

Watershed Management Section Project Completion Reports

Purpose

Reports detailing activities and accomplishments funded from grants administered by the Watershed Management Section are used as reference materials for project teams working on similar projects. These project completion reports represent a permanent forum to share your experiences with others. The project completion report must be comprehensive enough so that any reader may determine:

1. the location, scope, goals, objectives, and accomplishments of the project;
2. where and why the money was spent;
3. lessons learned, successes and failures
4. how any aspect of the project may have been done differently
5. additional work needed.

The Watershed Management Section submits copies of these reports to the EPA to satisfy reporting requirements.

Please note the following is general information and may be superseded by specific requirements in individual grant agreements.

All Watershed Management Section projects require a project completion report. For multi-year projects funded from different grants, project completion reports are required at the end of each grant period. Reports are due within 30 days after the end of the project or funding period, as specified in the grant agreement. The last quarterly report does not substitute for the project completion report and covers only the last quarter of the project. The project completion report covers the entire grant period and addresses all aspects of the project. These reports must be submitted to KDHE in both a paper format and on computer disk in either MS Word or Corel WordPerfect format. KCW also requires a separate final report. Organizations are encouraged to create web-sites about their project which include the project completion report.

Introduction

Preparation of a project completion report is an important aspect of all Watershed Management Section projects. These reports convey important information about NPS projects, their success and failures, further actions necessary, and the way in which the grant funds were expended. In the report, the project sponsor presents a summary of the project, including background information, water quality data and trends (if applicable) and other supporting information to

describe the accomplishments and milestones achieved. Project sponsors should keep project completion report development in the forefront of their minds throughout the project. Data, photographs, maps, and other information are collected most efficiently while the project is underway. Some examples, such as before and after photographs are possible only if a photographic record is created when the project is begun.

Several parts of the project completion report can be developed while the project is underway, including project descriptions, maps, goals and objectives, and the history of the water quality problem to be addressed. The document should not be written as an after thought at the end of the project. Rather, it should be integrated from start to finish with the planning, coordination, and implementation of the project. A project completion report is an excellent means of identifying additional water quality issues in the area and for proposing additional studies and programs to address these issues. An attractive, informative and user-friendly report can be used as outreach material to inform the public about projects in their area and can help to gain support for future projects. Also the report can be published on the Internet with links to more information that may be of interest to the viewer. This opportunity allows the sponsor to reach a much wider readership than would be possible with only printed materials. Internet publishing also presents special challenges in that report format and considerations between the printed media can, and do, differ. Each media offers unique challenges and opportunities.

The type of project will, to a great deal, dictate the report format. A shorter information and education project will have a much different project completion report than a multi-year watershed protection project. There will be differences in format, information presented, and the detail contained in the report all will affect the size of the report. Project sponsors are encouraged to think ahead and identify data analysis and display needs before the project is completed. Planning for the project completion report should begin while preparing the project proposal. Specific activities should be included throughout the project implementation that relate directly to the project completion report and the collection of information that could be included in the project completion report.

Project completion reports should not be directed only at other water quality professionals. While the technical aspects of the project are important and certainly have their place any final report, nontechnical information is important as well. An advantage of including nontechnical explanations of the project and data collected is that the information can readily be used for newspaper articles, fact sheets and other outreach materials. The best project completion reports are geared to a wide range of audiences. The sponsor can prepare a complete comprehensive report that covers all aspects of the project including all the technical data.

From that report, shorter publications can be generated for the general public without much additional effort.

Report Format

Common elements of all good project completion reports include the following:

- ⇒ Cover Page
- ⇒ Table of Contents
- ⇒ Executive Summary
- ⇒ Introduction or Background
- ⇒ Project Goals, Objectives, and Activities
- ⇒ Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned
- ⇒ Financial
- ⇒ Work Products
- ⇒ Acknowledgments

Cover Page

Depending upon the graphic abilities of the sponsor, a cover page can be elaborate or simple. The cover page needs to do two things:

1. give an indication of what the document contains and
2. make the reader interested in going farther.

Both can be accomplished without the need for expensive and complicated methods.

Basic information that should be included are the project title, time period of the project, the organizational sponsor of the project, the project manager and staff, major contributing agencies and individuals and an acknowledgment of funding sources. All publications funded from Section 319 are required to provide acknowledgment that funding has been provided for the project/publication by KDHE from a grant by the EPA. Refer to the grant agreement for the specific wording.

Table of Contents

This may not be necessary depending upon the type and length of the report. The table of contents should provide the major sections and as many subsections as needed to provide an indication of what is contained in the report and the ability to locate the information of interest.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the executive summary is to present an overview of the entire project completion report in a brief and concise manner. The summary is

intended for the reader who wants to know about the project, but has neither the time or interest in reading the entire report. The length of the summary will vary greatly depending on the complexity of the project, ranging from one or two paragraphs to several pages. This is an excellent place to present the project in largely nontechnical language which can be used for the publication of fact sheets or as the basis for press releases to the available media outlets. The executive summary is especially important for longer and more complex project completion reports. For shorter reports it can be omitted or included in the Introduction portion.

Introduction or Background

This is a presentation of the problem, the factors that created the problem and the major aspects of the political, economic, and social conditions that created the problem and/or need to be overcome in reducing or eliminating the problem. Basically, this is a “How did we get here” discussion and should also orient the project in the mind of the reader. It is important to provide the reader with information so that they can identify the area covered by the project and/or the problem not only in geographical terms, but in the social/economic culture present in the area. The level and detail of maps will vary. Maps should be used to locate the project and identify significant factors within the area that could affect the water quality problem.

Goals, Objectives, and Tasks

This is the “What we did about the problem” portion of the report. In general, the goals are broad statements about the project needs that are achievable through objectives. A description of the objectives and tasks should immediately follow each goal. Each objective should have a description of the tasks that will achieve that objective. Pictures, maps, and graphics are useful to describe an objective or task. Task outputs should be measurable and quantifiable.

Examples of good goal statements are: “To restore the recreational health of the Green River” or “To identify and implement appropriate grazing practices to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering the Green River.” Examples of objectives are: “Achieve a biomass concentration of 150 gm/m² as a summertime instantaneous reading” or “Sponsor a demonstration project of seasonal management of livestock.”

The project sponsor should include a discussion as to how well the tasks, objectives, and goals were met and describe both the successes and failures and the factors which may have contributed to the success or failure. Scheduling of activities and any delays should be discussed. Factors that changed or delayed the original project schedule should be stated and examined and explained. This section is also useful to present an analysis of any data collected during the project. The data itself can either be included here or as an appendix.

Sometimes the volume of data is such that it would be made available only on special request.

Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Review the problem, the solution, and any conclusion(s) that can be drawn from the project, including additional areas of study that the project identified as necessary. This is a very good place to describe any additional projects or activities that need to be undertaken as a result of this project.

Financial

All Watershed Management Section grant funded projects need to have an accounting of the grant and contributed resources (matching funds) expended over the life of the project. The contributed resources should include in-kind contributions as well as actual cash expended. A comparison of actual expenditures to budget grouped by type of expenditure is desired with separate grant, match, and total columns. Any significant deviations between the budget and the actual expenditures should have an explanation provided. Make sure the math is correct and agrees with the accounting records of your organization and the quarterly Affidavits of Expenditures and Contributed Resources submitted to KDHE for reimbursement.

Work Products

Work products can cover a very broad range of items. The following list, although far from inclusive, contains examples a few of the more common work products. The actual item or a photograph of the item, for example an poster session, should be attached to the project completion report in an appendix. Photographs of best management practices, water festivals, tours, etc. not included in previous sections can also be included here.

- Brochures
- CDs
- Educational Materials
- Evaluations
- Flyers
- Interviews
- Meeting Announcements
- Newsletters
- Newspaper Articles
- Presentations
- Press Releases
- Publications
- Questionnaires
- Radio Announcements
- Videos
- Workshop Materials

Acknowledgments

This section should recognize the individuals and organizations that participated in the project. Grant conditions require that KDHE and EPA be acknowledged as funding the project from Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Graphic Design

It is not necessary to have a graduate degree in graphic design to produce an outstanding report. Elements of good design are:

- ⇒ White Space
- ⇒ Layout
- ⇒ Graphics
- ⇒ Communicating Technical Data
- ⇒ Color
- ⇒ Content

White Space

White space refers to the amount of space on the page that is left blank. A good rule of thumb is 1/3 white space and 2/3 text. But as with all rules of thumb, that rule can be broken if you have a particular purpose in mind.

To immediately create white space you can increase the margins on the page. Have your headings wrap onto a second line rather than one long line. Use left justification instead of full or right justification for text. This creates more white space at the end of the line and makes it easier to read since your brain can remember the last word of the previous line when not all the lines end together.

Layout

When designing the layout of your project completion report, use restraint, consistency, and quality materials. Don't get carried away when choosing the typeface or font. Be consistent with the kinds of graphics or artwork and only quality graphic materials (photographs, artwork, graphs and tables) should be chosen to be included in the report. Invite the reader into your material with appealing user-friendly layouts. One option is the use of newspaper style columns. Select typefaces for readability. Provide variety, but not confusion. Hundreds of fonts are available, but resist the urge to use them all in one publication. A more formal project completion report usually looks best with formal fonts. Serif fonts should be used for large blocks of text because your eye can read them more easily. San-serif fonts (without the little feet on the letters) are good choices for headings and titles. Experiment but, remember your basic intent is to convey information about the project, not to create a modern work of art. Short fact sheets derived from information in the final report and intended for different audiences can contain less formal style fonts.

Graphics

Always use high quality graphics. Don't include so much information that your point gets lost. If you are going to reproduce the report in black and white only,

that should be considered when selecting or producing your graphic. Charts, tables, or photographs in color do not always reproduce well in black and white. View the graphic to answer the question, "Is it readable?" Seventeen shades of gray may reproduce as one shade of gray and the information you were trying to present is lost. Different patterns may also reproduce such that they are indistinguishable from one another. Make sure the information you intend to convey is actually available.

Varying the size and location of graphic elements can increase interest, although this can cause confusion if overdone. Vary the size of the graphic elements. Select a small number of different sizes and use them depending on the location and importance of the material presented.

Use only clear photographs that will reproduce well. It is better to leave out a murky or hazy photograph than to include it. Consider the reproduction method to be used when selecting photographs. A professional print shop can reproduce photographs that would not work well in a photocopy machine. The method of reproduction is a factor based upon the length of the document and the number of copies to be produced. Photos of people doing things appeal to a wider audience. That may not always be possible for every photograph. Try to include some photographs of people in action, such as water sampling, demonstrating a technique, or some other activity.

Color

Color in your project completion report will dramatically increase its attractiveness. Using color does not always require using a costly four color separation process and blowing your budget sky high. Printing your report in one color such as dark blue or green costs little, if any, more than using black ink. And the extra cost for two color printing is not always beyond reach of most printing budgets. Even just using colored paper can increase the attractiveness of the report. Be sure that the paper selected does not interfere with the readability of the document.

Content

Make the text interesting. Okay, so you are not writing the "great American novel." There are still things you can do to increase and hold the readers interest. Break up long blocks of text with interesting tidbits of information or small graphics. Quotes from participants used as sidebar inserts along one margin are an excellent way to break up long blocks of text. Use an active voice, good grammar and complete sentences. Tell the story of your project.