



Länsstyrelsen  
Stockholm



Havs  
och Vatten  
myndigheten

# Handbook for strategic municipal water management – a summary

## Introduction

This document summarizes the Handbook for strategic municipal water management, developed within project LIFE IP Rich Waters. It provides an overview of the steps in the work method described in the handbook. The handbook also has several annexes, that can provide support in various parts of the work process. They are not described here but they are available (in Swedish) online at [www.vattenplanering.se](http://www.vattenplanering.se).

## About the handbook

The method in the handbook is based on best available knowledge about municipal water management and on experiences and lessons from various municipalities. It provides a general description with recommendations for how a municipality can work with water issues. The approach is described from a process perspective with examples of issues that are important to consider. The work approach and orientation should be adapted to each municipality's conditions. The handbook should therefore be used as inspiration and as a support tool for creating an individual work model for water management on the scale that suits the municipality.

The handbook has been drafted within the LIFE IP Rich Waters project by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. The handbook was published online in December 2018, revised in 2022 and is available (in Swedish) at [www.richwaters.se](http://www.richwaters.se).



The handbook has also been published as a web tool at [www.vattenplanering.se](http://www.vattenplanering.se) with several examples of how different municipalities work with water management.

## About strategic water management

When you think about the water management in your municipality – would you say you work towards a specific goal? Do you have an effective organization? Do you develop the different values of water; ecological, social and economic values? Do you meet the requirements of the law?

Strategic water planning is about balancing different interests and requirements both short term and long term. It is about creating a cohesive water management even though your organization has numerous roles and responsibilities. It is about creating a

more effective governance towards a common goal and a robust organization to do the work.

It is important for every organization to find its motivation and its way of working. Water management should not, and cannot, be merely a cost. Successful water planning is also not based solely on legal requirements, such as complying with environmental quality standards for water, but the driving force is usually a combination of different issues. In growing cities, there is a particularly great need for good planning bases for water resources.

Several organizations already have full-time or part-time water coordinators who can develop water management and motivate the internal organization. Several municipalities also have produced governing and supporting documents for the water work, including water plans that specify the goals, direction, and organization for the water work. Several municipalities are part of networks or collaborations on various water issues through inter-municipal associations, water conservation associations or the like – either to jointly finance measures or supervision, or environmental monitoring.

In short, the water planning should show how the work should be carried out within the municipality, in the short term and in the long term, and that targeted and balanced water work saves both time and money for the organization and gives better effect in the environment. Strategic water planning is proactive instead of reactive and it uses water as a valuable resource.

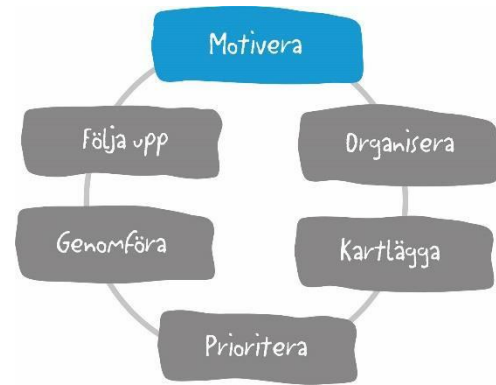
The handbook is a support to structure a complex work. It supports the discussions on goals and vision, organization, and how this can be described to help the municipality to push forward in a goal-oriented way.

### **Key factors for successful water management**

- Harmonise water management in terms of the municipality's ambitions and legal requirements.
- Build a robust and broad internal organisation with clear lines of decision-making and sharing of responsibility.
- Build a common knowledge base relating to the problems and needs for measures.
- Prioritise measures methodically and secure financing and implementation through internal coordination and external collaboration.
- Follow up and evaluate water management both organisationally and practically for continued development and effectiveness

## Step 1: Motivate

Water management is complex. The municipality also has many different roles and a broad responsibility for water issues. At the same time, water issues must be balanced with other municipal interests, and must meet legal requirements, and have the resources (and knowledge) to do the job.



Each municipality must find its own motivations over which advantages and benefits are associated when conducting and developing water management work. The political will is an essential factor for how well a municipality succeeds with water management.

In many cases, increasing knowledge is necessary, to create a better understanding of water as a resource. Activities such as education in different aspects of water management could be necessary.

### Three key points

- Find your reason 'why' – why water is important, and which benefits the municipality can achieve with coordinated water management.
- Determine who needs to be motivated? Who needs to be motivated to proceed? Decision-makers, internal organisation?
- Harmonise the municipality's ambitions with legal requirements.

Arguments that municipalities have used to develop water management:

- More efficient working methods
- Legal requirements
- Multifunctionality and enhanced ecosystem services
- Securing the water of the future
- Better results in municipal rankings

Questions you may ask yourself when discussing motivation for development on water management:

- How does your municipality work with water issues and does the way of working well?
- What time perspectives do you work with and what goal do you have?
- Is there dialogue across departments and units, across management boundaries?

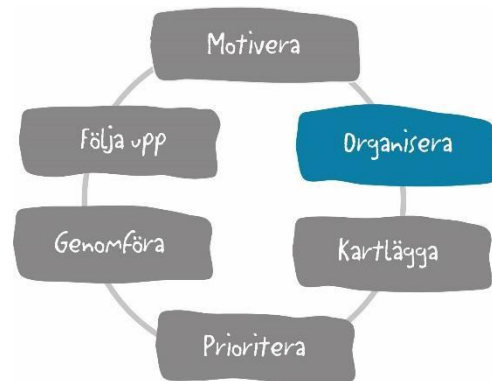
- How do you ensure that relevant perspectives are included in projects, investigations, plans and programs?

## Step 2: Organise

An important factor for success in water management in a municipality is to establish a robust organisation in which every participant's responsibility is defined. The political anchoring is central, together with creating a cross-disciplinary administrative organisation for a coordinated approach to water management.

A cross-disciplinary organization is necessary since water is the same. This will also eliminate many discussions in subsequent phases when operative measures are implemented.

Since water does not follow administrative boundaries, it is also important to develop collaboration with external stakeholders of the water basin perspective.



In this chapter of the handbook, you will find support for organizing water work within the municipality and with external parties based on different examples of how other municipalities have done and suggestions for organizational structure.

Several municipalities describe consequences of a lack of internal organization:

- Work is paused or takes much longer because they do not get along. Detailed planning work is delayed due to important issues not considered for review.
- Different administrations pursue issues that directly contradict each other's aims and objectives.
- Different administrations procure equivalent orders from different consultants.

### Three key points

- Create a robust internal organisation with broad representation from various parts of the municipality.
- Decide on an order of delegation that describes roles and responsibilities.
- Collaborate with external stakeholders for increased knowledge and initiatives that use resources more efficiently, e.g. joint planning, shared job positions, financing, and implementation of measures.

### Cooperation with actors outside the municipality

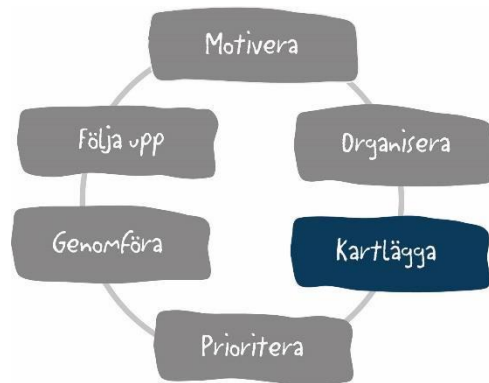
Joint planning and risk management from a river basin perspective, is becoming increasingly important. For many municipalities, neither resources nor competence are sufficient to cover all the different water-related requirements and needs within their

geographical area. Therefore, collaboration with others will then be extra important to maximize the effects of the measures implemented. Inter-municipal cooperation can therefore be a must. There are many benefits from joint planning, shared service for water coordinators or project managers, shared funding, and common priority to maximise the impact of the actions implemented.

### Step 3: Mapping

A knowledge basis is required to establish a good picture of the status of the environment and analyse the challenges facing the municipality. Based on the results, an assessment takes place to determine which measures should be prioritised.

Which type of supporting material that should be gathered depends on the purpose for which it is collected. Various types of documentation and information are gathered internally and externally.



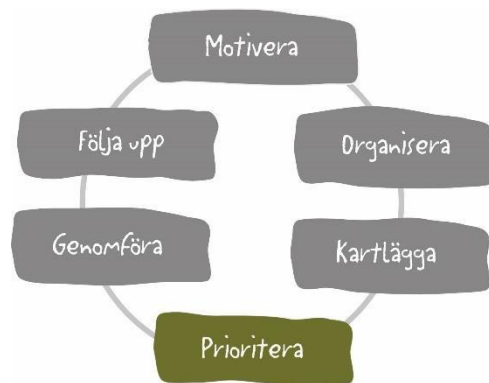
Do not forget to determine how the collected material should be managed and stored so that it remains accessible later. The results from the mapping can be used in later stages as a basis for implementation of measures or in the procurement of services. There may also be reason to revisit this stage to complete the analysis, or if the purpose of the water management process changes.

#### Three key points

- Build a common knowledge base relating to the problems and needs for measures.
- Determine which material is necessary and adequate to be able to decide on the further work.
- Consider how the results from the gathering of information should be stored and managed. It will very likely be useful in other assignments and projects.

## Step 4: Prioritise

A prioritisation process is needed to identify key issues, particularly since there are seldom economic or human resources available to implement all measures proposed because of the information gathering process. The municipality thus needs to prioritise internally and sometimes in the external collaboration within the water basin. Various time requirements must be observed. In 2021/2027, our waters must achieve good water status and we can expect effects on society and the environment in a changing climate adding to the challenges.



By structuring the water management, opportunities to implement the correct measures at the right time are increased, which can save resources and provide a better result. In most cases, however, there is a delay in measurable effects in natural environments after implementation of physical measures.

Measures can be implemented while the long-term and strategic planning or prioritisation work proceed if there are means and opportunity. Sometimes, it may even be necessary to work in both ends, particularly in municipalities with high ground exploitation pressure.

There are different methods and models to help prioritise. Often, these are best when combined. The purpose determines which methods and models are most suitable. The handbook gives a few examples of methods.

### Three key points

- Prioritize methodically! The need for measures often exceeds the budget and therefore the initiatives must be prioritised. Find a method that suits your purpose.
- Use the material from step 3 – Mapping to arrive at a fact-based decision.
- Involve your stakeholders and start from a water basin perspective! The work benefits from prioritising together or in consultation with those who are affected by the measures.

## Step 5: Implement

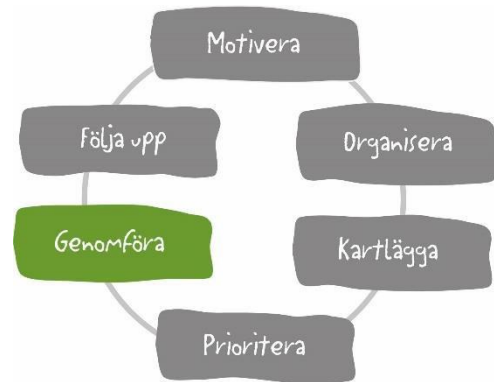
Implementation is a process in and of itself and it must also be planned and documented. With thorough preparatory work, the implementation phase is simplified.

Measures can be divided into administrative, preparatory, and physical measures.

Administrative measures are the development of for example plans and programmes for water. Water documents should be steering document for how the municipality will work with water management. They include descriptions of objectives, sharing of responsibility and various types of measures that are required to achieve goals and to facilitate and evaluate the work.

Preparatory measures include for example the establishment of knowledge basis, which is required to analyse the status of the environment and the challenges facing the municipality.

Physical measures are the concrete work, such as establishing wetlands, removing migration barriers, or building dams. Good project planning is important, particularly if several stakeholders are involved. Do not forget to document and follow up to develop the work process.



### Three key points

- The implementation work is a process in and of itself. Document to develop the work approach and to facilitate learning.
- Secure implementation and financing by planning and coordinating internally and collaborating and cooperating externally.
- Communicate and solidify the result for a harmonised view on the implementation.

## Step 6: Follow up

The work with water management requires regular follow-up and evaluation, so that the right initiatives are prioritised based on both short-term and long-term needs and that the work provides the results that are desired. Follow-up and evaluation are valuable for developing work procedures, improving efficient use of resources, and avoiding pitfalls



in future work. Follow-up of water management should take place in connection to the municipality's general evaluation and follow up.

In most cases, there is a delay before measurable effects in the environment after implementation of physical measures, so the follow-up can not only be done immediately after implementation.

Evaluation could create a basis for following up on the effects of what was planned, to develop the work approach and improve the result. Was the intended result achieved? What worked well? What worked less well? The evaluation can be carried out at any point in time when there is a need to know how the work functioned. Do not forget to communicate the results from the follow-up and evaluation with relevant stakeholders.

### **Three key points**

- Follow up and evaluate on the water management both organisationally and practically for continued development and effectiveness.
- Follow up on the water management in connection with the municipality's other follow-up.
- Communicate and solidify the result from the follow-up and evaluation with concerned stakeholders.