financial plan includes two main components:

- Total forecasted expenses (i.e., the cost of undertaking the activities in your implementation strategy)
- Current and potential funding sources, as well as monetary and in-kind contributions.

Often partners can contribute staff time, office space, or other non-monetary contributions. These in-kind contributions should be tracked as they are important sources of support for the Model Forest.

RESULT: Identification of financial resources required to achieve your strategic directions.

STEP 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of your Model Forest's plans and activities helps determine how successful they are and what aspects of your program or activities might need to be adjusted on an ongoing basis. Describing your general approach to M&E should be included in your strategic plan. Details should be outlined in an M&E Framework.

Read more: *Chapter 5: Monitoring and Evaluation*

STEP 7: COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Sharing lessons learned is part of the sixth Model Forest Principle. Whether it is communicating results locally among stakeholders, to local or national governments, or with other members of the IMFN, sharing experiences accelerates sustainability in all of our landscapes and increases access to potential new or additional resources. Yet, communications and knowledge sharing is often overlooked as an important element strategic planning.

Understanding who you need to reach, why, how and how often is key to effective communication. Communications and knowledge sharing should be noted in your strategy in broad terms. Details should be captured in a separate communications and knowledge sharing plan that directly links to your Model Forest strategic plan and supporting program of work.

Read more: *Chapter 6: Model Forest Communications*



Photo: Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

STEP 8: PRODUCING A STRATEGIC PLAN

Now it is time to consolidate all this information into a single document — a Strategic Plan. Your Strategic Plan answers the questions: Where are we? What resources do we have? What do we want to achieve? How do we get there? A small committee or individual can develop a draft for review. Approval is then sought and required by the larger stakeholder group. Once approved, your Model Forest Strategic Plan should be shared with the IMFN Secretariat.

General outline of a Model Forest Strategic Plan:

1. Description of the Model Forest Area

- Map of your Model Forest
- The size of your Model Forest, including a rationale for the boundary selected
- Biophysical information such as land types, areas and water
- Descriptions of major land uses such as forest resources (ecosystems, species, NTFPs, etc), agriculture and mining
- Land tenure arrangements
- Conservation and protected areas
- Communities, socio-economic characteristics and economic dependencies, significant cultural and historical information.

2. Issues, challenges and stakeholder needs

Briefly describe the critical issues, challenges and needs identified during your strategic analysis and include an overview of how and why you selected these issues.

3. History of Model Forest development

If relevant, include information and analysis about your Model Forest’s past impacts, successes, lessons learned and challenges, to show how you will move forward by building on past activities.

4. Strategic directions

Outline the strategic directions that stakeholders have agreed to: vision/mission, objectives, expected impacts and logic model.

5. Governance and administration

Outline the governance and administrative structure you have identified to complement your stakeholders group: your organizational structure, operating principles, decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities, and other administrative concerns.

6. Work plan

Describe the programs and activities your Model Forest will undertake to achieve its vision, objectives and expected impacts.

7. Financial plan

Prepare a detailed financial plan for the strategic plan period (e.g. 5 years) that outlines your expense forecasts and funding sources.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Describe in broad terms how you will know your project is on track/successful or not. Partners should prepare a separate and detailed monitoring and evaluation framework.

9. Communications and knowledge sharing

Communications and knowledge sharing should be included as a Model Forest activity. Partners should later develop a detailed communications plan that directly links to the Model Forest strategy and program of work.

10. Other

You might want to include a signature page showing your stakeholders’ commitments, an executive summary and any additional information in annexes such as letters of support or funding.

RESULT: A final Strategic Plan for your Model Forest.

NOTE: *The International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) and the Regional Model Forest Networks have considerable experience reviewing strategic plans and can offer sound advice on their content, structure and more. Contact us for assistance.*



Photo: River Mirna Basin Model Forest, Croatia

CHAPTER 3

MODEL FOREST GOVERNANCE

One of the most important steps in developing a Model Forest is to clearly define an appropriate governance structure so that the roles and responsibilities within the Model Forest are clear to everyone involved.

The Model Forest governance structure should be participatory and transparent, and reflect your landscape's cultural, social, political and economic realities to ensure consensus building among stakeholders. It should also operate on the bases of consensus.

STEP 1: CREATE KEY POSITIONS, COMMITTEES, GROUPS AND STRUCTURES

First, based on the stakeholder group identified in your strategic plan, develop an organizational structure that allows for active participation and consensus-based decision-making by your stakeholders.

It is important to understand that not all stakeholders will want to be involved in the same capacity or to the same degree. Although all stakeholders are equal, their level of involvement will vary in absolute terms, as well as over time.

Levels or types of governance can vary within and among Model Forests, examples include:

1) **Governing body**

A Model Forest requires a body that meets regularly to oversee any staff and provide direction and authorization on strategic issues. This group might be called a Management Committee, an Executive Steering Committee, a Board of Directors, or another preferred name.

The governing body is ultimately responsible for all aspects of governance and management of the Model Forest as an organization. It ensures that a Model Forest's resources are effectively applied to support the strategic directions. It meets regularly with Model Forest staff to review activities, project developments, new proposals, challenges and financial reports. It also approves budgets and makes decisions on its own or on recommendation from management.

The governing body is typically elected at the annual stakeholder meeting or is chosen through another agreed-upon process.

A Model Forest may decide to incorporate as a formal entity or not-for-profit organization, or may opt for a less formal approach. Choose whatever structure is best for your partnership.

2) Stakeholder committee

A typical stakeholder committee is made up of representatives from all stakeholders, led by an elected President or Chair, and/or a Board of Directors, who are responsible for overseeing programs and ensuring that annual plans are implemented as endorsed by the governing body.

The stakeholder committee typically makes decisions at periodic forums or annual board meetings that address broad questions of strategy, program direction and policy. During these forums, the governing body and project leads report on their activities in the previous year and present plans for the next year. The forum allows stakeholders to discuss and debate strategic and operational issues in the presence of the governing body.

Some stakeholder committees meet formally only once a year, or more frequently under extraordinary circumstances

3) Technical or advisory committees

Model Forests benefit greatly from the input and guidance of specialists. This professional expertise is often contributed through formal or informal technical or advisory committees, also called working groups or task forces.

The size, composition and activity level of the technical committee will vary according to need. Some committees are project-specific and end once their project is completed, while others can be permanent, operating in an advisory capacity to both the governing body and the staff.

Technical committees might undertake preparatory work leading up to management decisions (e.g., developing policies, procedures and recommendations for high-level consideration; reviewing and recommending projects and activities as part of an annual work plan). They may also carry out specific tasks, such as fundraising, and work with staff to implement operations, activities and projects.

Terms of reference for each technical committee are key to helping define and understand the committee’s roles, responsibilities, tasks, reporting relationships and participants.

4) Staff

Model Forest staff develop and undertake an annual work plan to ensure the Model Forest operations are looked after. Model Forest staff can include a general manager, a project manager, a communication or technical officer and/or an administrative support person; however, this may vary depending on available resources, the scope of the annual work plan, and the reporting and tracking requirements of sponsoring agencies. In some countries, staff might be paid for or provided by the host government, a stakeholder or an international donor, or a combination of all three.



Photo: Prince Albert Model Forest, Canada

STEP 2: OUTLINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of each level of governance boosts accountability and transparency, two key principles in Model Forest governance. The best way to outline roles and responsibilities is to prepare a table that covers three categories:

1. **Who is accountable:** List your Model Forest's key positions, committees, groups and structures. You can limit the list to those responsible for performance reporting in some way (e.g., general manager, president, board of directors, key committees and working groups).
2. **What they are accountable for and their roles:** Outline the roles and responsibilities of each group on the list and note what each is accountable for. An exhaustive list of responsibilities is not required, just the essential tasks that the group would be asked to report on.
3. **Who do they report to:** Explain the reporting relationships of each group, and how they fit into the different levels of Model Forest, regional network and the IMFN.

Your table may not include every position, committee or group in the Model Forest, but it should clearly indicate the various roles and responsibilities. One way to examine roles and responsibilities is to determine who would make a recommendation and who would approve something.



Photo: Kodagu Model Forest, India

STEP 3: DEVELOP POLICIES, BYLAWS AND GROUND RULES

Growing pains are to be expected in the initial stages of a new Model Forest. Decision-making processes will be untested, and an unfamiliarity with working together may strain the resolve of the stakeholders. However, assuming that stakeholders have made a commitment to the Model Forest concept, and that each stakeholder comes to the table prepared to treat others with respect and consideration, debate can be constructive and decisions can reflect broad stakeholder input. Developing policies, bylaws and ground rules can help smooth the way.

There are four general types of policies to help guide decision making and activities:

1) **Framework and governance policies**

- Reflect the values and mandate of the Model Forest
- Set limits on activities
- Provide the principles to guide decisions—principles may include mission statement, constitution and bylaws; organizational structure, including roles and responsibilities; committee terms of reference; etc.

2) **Operational or executive policies**

- Provide a framework for managing the Model Forest as an organization
- Include areas such as financial and personnel management.

3) Administrative or functional policies

- Govern the day-to-day delivery of services and activities of the Model Forest.

4) Conflict of interest policies

- Help with managing real and perceived conflicts
- Cover areas such as disclosure of direct and indirect financial interest, disclosure of conflicting organizational interests, anti-nepotism
- May focus on board members—their compensation, reimbursement for expenses, use of organizational property, gifts and gratuities, political activities
- May also encompass committee members and staff.

As well, many Model Forests formulate bylaws that govern how they operate. If a Model Forest becomes a legally registered organization, bylaws are often required as part of the registration process. While the actual requirements may vary depending on legislation, here are the typical items that appear in bylaws:

- Corporation name (legal Model Forest name), address and logo/brand
- Who the members are, how to become a member, conditions associated with membership, termination
- Meetings of the membership and voting
- Number of directors in the governing body, eligibility and terms
- Nominations and elections
- Meetings of the governing body (how many per year, quorum, notice of meetings)
- Duties and powers of directors.

- Officers of the governing body (election, term, duties, resignation and removal)
- Standing committees of the governing body
- How to keep minutes, general information on books and records
- Fiscal year of the organization
- Audit
- How to amend bylaws.

In addition, some Model Forests develop ground rules to guide stakeholders’ participation in the Model Forest. Ground rules are not formal governing regulations, rather, they define a series of operating principles that each stakeholder and individual agrees to follow.

Contact the IMFN Secretariat for governance examples from other Model Forests.

CHAPTER 4

MODEL FOREST WORK PLANNING

An Annual Work Plan (sometimes called an operational plan, action plan, or activity plan) links your strategic planning to the day-to-day activities of your Model Forest. It helps set priorities, implement projects and activities, and contains detailed planning and specific budgets for each activity.

STEP 1: SELECT ACTIVITIES

Start by identifying activities you will undertake in the coming year. Develop and review the activities in a transparent and inclusive way by involving stakeholders in planning workshops, working groups or soliciting project proposals. To help prioritize your list of possible activities and make final selections, ask yourselves the following questions:

- Which activities and associated impacts are key to achieving the Model Forest's strategic directions?
- Which activities need to be completed before others can be initiated?
- Which activities are easier or quicker to implement?
- Does the activity fit well with the available resources and opportunities?
- What problems or constraints must the project overcome to succeed?
- Are the target beneficiaries clearly identified? Are the beneficiaries able, interested and willing to participate?

RESULT: A prioritized list of activities for each program area.

STEP 2: SUMMARIZE SELECTED ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Create a summary of each project/activity that includes:

- Project name
- Description: a brief overview of the activity or project, its importance or rationale, and the links between it and other activities in your Model Forest
- Partners: a list of organizations participating in the proposed project, highlighting the lead proponent and other participating organizations
- Activities: a list of the major activities, their outputs (deliverables), and expected completion dates
- Target beneficiaries: identify and describe those expected to benefit from your proposed project
- M&E links: highlight the project's links to your Model Forest impact indicators and targets (see Model Forest Monitoring and Evaluation)
- Progress: describe any progress, either from previous Model Forest projects or from other activities that contribute to the proposed project
- Financial summary: outline your budget and funding sources, both cash and in-kind contributions
- Management: an overview of how the activities and/or project will be managed and by whom
- Contact: the name, address, telephone number and email address of the main contact person.

RESULT: A summary for each selected project.

STEP 3: PRODUCE A WORK PLAN

Consolidate this information into a single document — your Annual Work Plan. This plan will help strike a balance between what activities stakeholders would like to do and what can reasonably be done given available resources.

General outline of a Model Forest Annual Work Plan:

1. Introduction

A summary of how the work plan was developed, any key points your Model Forest wants to highlight and any major changes since the previous year (e.g., stakeholders, budgets, governance).

2. Link to Strategic Plan

Using a logic model, simple table or narrative, illustrate how the proposed activities link to your expected Model Forest outcomes and impacts.

3. Financial summary

Present the overall budget for the Annual Work Plan by consolidating the activity related budgets into a single table, identifying both the available resources and the additional resources needed to effectively implement the work.

4. Project summaries

Include the project summaries developed in Step 2.

RESULT: A draft Annual Work Plan.

STEP 4: WORK PLAN APPROVAL

The Annual Work Plan needs to be reviewed and accepted by all Model Forest stakeholders. Some questions to consider:

- Are the proposed projects consistent with the strategic directions outlined in the Model Forest Strategic Plan?
- Will the proposed activities lead to achievement of the Model Forest's expected outcomes and impacts?
- Are the proposed activities based on the needs, issues and challenges faced by stakeholders?
- Will the proposed activities meet the needs of those they are designed to help?
- Does the Model Forest have the capacity to implement the proposed activities?
- Are the participating organizations clearly identified for the proposed activities?
- Is an activity lead identified?
- Are the budgets realistic, accurate and complete?
- Has the need for resources, and the ability to compete for and secure them, been assessed?
- Can the proposed activities be completed within the one-year time frame of the work plan?
- Does the plan show that all interested stakeholders have been involved in the planning process?

A designated lead, whether the Model Forest coordinator or planning committee, etc., needs to take ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Annual Work Plan moves along and is implemented.

RESULT: A final Annual Work Plan.

STEP 5: IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING

After the Annual Work Plan is approved, it is beneficial to identify a lead who is in charge of day-to-day project management and will ensure the work moves ahead.

The project lead should also ensure that both gender and environmental dimensions are considered for each activity.

Some gender dimensions include:

- Gaining an understanding of gender relations, the division of labour between men and women, and who has access to and control over resources
- Using participatory processes and including a wide range of male and female stakeholders at both the governmental and civil society levels
- Identifying barriers to women's participation and productivity (e.g., social, economic, legal, political, cultural)
- Gaining an understanding of women's practical needs and strategic interests, and identifying opportunities to support both
- Considering the project's different impacts on men and women, and identifying any consequences to address
- Establishing baseline data, ensuring sex-disaggregated data, setting measurable targets and identifying expected outcomes and impacts and their associated indicators
- Outlining expected risks and developing strategies to minimize them.

Some environmental dimensions include:

- Understanding the environmental features of the project site and their possible effect on the project (e.g. seasonal changes)
- Identifying possible environmental effects of the project and their significance
- Implementing strategies and measures to alleviate or eliminate the project's negative effects and increase its benefits, and monitoring the project to ensure that these measures are effectively implemented
- Integrating environmental outcomes and impacts into the project's other outcomes and impacts.



Photo: Prince Albert Model Forest, Canada

Often, the project lead is in charge of monitoring and reporting on the impacts generated (or not) by the project, as guided by the Model Forest's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

RESULT: Activities and projects implemented over the course of the year with results to feed into the Model Forest's reporting processes.

CHAPTER 5

MODEL FOREST MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of your Model Forest’s plans and activities helps gauge success and highlight what aspects of a program, project or activity might need to be adjusted in the future.

- Monitoring is the continuous assessment of program or project implementation and performance, and answers the question, “what is happening?”
- Evaluation is the periodic assessment of the relevance, cost-effectiveness and sustainability of a program or project, and answers the question, “did what was supposed to happen actually happen and why?”

Both of these M&E processes are important for obtaining a complete picture of your Model Forest’s success – and using them will help in designing and implementing better projects, enhanced accountability, greater capacity to demonstrate progress and direct financial savings for your Model Forest.



Photo: Montagne Fiorentine Model Forest, Italy

To get started, develop an M&E Framework, which will help you:

- Determine how you will measure impacts
- Build a monitoring strategy to track progress
- Learn and make programming adjustments on an ongoing basis
- Identify evaluation needs over the life of your Model Forest, and
- Support reporting and communication of impacts.

A typical M&E Framework consists of four main components:

1. Logic Model– An illustration of how proposed activities are expected to help achieve the Model Forest’s outcomes and short-, medium- and long-term impacts
2. Impact Monitoring Strategy– A plan for ongoing performance measurement by identifying targets and indicators of impacts
3. Evaluation Strategy– A plan for evaluating your Model Forest’s performance
4. Progress Reporting– A process to guide the sharing of your Model Forest results.

[View and download our M&E Framework templates from Google Drive.](#)

1. LOGIC MODEL

A logic model serves as a “road map”, showing the sequence of outcomes and impacts that are expected to logically flow from your Model Forest’s activities.

Model Forest Toolkit Logic Model Template

1.1. Start by listing the program areas (and activities) your Model Forest will undertake, as defined in your Strategic Plan, providing enough information to give an overview of the main components of your program – detailed project planning is not necessary. Some examples include: Science & Research, Communications & Public Awareness, Capacity Building & Training, and Management.

1.2. Next, identify the outputs associated with each of the program areas. Outputs are the range of tangible goods, services or products that will be generated as a result of a project or activity. There may be more than one per program area. These outputs are the evidence that a project or activity occurred. Some examples include: tools, workshops, conferences, field guides, manuals, websites, research reports, etc.

1.3. What are the outcomes that will occur from your Model Forest activities? These are the direct effects expected to see as a result of the project or activity and should be within the control of your Model Forest to obtain. Outcomes typically have an action word associated with them, for example: enhanced understanding of the Model Forest concept; increased availability of knowledge and tools to local landowners and decision-makers.

1.4. Finally, impacts are the developmental results of your Model Forest; that is, the real, sustainable changes that have resulted from the outcomes achieved by completing your projects and activities. For example: increased collaboration between partners on Model Forest projects; adoption / use of Model Forest products, tools, data, and processes beyond its boundaries; enhanced community capacity to manage local forest resources; reduced rates of deforestation.

- Short-term impacts would be seen within 1-2 years after the completion of an activity and extends in reach to the Model Forest’s target beneficiaries.
- Medium-term impacts would be seen within 2-5 years after the completion of an activity and effect both the Model Forest and surrounding area.
- Long-term impacts (5+ years) go beyond the life of an activity or project and are amplified within broader society. They should reflect the overall objectives of your Model Forest.

A logic model is usually laid out in columns, as a flow chart that shows the linking relationships from program areas through to impacts. See the template for some ideas.



Photo: Czech Republic Model Forest, Czech Republic

2. IMPACT MONITORING STRATEGY

Impact monitoring provides the knowledge needed to effectively and efficiently manage your Model Forest projects/activities on an ongoing basis. This can provide reassurance that impacts are occurring as expected, or can serve as an early warning that the planned impacts are not occurring (and could lead to a decision for additional research, such as through an evaluation, to determine why).

Model Forest Toolkit Impact Monitoring Strategy Template

2.1. Start by listing the outputs, outcomes, and impacts from your logic model as elements and then identify your impact indicators by deciding what information or data would be needed to assess whether each output has been produced or each outcome / impact achieved.

At the output level, indicators can measure the quantity or quality of goods and services created or provided by your projects (e.g. number of people trained, opinions of teachers on training facilities provided, number of facilities in operating condition). An indicator at the outcome or impact level would measure the change (in quantity and/or quality) resulting from the goods and services produced by the projects. For example:

- If an output is a “workshop on improved bamboo shoot production”, an indicator might be the number of smallholders that were trained in improved bamboo shoot production techniques.
- If a short-term impact is “increased smallholder annual average production of bamboo shoots”, an indicator might be the “average annual production of bamboo shoots”.

Indicators should, where possible, measure the impact of a situation rather than the input. For example, women’s literacy rate is a better measure of women’s educational status than female enrollment rates because literacy measures the effect resulting from a change in enrollment rates.

Note: Impact indicators should be designed to measure benefits and adverse effects on men and women separately whenever appropriate.

2.2. Next, identify targets or threshold values that can help differentiate acceptable from unacceptable progress. Targets are quantifiable levels of the indicator that your Model Forest stakeholders want to achieve in a given time frame. Targets make the goals concrete and allow for the comparison of actual performance and progress over time.

To set a good target, several pieces of information are required, including: impact indicator, target group (for whom), quantity (how much), quality (how well), time frame (by when), location (where), and baseline (from when and from what level). For example:

- Impact indicator: average annual bamboo shoot production by small landholder
- Target group: male and female small landholders (cultivating 2 hectares or less)
- Quantity: 500 small landholders increase average annual production by 50%
- Quality: maintaining same quality of harvest as baseline
- Time frame: by September 2020
- Location: within the Model Forest
- Baseline: 2018 baseline.

Within the Model Forest, 500 male and female small landholders (cultivating 2 hectares or less) increase their average annual bamboo shoot production by 50% by September 2020, maintaining the same quality of harvest as at the 2018 baseline.

2.3. Finally, outline a realistic plan for data collection to inform your monitoring process. Answer the following questions:

- What sources are most appropriate? e.g., Who should be interviewed? Which documents should be reviewed? Does an organization already collect appropriate information?
- What methods for data collection should be used? e.g., sample surveys, administrative records, national statistics, workshops or focus groups, observation, etc.
- Who has responsibility for the data collection? e.g., staff, supervisors, independent evaluator, Model Forest partners, etc.
- What timing & frequency of data collection should be used? e.g., at start, monthly, annually, according to seasonal cropping cycles, during an evaluation, etc.
- What are the estimated costs for collecting the information?
- Are there any risk factors to consider?

Put all of these details into an Impact Monitoring Strategy table to help organize your answers. See the template for some ideas.

3. EVALUATION STRATEGY

Evaluation provides a periodic opportunity to take an in-depth look at the state of your Model Forest and achievements during a specified time period. Evaluations typically occur at two points:

- Relatively early in the life of a Model Forest (e.g., within the first two to three years). The focus is on examining how the Model Forest is being implemented, whether adjustments are necessary and whether progress toward the achievement of the impacts is occurring (called formative evaluations).
- After a Model Forest has been in place long enough that some impacts may have been achieved (e.g., within five years). The focus is on the degree to which these impacts have been achieved as well as to determine the contribution of the Model Forest to these achieved impacts (called summative evaluations).

Formative evaluations are focused on improving your Model Forest and feed back into ongoing work to enhance the probability that you will achieve your impacts. Summative evaluations look back on the level of achievement of impacts as part of a project or program ending.

Whether your evaluation is formative or summative, you will need an Evaluation Strategy.



Photo: Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

Model Forest Toolkit Evaluation Strategy Template

3.1. The first step in developing an Evaluation Strategy involves identifying the issues and associated questions that need to be addressed during the evaluation.

There are four issue areas to consider:

- **Relevance** — The extent to which your Model Forest is meeting existing needs and is maintaining the core principles of a Model Forest. For example, is your Model Forest providing identified target audiences with the tools and information they require to implement the principles of sustainable forest management? Does your Model Forest realistically address an actual need? Is your Model Forest operating within its defined mission or mandate?
- **Success** — The extent to which your Model Forest is achieving its objectives. For example, is your Model Forest effective in meeting its intended outcomes and impacts, within budget and without unwanted negative impacts? Is your Model Forest making progress toward the achievement of long-term impacts?
- **Cost-effectiveness** — The extent to which impacts are being achieved efficiently and effectively. For example, are the most appropriate and efficient means being used to achieve impacts, relative to alternative design and delivery approaches?
- **Sustainability** — The extent to which projects, outputs, outcomes and impacts will continue after external support has ended. For example, has your Model Forest implemented mechanisms to ensure that e.g., skills, knowledge, and capacity will persist after an activity has been completed and/or funding ends?

3.2. Next, identify the data requirements that need to be collected in order to answer each evaluation question. It is important to identify any data requirements which rely on the initial or ongoing collection of information, to ensure that the necessary data are available at the time of an evaluation.

3.3. Lastly, outline a realistic plan for data collection needed to inform your evaluation process. Questions to consider:

- What sources of data are most appropriate? e.g., Who should be interviewed? Which documents should be reviewed? Does an organization already collect appropriate information?
- What methods for data collection should be used? e.g., sample surveys, administrative records, national statistics, workshops or focus groups, observation, etc.
- Who has responsibility for the data collection? e.g., staff, supervisors, an independent evaluator, Model Forest partners, etc.
- What timing & frequency of data collection should be used? e.g., monthly, annually, according to seasonal cropping cycles, during an evaluation, etc.
- What are the estimated costs for collecting the information?

Put all of these details into an Evaluation Strategy table to help organize your answers. See the template for some ideas.

4. PROGRESS REPORTING

Progress reporting feeds into your Model Forest’s communications and outreach plans and activities, ensuring that target audiences receive impact updates in a timely and appropriate way. Reporting on impacts and results helps assess where you are in comparison to where you planned to be, and it is a tool to stimulate discussion among Model Forest stakeholders.

An important aspect of progress reporting is the feedback of key messages into your Model Forest management process, allowing continuous improvement in the management and administration of the Model Forest and in achievement of identified impacts.

A Progress Reporting table can help you collect the information needed for these activities.

Model Forest Toolkit Progress Reporting Template

4.1. First, list the elements and their related impact indicators and targets as developed in your Impact Monitoring Strategy. For each item, collect and add the following information:

- Activities completed– A brief overview of the actual activities that were undertaken and the date they were completed. Activities completed are not impacts; they are highlighted to illustrate what the Model Forest has done, not what it has accomplished.
- Accomplishments– The impacts recorded from data collection during ongoing impact monitoring. This is the key column in the impact reporting summary. What changes are being seen?
- Impact analysis– An overview of the implications of the recorded accomplishments for the Model Forest, its beneficiaries, partners, etc. Have any additional, unanticipated impacts been identified?

4.2. Produce some descriptive text to accompany the Progress Reporting table. Consider including:

- Identification and analysis of key factors, issues or challenges affecting achievement of impacts
- Status update of financial and in-kind contributions from Model Forest participants and donors

- Update of the identified risks and mitigation plans
- The identification of new and emerging risks that are affecting or have potential to affect the achievement of impacts
- Information on required modifications to projects and associated resource allocation
- Lessons learned (for example, on the achievement and cost-effectiveness of impacts, relevance of results, partnerships, financial and human resources, and informed and timely action)
- Recommendations for action, and
- Degree of sustainability of impacts over a period of time.

Monitoring and evaluation should not be stand-alone, technical activities. They should be closely linked to decision-making processes at all levels and provide feedback to managers, Model Forest partners and others on, among other things, the performance of existing policies and programs.

The information posted here is simply a place to start. There are many monitoring and evaluation resources available online and professionals with expertise that can provide more support to help you plan around your own Model Forest’s needs and priorities.

CHAPTER 6

MODEL FOREST COMMUNICATIONS

Sharing lessons learned is part of the sixth Model Forest Principle. Whether it is communicating results locally among stakeholders, to local or national governments, or with other members of the IMFN, sharing experiences accelerates sustainability in all of our landscapes and increases the opportunity to access new or additional resources.

Developing a communications and knowledge-sharing plan for your Model Forest will help define your target audiences and key messages, and agree on preferred approaches and methods to collect and share findings and results. The plan should directly link to your Model Forest strategic plan and supporting program of work.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Who do you want to communicate to and why — both internally and externally?

Consider how to obtain information (e.g. social media, academic journals, community events, conferences, etc.). Understanding your audience helps tailor the kind of information you share, when and how.

STEP 2: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES

What are the key issues for your Model Forest – climate change, livelihoods, indigenous engagement, industry practices, etc.?

Understand how key issues are being reflected in the media and the public arena and how your Model Forest stakeholders position themselves accordingly. These form the basis of your Model Forest’s key messages.

STEP 3: DEVELOP YOUR OBJECTIVES

What are you trying to achieve with your communications plan and how does it help achieve your Model Forest’s vision and objectives?

Apply your understanding of the relevant issues to develop 3-4 key messages that clearly reflect your Model Forest’s vision, mission and expected impacts.

STEP 4: DEFINE YOUR APPROACHES

How will you reach your audiences?

In order to define which approaches or channels will be best suited to reach your audiences, map out target audiences alongside key messages for each. For example, Model Forest members and stakeholders might be best reached through a knowledge-sharing webinar that collects and shares success stories to emphasize the key message, “Model Forests bring stakeholders together to cooperate in the use of natural resources.”

STEP 5: COLLECT INFORMATION

How and when will you gather stories and results from your Model Forest projects?

Explore how to link your communications and knowledge-sharing plan to the Model Forest M&E Framework to ensure activities include a component of collecting results at the right times and in the right ways to feed your communications and knowledge-sharing needs.

STEP 6: PLAN AND IMPLEMENT ACTIVITIES

What will you do on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis to achieve your communications objectives?

These might include, for example: a social media campaign to launch a new report, a moderated online discussion around a specific event, monthly newsletters for sharing internal successes and announcements, weekly web articles to showcase project activities, building an online research database to share project findings, and an annual report released each year.

Importantly, these activities should build on and amplify the outputs of key activities and link to achieving Model Forest impacts.



Photo: Montagne Fiorentine Model Forest, Italy

STEP 7: EVALUATE YOUR ACTIVITIES

How successful are your communications and knowledge sharing activities and does anything need to change?

Monitor and evaluate following the same principles as for the wider Model Forest M&E Framework.

There are many available resources both online and through partner organizations to help you build and implement a communications and knowledge-sharing strategy. This is simply a quick overview of some key steps in the process. You will need to expand it and tailor it to your own Model Forest's needs and priorities.



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