



International
Model Forest
Network

MODEL FOREST TOOLKIT

THE MODEL FOREST TOOLKIT IS A HOW-TO MANUAL FOR NEW AND EXISTING MODEL FOREST MANAGERS AND OTHERS INTERESTED IN THE PRACTICE. LEARN HOW TO SET UP A MODEL FOREST, UNDERTAKE STRATEGIC PLANNING, ORGANIZE AND RUN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES, COLLECT AND DEMONSTRATE IMPACT, AND SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES WITH DONORS, PARTNERS AND FOLLOWERS.

CHAPTER 1

STARTING A MODEL FOREST

ALSO AVAILABLE

CHAPTER 2 — MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING

CHAPTER 3 — MODEL FOREST GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 4 — MODEL FOREST WORK PLANNING

CHAPTER 5 — MODEL FOREST MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CHAPTER 6 — MODEL FOREST COMMUNICATIONS

CHAPTER 1

STARTING A MODEL FOREST

Starting a Model Forest means: 1) defining a physical area where there is an opportunity to jointly manage resources and sustainable development, 2) bringing together all the stakeholders involved to make those decisions in a participatory, equitable and transparent way, 3) developing and implementing a strategic plan, and 4) going through the steps to become a member of the IMFN.

MODEL FOREST APPROACH

No two Model Forests are the same. While all share common principles and attributes, the cultural, geographic, institutional, political and other circumstances make each Model Forest unique. The activities and approaches undertaken by Model Forests differ in light of this diversity. In some Model Forests, for example, conservation issues are paramount, while in others economic diversification, conflict management, wood value chains, watershed management or other issues are more prominent.

It is important for your Model Forest to build an approach and program of work that is relevant, inclusive, technically sound and achievable, and one that reflects your stakeholders' priorities, circumstances and customs. This can be done by following the six Model Forest Principles as described below.

MODEL FOREST PRINCIPLES

Many land and resource management strategies already reflect some of the core elements of the Model Forest concept — for example, participatory forestry, forest landscape restoration (FLR), ecosystem-based management, collaborative networks and landscape approaches. However, the following six principles are unique to all Model Forests:

1. Landscape
2. Partnership
3. Commitment to sustainability
4. Governance
5. Program of activities
6. Knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking.

Regardless of the specific ecosystems or tenures involved in your Model Forest, the six principles have the following effects:

- Facilitate experiments in sustainable development
- Maintain broad program coherence
- Create a clear link between landscape-level applications and national and international policy issues
- Help each Model Forest maintain its conceptual focus and program integrity throughout its development
- Ensure that each Model Forest has the autonomy to design an initiative that reflects local priorities
- Create a mechanism for convening a broad range of stakeholders and a foundation for networking at the local, national, regional and international levels.

How to apply the Principles to initiate a Model Forest is described in greater detail below.



Photo: Prince Albert Model Forest, Canada

DEFINE THE LANDSCAPE

There is no minimum or maximum prescribed area for a Model Forest. For some, boundaries correspond to an existing administrative unit such as a municipality or multiple administrative units. Others are defined by an ecological boundary, such as a watershed or multiple watersheds. Alternately, boundaries may be determined by a particular issue stakeholders wish to address, such as species at risk or landscape restoration, as examples. The key element is to ensure a diversity of interests, land uses and stakeholder representation within the area selected.

In other words, a Model Forest must be large enough to represent the full range of landscape uses and values in the surrounding area. At 20,750 hectares, the Carood Watershed Model Forest in the Philippines is one of the smallest while Chiquitano Model Forest in Bolivia covers 20 million hectares. Most Model Forests range from 300,000 to 500,000 hectares. A site may start out smaller and grow in size over time as new issues or priorities arise (though growth in area is not required).

IDENTIFY MODEL FOREST STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have determined the issue(s) you wish to address in a particular landscape, the next step is to understand who needs to be involved. Model Forest stakeholders are individuals, groups or institutions that are interested in, are affected by or can affect (positively or negatively) a Model Forest's decisions about resource management and programming priorities. Stakeholders need not reside within the physical boundaries of your Model Forest. In fact, many Model Forests involve organizations from outside, such as universities and research institutions. As well, although some stakeholders remain constant throughout the life of a Model Forest, others change over time as issues, programming and needs change.

The stakeholders who voluntarily work together to identify a common vision and address issues of mutual interest, and who are formally recognized in the Model Forest's governance structure, are referred to as “partners.”

Your initial stakeholder group may be small, but it will likely grow over time. Partners should encourage new stakeholders to participate as gaps are identified in knowledge, issues or representation. Other organizations may become interested in participating when they learn more about Model Forests and their activities.

A Model Forest partnership does not have legal authority over the land base and, therefore, must include key land users, managers and other stakeholders.

Here are some examples of stakeholders:

- Industry
- Community groups
- Indigenous peoples
- Government agencies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Academic and research institutions
- National parks
- Private landowners.



Photo: Campo Ma'an Model Forest, Cameroon

SOME FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS:

- **Influence:** Influence goes beyond how much power a stakeholder wields to bring about change. It also includes the absence of influence. Consider the needs and interests of those who may be affected by decisions but have no power to influence them.
- **Responsibility:** Examine a potential stakeholder's responsibilities. These may include regulatory responsibility for compliance with laws, policies and regulations; contractual or legal responsibility to other organizations; financial responsibility to donors or others that provide resources; and ethical or moral responsibility to those that are affected by, or that can affect, decision-making in the Model Forest.
- **Representation:** Consider not only the different values and uses of the landscape that the Model Forest should represent, but the legitimacy of a representative and the number of interests represented. The groups the stakeholder representative claims to speak for should support that person as their representative.



Photo: Reventazón Model Forest, Costa Rica

Often Model Forests are formed to address conflicting interests, making them complex in practice. Therefore, the partnership often includes stakeholders who do not typically work together or agree with one another. To engage local participation and expertise, the partnership needs to recognize that its many points of view have common elements and have a place in the decision-making process.

It is strongly recommended that you conduct planning exercises in the form of workshops and meetings to help stakeholders reach consensus about the Model Forest's strategic directions, including its vision, objectives and expected impacts, and ongoing activities. These elements should form the foundations of your strategic plan, which ultimately seeks to apply and demonstrate natural resource management practices that are environmentally sound, socially acceptable and economically viable. Identifying commonalities rather than focusing on differences is a helpful way to start. Different approaches may be needed for different stakeholders to ensure their full participation.

More information about strategic planning is available in Chapter 2 of this guide.

ASSESS YOUR MODEL FOREST

These key questions will help you assess your Model Forest plans and approaches against the six Model Forest Principles during its development period:

ASSESSING YOUR LANDSCAPE

- Does your landscape area contain significant forest and other natural resources, including unique environmental features?
- Is your area reflective of social, cultural and other community considerations?
- Are a range of issues and values represented on the landscape?
- Is there a diversity of landscape types (ecosystems, land uses, etc.) within your area?
- Is your area reflective of your broader geographic region?
- Is there a clearly articulated rationale for the area selected?

ASSESSING YOUR PARTNERSHIP

- Can most of the population access the Model Forest through a stakeholder who represents their principal activity, value or area of interest?
- Does your Model Forest have a diverse partnership of stakeholders who identify goals, set priorities and development targets, and establish policy guidelines for the overall program?
- Are any values or resource uses under-represented or not represented in your partnership?
- Are there stakeholders or other groups not currently involved that could help achieve your goals?

ASSESSING YOUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

- Does your partnership have an agreed-upon strategy for determining progress toward sustainability? Is there a commitment to developing and implementing this strategy?
- Does your partnership have a long-term commitment to the concept of sustainable development? Will it support research and technology transfer on the subject?
- Does your Model Forest have the support of national, regional and local authorities (public or private) with jurisdiction over the land and resources?
- Does your Model Forest's program relate to an overall national or regional forest plan?

ASSESSING YOUR GOVERNANCE

- Does your governance structure encourage, in practice, meaningful participation by the stakeholders?
- Is your Model Forest managed by a partnership of stakeholders representing a diversity of interests (e.g., industry, community groups, government agencies, non-governmental environmental and forestry groups, academic and educational institutions, national parks, Aboriginal groups, private landowners)?
- Is your Model Forest managed by consensus and is the decision-making structure transparent?
- Has your Model Forest established technical or advisory committees to develop your program and report to the stakeholder committee?
- Does your governance structure exclude or inhibit involvement by any groups?

ASSESSING YOUR PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

- Does your Model Forest reflect the majority of local and national forest values as defined in a national forest program or similar documentation?
- Is your Model Forest concerned about the needs of local and indigenous people, as well as about the conservation and wise use of the forests and natural resources?
- In its programming, does your Model Forest consider the range of forest values identified as being important? Does it consider social, economic, ecological and historical dimensions of sustainable management of the forest-based landscape and natural resources?
- Does your Model Forest demonstrate the most environmentally appropriate management practices and techniques, and does it support, to the degree possible, scientific research and the application of new technologies?
- Does your Model Forest carry out education and training within the area to make local communities more aware of the program?

ASSESSING YOUR KNOWLEDGE SHARING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

- Do you make your commitment to knowledge sharing known through network activities, demonstration projects, linkages to other Model Forests and participation in global processes (e.g., the development and application of local-level indicators of sustainable forest management)?
- Will your Model Forest be an active partner in the IMFN and share experiences, successes and failures with other Model Forests?

NEXT: CHAPTER 2: MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING



Photo: Kōdagu Model Forest, India

