Policy Committee Meeting Agenda
Clean Water Council
November 20, 2026
9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
WebEx Only

Policy Committee: John Barten, Rich Biske (Chair), Gail Cederberg, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Chris Meyer (Vice Chair), Peter Schwagerl, and Jessica Wilson

9:30 Regular Business
- Introductions
- Approve today's agenda
- Chair update
- Staff update

9:45 Public Comment
Members of the public who would like to provide comment about something not on the agenda are welcome to do so at this time.

10:00 (INFORMATION ITEM) Legislative updates
With the election now in the rearview mirror, we'll take a quick moment to share what is known about the political landscape at this time, and what the election results could mean for the Clean Water Fund. Members are invited to share insights they have as well.

10:15 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Draft content related to public engagement
The draft content that lays out how the FY28-29 recommendations were developed is included in the packet. This is an early draft, with under-designed graphics, but still at a point where input would be helpful. Members are asked to read and offer high-level feedback. We won't wordsmith in the meeting, but detailed edits are invited in tracked changes versions for incorporation after the meeting.

10:45 BREAK

11:00 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Evaluation against Public Participation Plan
Before moving off the public engagement topic, we will take a few minutes to review the Public Participation Plan and discuss how the last year went in light of the guidance laid out, and what to consider moving forward into the strategy year and the next budget year.

11:30 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Preparing for private wells discussion
A little over a year ago, we began scoping the private wells policy statement. Before restarting our scoping conversation, we will circle back to what was discussed then as well as our content in the "looking ahead" section of the policy recommendations in the biennial recommendations report. As a part of this agenda item, we will identify who else to invite to the discussion to help embed external perspectives early on.

12:00 Adjourn

Developing the FY28-29 Recommendations

The process leading to the adoption of the FY28-29 recommendations was approached differently than in years past. This was largely due to the adoption of two key process improvements in 2025, which emerged from the then-record public engagement during the FY26-27 budget development process. These improvements were the Council's first-ever Public Participation Plan and the development of an evaluation rubric.

Public Participation Plan

Based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) framework, the Public Participation Plan guides the Council as it seeks input on budget and policy recommendations. It intentionally moves input earlier in the process to increase the opportunity for external perspectives to influence final outcomes and clarifies how to maintain that over time to build transparency, accountability, and trust. Among other things, this plan lays out the nature of different decisions being made along the way, the role input can play in those decisions, and the promise being made by the Council in asking for that input at those times.

It also underscores that achieving the State's clean water goals will take everyone—the Clean Water Council and Clean Water Fund will not be able to do it alone. By engaging people actively working to address water challenges during the development process, the Council's recommendations are more relevant and effective, and local, complementary action is likewise enhanced at the same time.

Public input was sought throughout the two years leading up to the recommendations included in this report. In line with the Public Participation Plan, involvement ranged from in-the-weeds collaboration in developing content to high-level feedback, depending on when and how the engagement occurred. The approach followed for developing this report is summarized on pages _____.

Background phase (October 2024-December 2025)

- Input received during this time has the greatest influence on the overall approach and outcomes produced
- Input considered during this phase included:
    - FY26-27 public input, especially as it related to values, priorities, and needs for strategic focus
    - Input solicited for the development of the Public Participation Plan and evaluation rubric
    - Survey in late 2025
- How this was used
    - Topics to guide meeting agendas
    - Priorities for policy recommendations developed 2025-2026
    - Creation of the Public Participation Plan, evaluation rubric, and revised proposal form
    - Questions asked by Council members and their priorities

Individual budget proposal review phase (February-May 2026)

- Input received during this phase influenced reception and understanding of individual proposals
- Input received during this phase included:
  - Comment letters and emails
  - Council member conversations with interested parties

Public input workshop (June 15, 2026)

- Input received at this time included:
  - more than 200 comments received ahead of meeting – a record
  - A new workshop, involving 30 interested parties in evaluating input received
  - A survey more than 300 people responded to on how to prioritize funding requests
- This influenced criteria used by BOC and Council members in giving direction to proposers on what to submit for draft program budgets, including level of priority for the program (high medium, low) and desired funding direction (increase, decrease, hold steady).

Preliminary budget development phase (July-October 2026)

- Input received during this phase influenced final changes to budget amounts
- Input received during this phase included:
  - Comment letters and emails
  - Testimony at BOC and Council meetings

Policy recommendation development

- Policy statements were developed in a highly-collaborative manner, with external perspectives engaged from the very beginning
- Input received influenced:
  - The overall scope of each policy proposal
  - The problem statement
  - Draft and final recommendations
- Input included:
  - Comment letters and emails
  - Council member conversations with interested parties
  - Presentations and meeting involvement from engaged organizations
  - Workshop responses from 80 participants at the 2026 Water Resources Conference

What's next

Input received for the FY28-29 recommendations will shape the content of meetings and efforts in the coming two years. Engagement will continue throughout.

Evaluation rubric

Also new for this budget cycle was the development of an evaluation rubric Council members used to further improve transparency, consistency, and accountability. This was designed by Council members during 2025, with the intention that scores generated through the use of the rubric as a tool would inform funding decisions. The criteria and weights are described in Figure _____, and demonstrate a clear signal from the Council as to what they were looking for with programs in the FY28-29 biennium.

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points Available
Water Quality Impact	Water quality is the top priority, with a focus on measurable improvements to surface water, groundwater, or drinking water. Prioritizes implementation of proven or innovative practices, with monitoring, assessment, research, strategy development, or planning included if it directly supports implementation. May also provide co-benefits that address other environmental concerns, including water quantity.*	0-15 _____
Measurable Outcomes, Progress & Feasibility	Defines clear, outcome-based goals and measurable indicators; shows historical progress or a feasible path to long-term systems change. May include research, monitoring, or planning activities that support measurable outcomes.	0-10 _____
Alignment with CWC Strategic Plan	Aligns with Clean Water Council Strategic Plan and state-approved water plans; coordinates effectively across local, state, and federal initiatives.	0-10 _____
Financial Leverage & Sustainability	Supplements vs supplants; potential for leveraging local or partner support; if partially funded, program is scalable	0-5 _____
Engagement and Community Value	Engages landowners, local communities, and underserved groups; addresses environmental justice and equity considerations; direct community support is evident.	0-5 _____

Communications	Clear plan on communicating outcomes; includes outreach strategies; has a plan or has demonstrated how to raise awareness of CWF through this program (e.g., Logo displayed, CWF mentioned)	0-5 _____

With the adoption of the rubric, the proposal form was updated as well. Key changes in the proposal form were:

- Increased specificity surrounding proposed outcomes from the funding requests and what has been achieved through past appropriations
- Discussion of how a program is planned to change from previous funding cycles, and why
- Demonstration of the interconnection between a proposal and other CWF- and non-CWF-supported programs
- Further detail on how program beneficiaries are engaged in the development or evolution of a program, and who local program partners are

Process leading up to the budget recommendations

With the rubric and updated proposal in hand, and the Council's commitment to public engagement, the process changed slightly as well.

The development process was broken into distinct phases: individual proposal review and familiarization, preliminary budget development, and final budget development.

Individual proposal review and familiarization

Over the course of four months, Council members reviewed each of the program proposals using the evaluation rubric described above, assigning scores as well as submitting questions for proposers. Those questions were addressed by program proposers in the Council meetings. Council members had a chance to adjust their scores and revise questions based on the answers provided.

The Budget and Outcomes Committee then reviewed averaged scores and final questions with program proposers before determining a priority level (high, medium, low) and potential funding direction (increase, hold steady, decrease) for each program. Those were then offered for affirmation or adjustment to the Council at the following meeting.

By spending time with each program at this level of detail, Council members enhanced their familiarity with each program and were able to consider each, to some extent, in a

vacuum. This also created space for feedback for proposers to consider regarding program ambition or key questions before budget amounts were reviewed.

Preliminary budget development

With each program individually assessed, the Council needed to begin the process of developing draft budget recommendations that considered all of the programs together, prioritizing how to best use forecasted CWF dollars. Based on initial review of the 63 proposals submitted, it was clear that there was more demand for good work than there would be funding available to meet:

- Nearly all programs were identified as high priority, with none considered low
- 5 new programs were proposed
- Funding direction:
    - 23 listed as increase
    - 31 listed as hold steady
    - 2 were split between increase and hold steady
    - 2 were identified as decrease
- It was acknowledged that "hold steady" could still include inflationary increases for the same amount of work

Before engaging in prioritization discussions considering this context, the Council created an opportunity for an influx of public input to collaboratively determine key consideration to keep in mind as budget priorities were set.

This was done through a three-part approach from May-July 2026 which sought to provide ample opportunity to influence Council discussions at a critical juncture in the process:

1) Submission of comment letters: People were invited to share their thoughts, whether they were general or program-specific. Over 200 comment letters and emails were received—a record number, nearly double the previous record set in the FY26-27 budget development process. A good number provided overarching comments and considerations for priorities, and 24 programs were mentioned by name.
2) Public input workshop: In place of a regular Council meeting, a day-long workshop was held to review those comments and focused primarily on discussions about how to move forward. Nearly 30 people participated in the room or online, intermixed with Council members so their input could be carried forward in future conversations. This workshop produced input regarding the remainder of the budget process, considerations for how to set FY28-29 budget priorities, and recommendations for Council activities and discussions FY27 and beyond.

3) Public survey: The outcomes regarding how to set FY28-29 budget priorities that came from the workshop were distilled into a survey in order to capture input from anyone interested in sharing which considerations should carry the most weight. More than 300 people filled that survey out.

With rubric scores, public input regarding how to set budget priorities, and initial funding directions determined, Council members then turned their attention to setting preliminary budget recommendations.

Acknowledging first and foremost that not all programs listed as "increase" would be able to have their increases met, the Council developed tiers for those programs, with the direction to proposers as follows:

- Tier 1: Emphasize increases here first, but do not wipe out total available funds
- Tier 2: Still work to ensure meaningful increase, but as a second priority
- Tier 3: Provide for increases if funds are still available

Proposers then used that information, as well as rubric scores and feedback received in the previous six months, to develop draft budget amounts for each proposal for the Council to consider.

After a full draft of a budget was shared, which showed strong alignment with Council direction, members had the opportunity to suggest increases or decreases for the proposed amounts, kicking off additional back and forth until a draft was finalized and unanimously passed in September.

Final budget development

The preliminary budget is timed to inform the development of the Governor's budget, but the recommendations included in this report utilize the November forecast from MMB. To that end, following the approval of a preliminary budget, Council members developed scenarios plans to allow for quick turnaround following the November forecast's release. The public input and deliberations over the previous year strongly inform the scenarios.

June 16, 2025

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Clean Water Council is committed to seeking the input not just from interested parties but from the public at large. The ratification of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008 led to the creation of the Clean Water Fund. Because voters provided their direct financial support to clean water, the Council believes that the Clean Water Fund deserves special attention from the public.

This public participation plan is intended to guide the Clean Water Council in seeking input on its budget and policy recommendations and strategic plan. It is based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) framework.

The purpose of this plan is to

- Apply a process to increase public participation, build trust and relationships, gather input and feedback, and promote transparency and accountability.
- Help the Council be intentional about why, how, when, and who it is engaging, including identifying the voices that may be missing.
- Be strategic in identifying the public participation efforts that are needed as well as capturing those already underway so that they can inform the Council's decisions. Public participation can be diffuse; and we know it's happening at multiple levels, to varying degrees, across many groups, in formal and informal ways. This plan can help to aggregate input and apply it at strategic points in time so that it can be used as a more formal element in the Council's decision-making process.
- Improve transparency and accessibility for the budget recommendation and policy recommendation process. Defining the Council's scope of work and role allows the Council to better sort and respond to the input received including informing people when their input is outside of the scope of the Clean Water Council.
- Continually review and adapt the approach to meet public participation goals and objectives. To that end, the Council intends to review the plan annually in January and adapt as needed.

DECISION TO BE MADE

- Clean Water Council budget and policy recommendation to the legislature.
- Clean Water Council will make a recommendation, Minnesota legislature will decide.

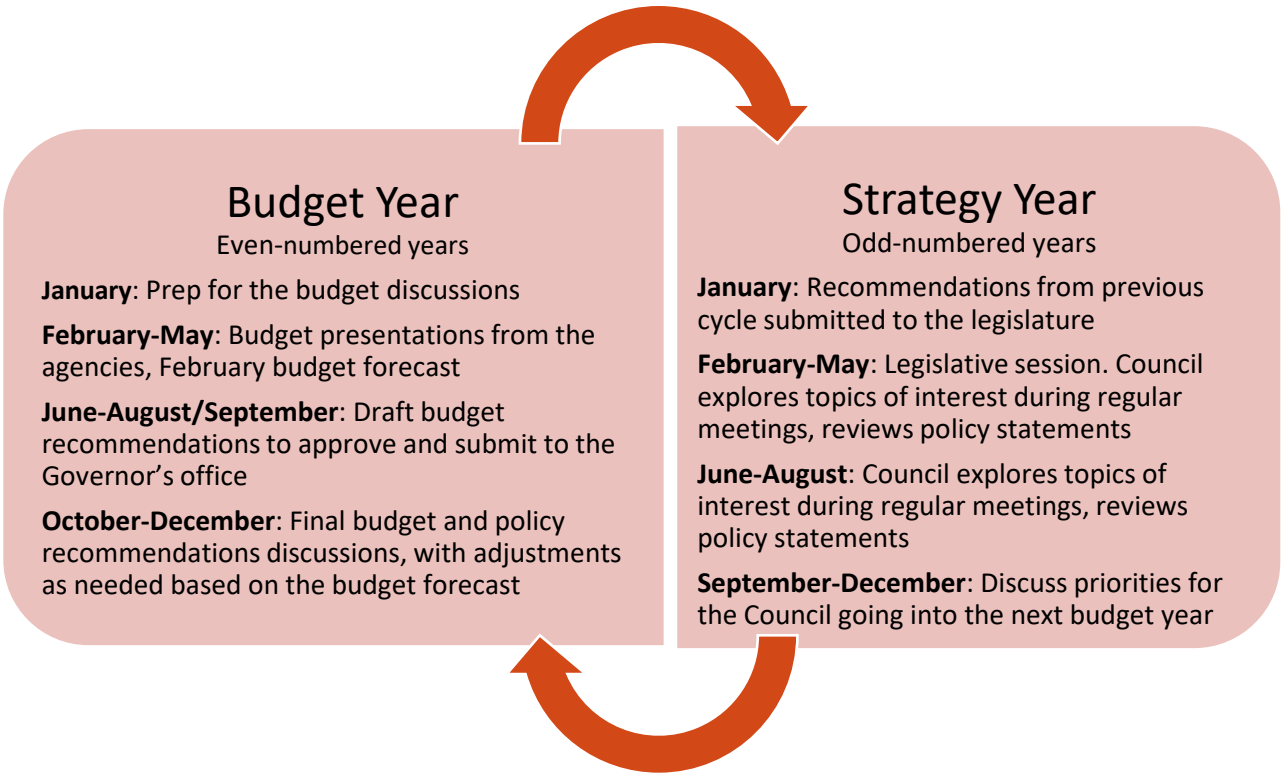


Figure 1. Clean Water Council workflow diagram.

DECISION CRITERIA

IN SCOPE

- Funding allocation for individual programs, projects, and initiatives
- Policy statements
- Clean Water Council Strategic Plan

OUT OF SCOPE

- Implementation of Clean Water Funded programs, projects, and initiatives
- Grant award processes and decisions

DECISIONS ALREADY MADE

- Budget deadlines
- Past budget recommendations
- Existing appropriations with and without tails
- Clean Water Council Bylaws and charter
- Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment and statutory language, Statute 114D

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Clean Water Council Strategic Plan
- Clean Water Fund Performance Report and Dashboard
- Clean Water Fund Communications Plan
- Clean Water Road Map

- Most recent Clean Water Fund budget and policy recommendations report
- Individual agency and Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) structure and budget process
- Research on values, attitudes, beliefs around water
- Outcomes of engagement initiatives such as the We Are Water program
- Budget and Outcomes Committee scoring rubric

INTERESTED PARTIES

- Tribal governments
- Minnesota Residents and Taxpayers
- Rights-holders
- Environmental organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Business organizations
- Statewide hunting organizations
- Statewide farm organizations
- Statewide fishing organizations
- County government (rural counties and seven-county metropolitan area)
- City governments
- Township officers
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Watershed Districts
- Metropolitan Council
- University of Minnesota
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Public Facilities Authority
- Local public health officials
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Interagency Coordination Team
- Minnesota House of Representatives
- Minnesota Senate
- Governor's Office

ROLES

INTERESTED PARTIES, PRACTITIONERS, RIGHTS-HOLDERS, AND RESIDENTS

Expertise in sense of place, community interests and values, public attitudes, and desired amenities.

- Provides their expertise on values
- Communicates questions, concerns, and ideas
- Reviews and provides input on Council budget recommendations and policy statements

Individuals and groups may provide input directly to the Council or their representative on the Council. Insights may also come indirectly from local engagement initiatives (for example, the We Are Water program) or from research on local perspectives on water.

CLEAN WATER COUNCIL

The state varies widely in terms of demography, geography, industry, land use, and local capacity. Members of the Council represent the interests of various groups in strategic planning, setting priorities, providing feedback to agencies on programs, making funding recommendations, and forming policy statements.

- Provides information to and acts as the aggregator of public sentiment
- Coordinates budget and policy recommendations with the Interagency Coordination Team

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION TEAM (ICT)

The Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) was formed to coordinate the use of Clean Water Fund dollars for achieving the aims of Clean Water Land and Legacy Act. The ICT includes the seven state agencies involved in protecting water quality: Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Public Facilities Authority.

- Represents the agencies that implement various programs funded by the Clean Water Fund
- Informs the Council of agency programs and their associated budgets, needs, and outcomes
- Considers feedback from the Council in their budget proposal to the Governor's office

CLEAN WATER COUNCIL ADMINISTRATOR

This position exists to perform high-level strategic planning, outreach, and coordination for the Clean Water Council. They guide the process for developing policy recommendations and biennial budget recommendations, provide communication and engagement support, coordinate with the legislature and state agencies, and ensure that all Members are equipped with what they need to participate fully and effectively.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Clean Water Council
- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the ICT (with input from the Clean Water Council)
- Submits its budget proposal to the Legislature

LEGISLATURE

- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Clean Water Council
- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Governor's Office (which is informed by the ICT and Clean Water Council)
- Finalizes and approves the Clean Water Fund budget and makes appropriations to agencies

The Clean Water Council makes Clean Water Fund spending recommendations to the Governor and Legislature

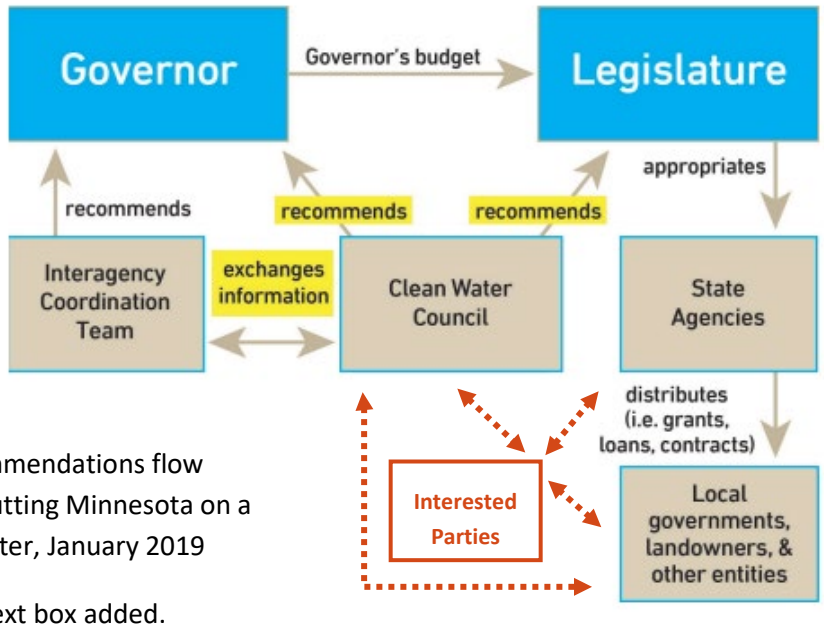
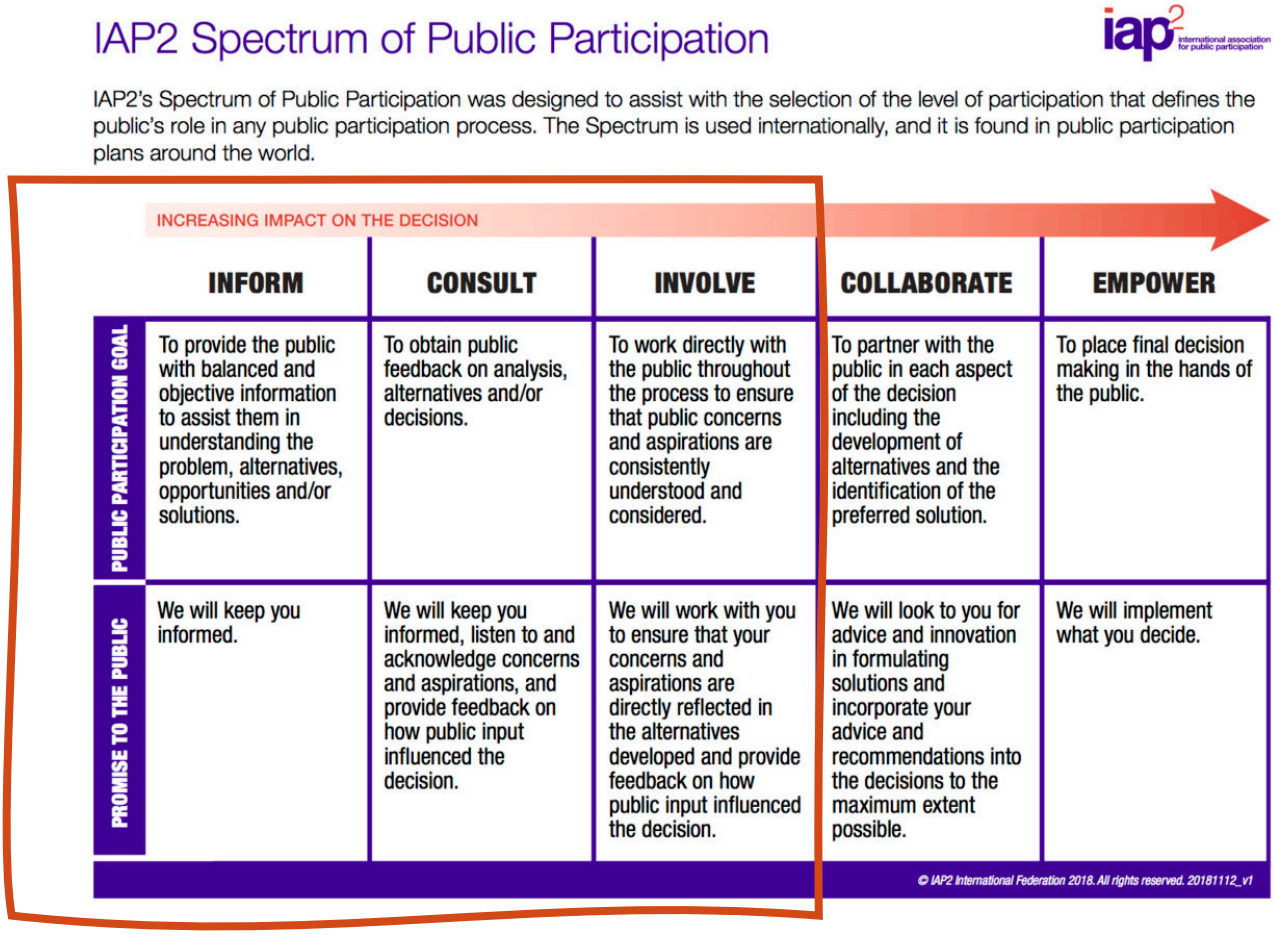


Figure 2. Clean Water Fund recommendations flow chart. Original graphic source: "Putting Minnesota on a Clean Water Trajectory", Freshwater, January 2019

*Note, orange dashed lines and text box added.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATON LEVEL



IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Figure 3. IAP2 spectrum of public participation. *Orange box outline emphasis added.

- **During the strategy year, the Council operates predominantly at the Involve level as members meet with interested parties they represent and seek broad input.** Techniques could include: Members meeting with individuals and groups they represent, with information and ideas flowing in both directions; attending industry and interested party conferences, meetings, field days, and other opportunities seeking to understand concerns and aspirations.
- **As budget recommendations and policy statements form up or are open for discussion, the Council may Consult people on the Council's priorities or drafts.** Techniques could include: Community comment at Council meetings, written comments, We Are Water program summaries, research that captures local perspectives on water, agency presentations, workshops/presentations from the Council at industry and interested party conferences and meetings.
- **As decisions are made, the Council communicates with interested parties at the Inform level.** Techniques could include: Website, social media, newsletters, interactive storymap, performance reports.

DECISION PROCESS

In designing the process for soliciting input, members of the Council should consider what they want to know, when, and how they will get that information. The Council ought to consider all input equally at all phases of engagement and in whatever form individuals and groups choose to provide it.

The Council ought to program its engagement actions to sync with when the information would be most impactful to the process. Figure 4 shows the budget year coordination with ICT flowchart including outcomes and key dates.

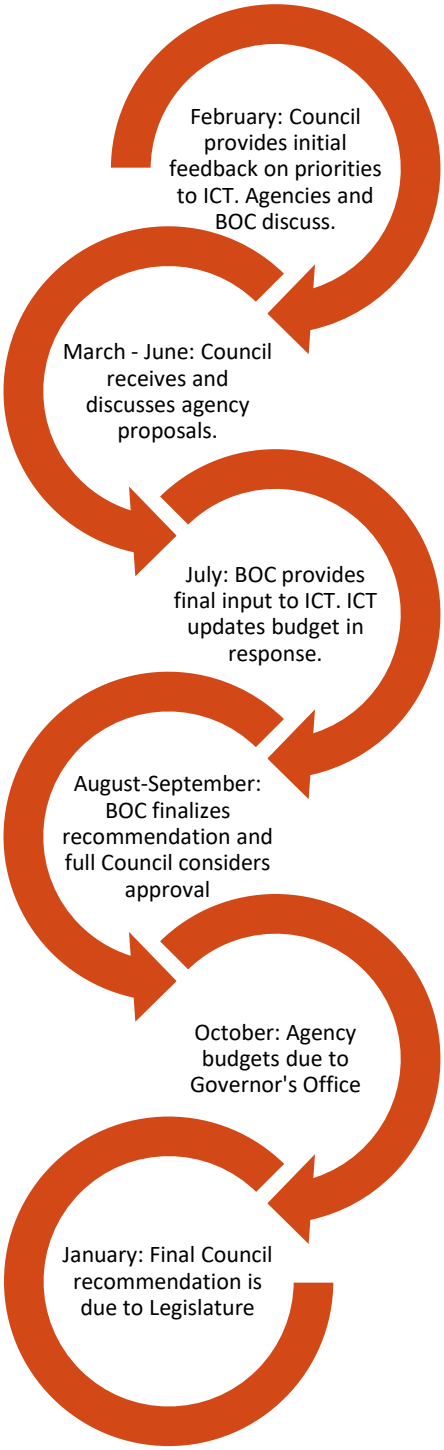
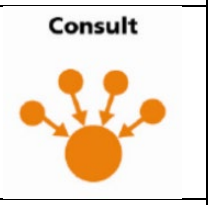


Figure 4. Budget year (even-year) coordination flowchart with ICT.

Table 1. Process outline.

Strategy Year (odd-numbered years)	
Description	**Engagement level (primary)**
Quarter 1 • The Administrator submits the policy and budget recommendations to the Governor and Legislature in January. • Clean Water Council reviews the Public Participation Plan. • Clean Water Council closes the loop with interested parties that provided input in the budget recommendation process, shares the report with interested parties, and notifies them of next opportunities for input. The Administrator prepares communication for distribution. Members forward the content to their constituencies. • Clean Water Council testifies at committee meetings. • Clean Water Council adjusts recommendations as needed based on final budget forecast.	
Quarter 2 • Clean Water Council members kick-off engagement with the interested parties they represent broadly, informing them of process, how to participate, and asking for input. All Minnesotans are invited to provide input at this early stage and respond to questions such as: o What is your vision for 10 years from now? o What is your hope for water resources in Minnesota? o What do we need more of? o What do we need less of? o What are your concerns related to water resources in Minnesota? o What do you want the Clean Water Council to know? • The Administrator develops tools to facilitate communication and engagement, including newsletters, press releases, social media, surveys, etc. • The Clean Water Council identifies conferences and meetings where it can provide updates, solicit input, share the public participation plan and (later in the year) preview its priorities going into the next budget year. • As is needed, the Administrator works with interested Members to submit conference abstracts.	
Quarters 3 and 4 • Members bring input from individuals and groups they represent to the regular Council meetings. • The Administrator facilitates discussion helps to outline Council priorities based on what each member brings as well as what is heard from interested parties. Themes from this exercise are referenced in subsequent meetings as the next budget and policy recommendations are developed. • The Clean Water Council also seeks input from We Are Water program coordinators and researchers and other indirect sources to seek to better understand local perspectives. The Council continues to invite people to react to prompts and encourage people to provide verbal or written testimony.	

• The Council presents its public participation plan and a preview of its priorities at industry and interested party conferences and meetings where it seems input. Presenters share an after-action review with the Council.	
Late Quarter 4 • The Council crystallizes themes and priorities in preparation for the budget year. These themes are shared with interested parties for them to react.	
Budget Year (even-numbered years)	
Description	**Engagement level**
Quarter 1 • Clean Water Council shares priorities with the ICT, kickstarting the proposal process. The Administrator develops communication materials to close the loop with interested parties, sharing the priorities, an overview of the budget-setting process, and opportunities to engage next. • Clean Water Council annually reviews the Public Participation Plan.	
Quarter 2 • Clean Water Council receives proposal presentations from agencies. The Council and ICT consider input as they form up their proposals. • Clean Water Council members consult with individuals and groups they represent. • The Council considers all feedback and synthesizing work from the past year, taking care to weigh all input equally regardless of when or how it was received.	
Quarter 3 • The BOC and ICT exchange budget proposals. The committee and Council describe how input received to-date was used or not used. • The Council consults interested parties on the budget and policy recommendations, then makes a decision. • The Administrator prepares communications to share with interested parties after the initial draft recommendations are developed, detailing outcomes, how it may adjust based on budget forecasts, and opportunities to be engaged in the coming months.	
Quarter 4 • Clean Water Council makes adjustments to its recommendations based on updated budget forecast information, makes a decision, and shares the final version with interested parties. When the final budget decision is made, it's accompanied by a report that evaluates the engagement process and closes the loop with interested parties. The report describes the fate of input received and how it influenced the decision as well as where input landed – it could be acknowledged, answered, or referred to agencies/policy committee/BOC, as appropriate. The report describes how input was used or not used.	

*Cycle repeats with strategy year. All input and wisdom are carried forward into subsequent cycles.