

Beyond 2018: Strategies and Approaches to Sustain the Urban Waters Federal Partnership

Introduction

This document discusses approaches to ensure continuity and growth of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP). Since its formation in 2011, the UWFP has achieved notable successes across the U.S to revitalize urban waterways and the communities that surround them. The Partnership has also grown from 7 to 19 locations.

To build upon these achievements, this document provides approaches to 1) advance and grow the UWFP, including increasing the number of designated partnership locations, and 2) support the development of an UWFP affiliate program. The goal of an affiliate program is to engage many new urban-to-rural communities in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership benefiting citizens nationwide.

UWFP Mission

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership will help urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are underserved or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. This federal partnership will put communities first. We will work to break down government program silos and to ensure that our collective efforts will reverse past neglect, energize existing programs, and engage new partners. We will listen to, engage and serve the communities where we work, ensuring they are full partners in restoring and protecting the water that surrounds them. We will establish strong partnerships with effective community-based organizations and local government officials to make the most effective use of economic incentives and other beneficial actions. With the right set of federal, state, and local tools and the local commitment of political will, the Federal Partnership will leverage existing neighborhood assets. These actions will be geared to promote early and visible victories to fuel long-term action. Success will advance the missions of our partnership, our agencies, and the federal government as a whole.

UWFP Goals

- Promote clean urban waters by enhancing the health of our country's watersheds, and addressing physical, chemical and biological degradation.
- Break down silos between federal programs to promote efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build upon the community-led model by engaging and serving community partners and implementing Urban Waters principles in all communities.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local businesses and economies to create new jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action to improve infrastructure, water quality, and public health, as well as expand and increase access to educational, recreational, housing, transportation and social opportunities.

The Future of the UWFP

Looking to the future, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership aims to achieve three objectives: **1)** sustain existing partnerships, **2)** add new partnerships, and **3)** establish an affiliate program.

1. Priorities to Sustain the UWFP

- a. Continue national collaboration among 15 or more federal agencies and undertake activities needed to support and strengthen their participation in the Federal Partnership.
- b. Ensure all UWFP Locations have an Ambassador, a workplan that is updated annually, and metrics to demonstrate location accomplishments.
- c. Limit federal funding of Ambassadors to “at least” or “up to” a four-year term.
- d. Develop and help implement a strategy to pursue sustainable funding sources for the Ambassador position at all UWFP Locations after federal funding has reached the end of its four-year cycle. For example, direct EPA funding for the Ambassador position will not be provided after a four-year cycle. Federal agency partners have the option to provide further funding at their discretion and if funding is available.
- e. Continue federal assistance to UWFP locations through the following actions:
 - Support new Ambassadors through training resources, such as the Ambassador Toolkit; invitations to monthly UWFP calls; email updates on Urban Waters events, meetings, accomplishments, and tools; and access to the Urban Waters Learning Network (UWLN) and the Ambassadors-Only forum on Basecamp.
 - Promote the Five-Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program to support urban restoration projects across the country.
 - Execute communications initiatives, such as strategy calls and dialogue, with federal partner agency representatives.
 - Deploy non-financial resources to the Partnership locations, particularly from agencies that have contributed limited financial and/or staff resources.

2. Approach to Add New UWFPs

- a. Increase the number of designated federally-funded Partnership locations from 19 to no more than 25 over the next three years. Ensure all new proposed Partnership locations are agreed upon by UWFP Agency partners.
- b. Solicit input from the federal partner agencies to select new cities to become designated Urban Waters Federal Partnership locations. Consider the location’s capability to form sustainable partnerships as well as local federal agency capacity to provide long-term assistance.

- c. Upon agreement by federal agency partners, add the Rio Salado Project in Arizona as the 20th Urban Waters Federal Partnership location. This proposed location has already developed a comprehensive workplan, initiated partner commitments, and performed broad-based outreach to establish a sustainable Urban Waters Federal Partnership.
- d. Establish federally-funded Ambassadors with four-year terms at new federal partnership locations.
- e. Seek to gain participation from additional federal agencies, such as the U.S Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Justice.
- f. Expand the UWLN by granting website access to all interested communities and stakeholders and add and disseminate new content.
- g. Establish process for reviewing progress of existing partnerships periodically.

3. Establish an Affiliate Program

To build upon the success at the 19 UWFP locations, new partnerships, cities, and communities across the U.S. will have the opportunity to affiliate with the UWFP. New locations with rural-to-urban watersheds will emulate the structure and operation of the existing 19 UWFP locations. Potential Affiliate locations can use Federal Partnership resources (outlined below) to achieve locally-defined environmental, economic, and social goals. There will be no limit to the number of affiliate locations.

About UWFP Affiliate Locations

The Affiliate program will provide a one-stop shop for communities to access resources and proactively reconnect and revitalize their waterways. Affiliate locations should emulate the Federal Partnership's Vision, Mission, and Principles. Each Affiliate location will work to achieve the five phases, as defined in the *Urban Waters Handbook*:

- 1. Evaluate Current Partnerships and Define Vision and Goals** – identify relevant stakeholders, community conditions, and common goals for local urban waters.
- 2. Forge Partnerships** – bring people together and set objectives and priorities. This would include identifying at least one or two federal agencies the location could work with. Location should also reach out to relevant state or regional entities to discuss possible collaborations.
- 3. Pursue Projects and Activities of Interest** – support implementation of priority projects and activities, from developing clear work plans and leveraging resources to strengthening community engagement efforts.
- 4. Measure and Communicate Results** – ensure that projects and activities lead to outcomes that better support people, their environment, and their communities.
- 5. Sustain Momentum** – guide partnership to develop long-term planning, build upon strengthened relationships, and secure adequate resources.

Each Affiliate location will be provided with:

- Guidance from federal agency partners on how to hire and fund an Urban Waters Ambassador.
- Access to all federal agency and non-governmental urban waters websites for technical assistance.
- Access to the UWLN resources and website.
- Invitations to national meetings.
- Opportunity to apply for Five-Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, when available.

Affiliate Applications

The UWFP will use a flexible approach to select new communities, cities, and/or local partnerships to become Affiliate locations. Locations will be selected on a rolling basis. To make its selections, the UWFP will implement the following process:

- Publish a “Call for Letters of Interest;”
- Conduct a national webinar to announce the affiliate program;
- Review Letters of Interest; and
- Determine Locations to be accepted.

Affiliate applicants should address the following in their Letter of Interest:

- Boundaries of the watershed to be addressed;
- Plan for engaging stakeholders, using an inclusion approach;
- How the Affiliate location will implement Urban Waters Ambassador functions described in the Partnership’s “Ambassador Toolkit;”
- How underserved communities will be included;
- How the Affiliate location would work with state government agencies and regionally-based non-governmental organizations; and
- Include letters of support, including endorsements from the Governor’s office.
- Description of high priority projects, performance metrics, and data collection reporting plan

In conclusion, the UWFP aims to continue improving our nation's waterways and serve surrounding communities, promoting their economic, environmental, and social benefits. By implementing the three approaches described above, we can help ensure that the UWFP will flourish for years to come.