

Engaging stakeholders in a watershed planning process

Lessons learned from the Big Sky Sustainable Watershed Stewardship Forum: 2016 - 2018



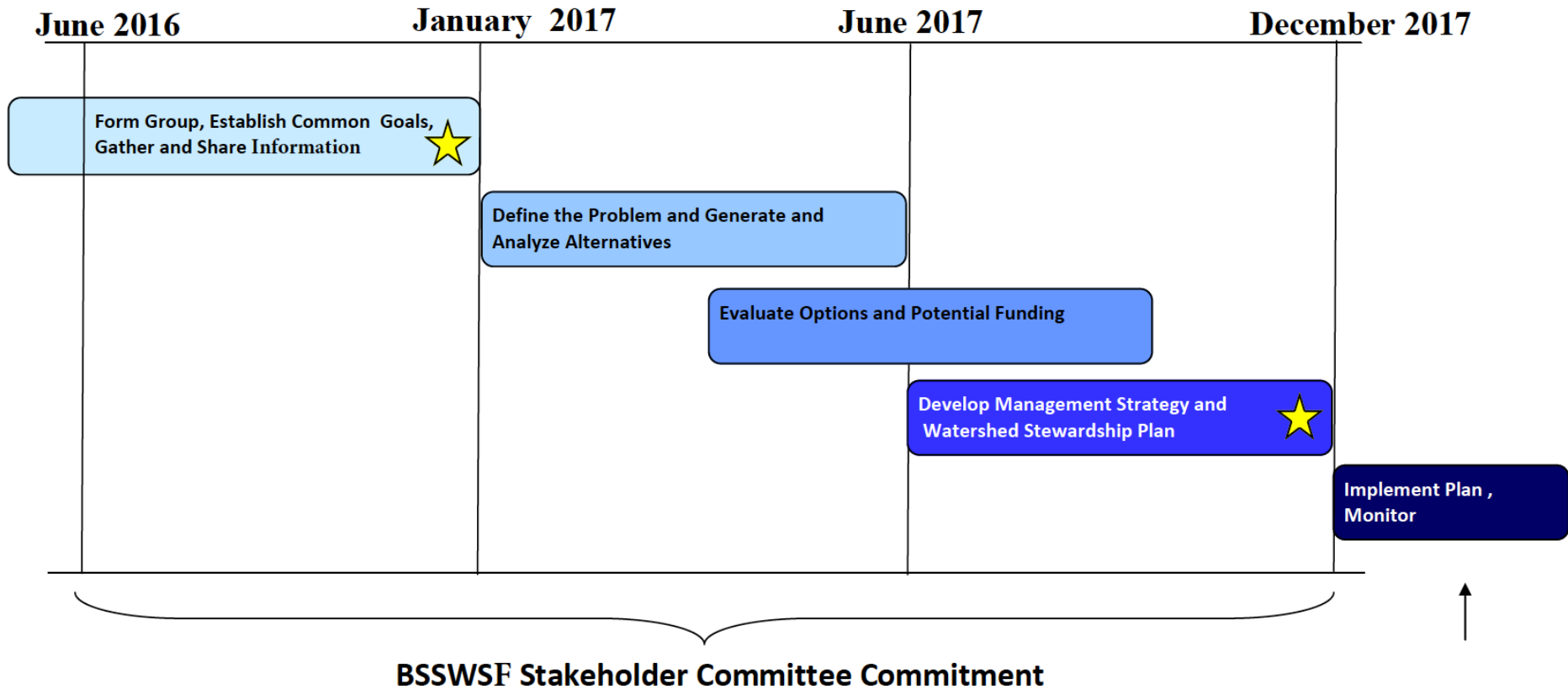
Background

- **Gallatin River Task Force:** nonprofit watershed group in the Upper Gallatin
- **Upper Gallatin:** Big Sky community surrounded by National Forest
- **Initial Watershed Planning Issue:** Identify additional wastewater discharge options for the Big Sky Water and Sewer District
- **Ultimate Watershed Planning Issue:**
 - *Identify sustainable solutions for wastewater treatment & reuse and water supply*
 - *Identify preservation and restoration needs for river systems within the Big Sky area*

Planning Effort Preparation

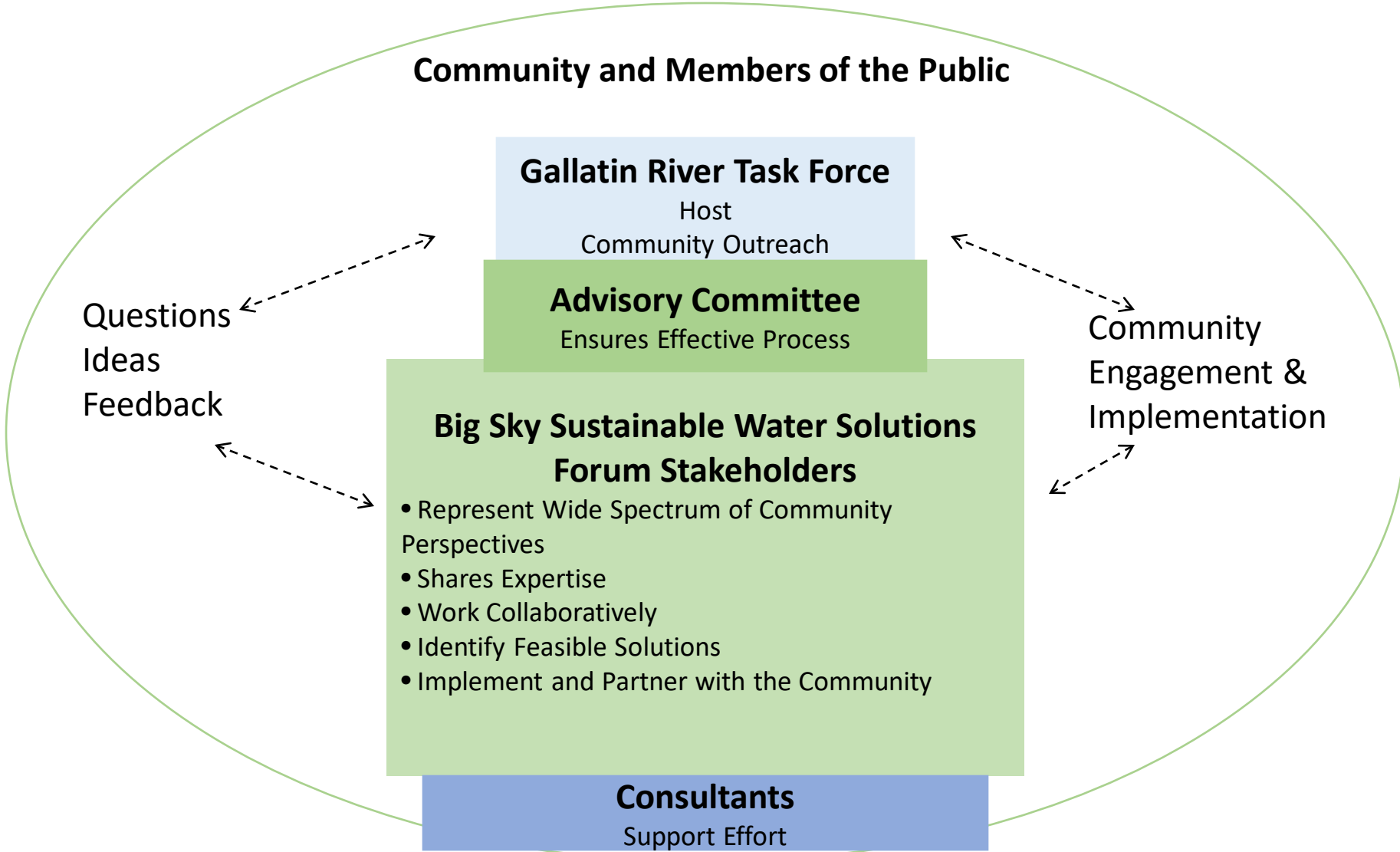
- **Hired consultants: facilitator & watershed scientist**
- **Secured public funding**
- **Identified and interviewed stakeholders**
- **Interview Stakeholders:** 33 stakeholders interviewed, representing community, business, conservation, agency and local government interests
 - *Water resource concerns in the Big Sky area*
 - *Input and approach to collaborative process*
 - *Identify tools and opportunities*
 - *Identify challenges or barriers that may create difficulties*
 - *Who else should be involved?*

Big Sky Sustainable Water Solutions Forum Timeline & Activities




★ Community Town Hall Meetings

Forum Roles





Big Sky Sustainable Water Solutions Forum

- 35 Stakeholders attended 13 meetings between November `16-December `17
 - \$300,000 effort funded 50% Big Sky Resort Tax, 25% Gallatin County and 25% Madison County
 - Priorities and action items agreed to by consensus in three focus areas:
 - Ecological Health of Our River Systems
 - Water Supply and Availability
 - Wastewater Reuse and Management
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Big Sky Sustainable Watershed Stewardship Plan



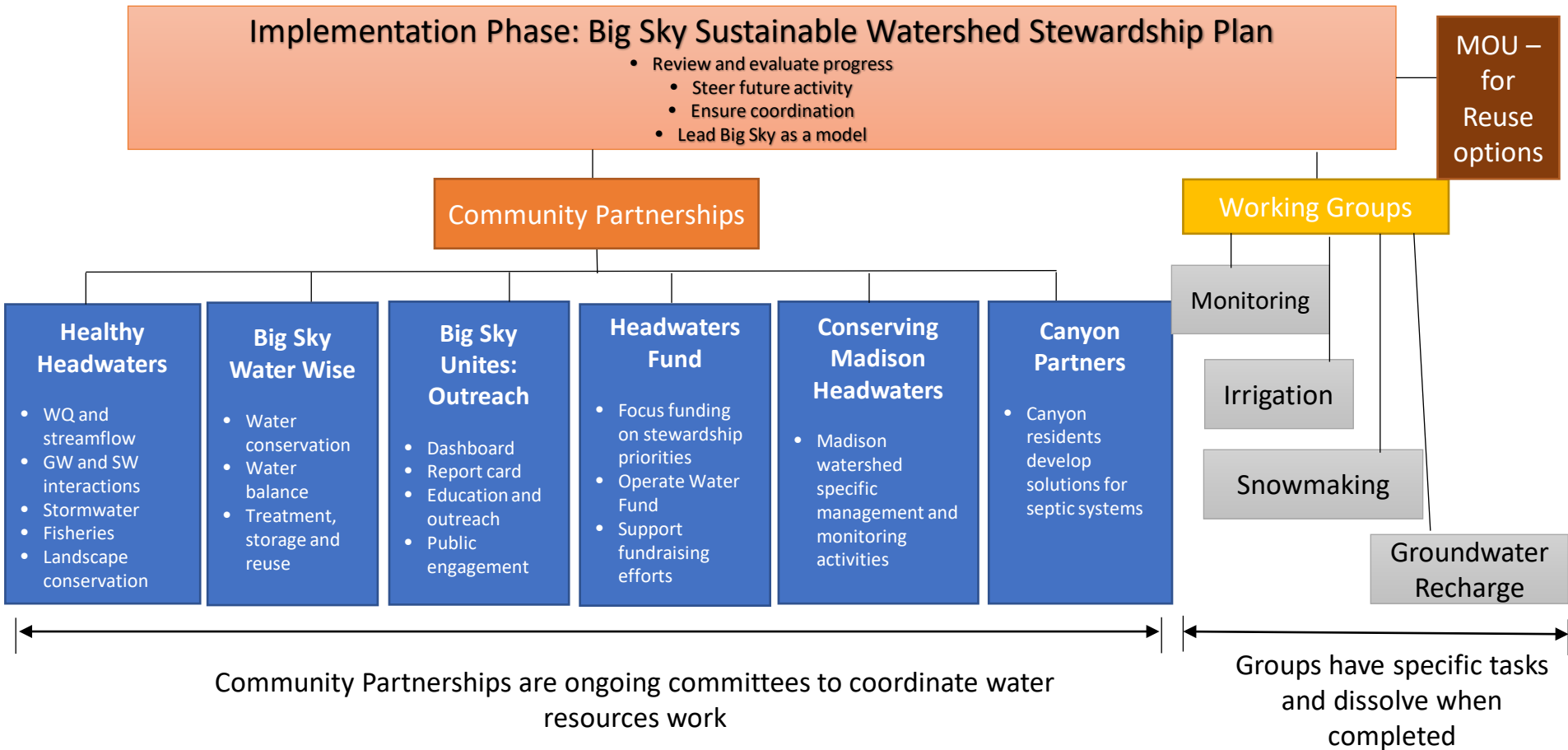
Big Sky Area Sustainable Watershed Stewardship Plan



January 26, 2018

<https://gallatinrivertaskforce.org/watershed-stewardship-plan/>

Implementation





Lessons Learned

- Recruit a **skilled neutral facilitator**
 - **Committed stakeholders** key to the successful process & long-lasting outcomes
 - **Stakeholder interviews** are critical to inform planning effort
 - **Initial information sharing & education** crucial to making informed decisions
 - **Advisory committee** to oversee and manage the process
 - Do not underestimate time, effort and funding needed for a successful process!
 - Prioritize implementation & funding strategies
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