



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 2

MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING

ALSO AVAILABLE

- CHAPTER 1 — STARTING A MODEL FOREST
- CHAPTER 3 — MODEL FOREST GOVERNANCE
- CHAPTER 4 — MODEL FOREST WORK PLANNING
- CHAPTER 5 — MODEL FOREST MONITORING AND EVALUATION
- CHAPTER 6 — MODEL FOREST COMMUNICATIONS



CHAPTER 2

MODEL FOREST STRATEGIC PLANNING

Undertaking a strategic planning process and developing a Strategic Plan for your Model Forest ensures that everyone involved shares the same vision for managing the landscape and implementing activities. It also helps assess your direction over the years in response to a changing environment, and ensures projects are consistent with the Model Forest's agreed mandate.

The value of the strategic planning process cannot be overstated. The planning process typically involves several workshops (and possibly meetings between smaller groups). If stakeholders do not feel sense of ownership or see themselves reflected in the plan, the chance of success is low. Take the time necessary to discuss issues, negotiate trade offs and move the process forward while building trust.

STEP 1: STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Undertake an analysis of your Model Forest's operating environment by exploring the needs, issues and challenges faced by your stakeholders. This will help identify the barriers, constraints, contexts, and opportunities that can inform how you develop and operate your Model Forest. Answer the following questions:

- What challenges do you face concerning the sustainable management of the landscape? What are the common elements?
- What do you require to be effectively involved in sustainably managing the forested landscape? What are the common elements?
- What sustainable development challenges currently exist on the Model Forest land base? What concerns do you have regarding the sustainable management of natural resources on the land base?
- What are your country's and district's priorities in relation to the national forest program and natural resource management?
- What international agreements, treaties and conventions are of interest to or apply to your Model Forest?
- What constraints or impediments do you face in developing and operating an effective Model Forest?
- What do you need or expect from stakeholders' involvement in the Model Forest?
- Who is already working on areas that interest your Model Forest? What are they doing? Are they already involved in the Model Forest, or can they become involved?
- What is the potential niche or area of expertise for your Model Forest?
- What is the timeframe of your strategy? (typically the timeframe is 5 years)

RESULT: A prioritized list of critical issues, needs and challenges that you and your stakeholders plan to address.

STEP 2: SET YOUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Using your strategic analysis as the basis, establish consensus on the vision, mission, objectives and expected impacts of your Model Forest.

Vision: Your vision should describe how the Model Forest area would be better or different if you achieved your expected long-term impacts.

Mission: Your mission should define how your stakeholders want to operate to achieve the Model Forest's vision. The mission can be framed around your common values, for example:

1. The core priorities in your culture or way of operating (e.g., consensus decision-making, broad participation, transparency)
2. The landscape elements that are important to each stakeholder (e.g., biodiversity, water, non-timber forest products, forest productivity, livelihoods).

The first set of values can help you choose a governance structure and a set of operating principles for your Model Forest. The second can help you identify issues and challenges, then prioritize them.

Objectives: Objectives outline what is expected to be achieved over the period of the strategic plan. The objectives should be limited in number (e.g. three to seven) and should clearly support the expected impacts.

Impacts: Impacts are the sustainable changes resulting from your activities, taking place in the short, medium and long term and corresponding to the vision and objectives of your Model Forest.

You may find it helpful to present your Model Forest's expected impacts in the form of a logic model, which is a flow chart that shows the relationships between programs and activities, outputs, outcomes and expected impacts. See Model Forest Monitoring and Evaluation for more details.

RESULT: Agreement on the vision, mission, objectives and expected impacts of your Model Forest.

STEP 3: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance structure of your Model Forest enables effective decision making involving all stakeholders. Questions related to Model Forest governance include:

- What is the most effective way to involve people, undertake activities and achieve your strategic directions?
- Do you have a transparent and accountable organizational structure that allows full and open participation by interested parties?
- Does your governance structure include effective ways of involving new stakeholders over time?
- Should any of your existing structures be changed? Are any additional structures required?

Read more: *Chapter 3: Model Forest Governance*

RESULT: Identification of an accountable, transparent and effective governance structure that suits your Model Forest context and complies with the laws of your jurisdiction.

STEP 4: PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

A work plan outlines the program areas and activities that will lead to achieving the strategic directions over the life of the Model Forest. Ask yourself: What can our Model Forest do to achieve our vision and long-term impacts? What activities will accomplish this?

Your work plan should contain the following:

- Overview of the general approach being used to achieve your strategic directions
- List of program areas and activities
- Identification of who will be involved in the activities
- Overview of the outputs of the proposed activities
- Timeline for implementation (such as a Gantt chart).

Program areas might include: Partnership development and maintenance; Applied research; Community sustainability and livelihood development; Communications and public awareness; Knowledge transfer; Networking; Monitoring and evaluation; and Management and administration.

Read more: *Chapter 4: Model Forest Work Planning*

RESULT: Identification of, and agreement on, the program areas and types of activities the Model Forest will undertake to achieve its strategic directions.

STEP 5: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

You should prepare a financial plan or budget to identify the resources needed to implement your strategy as well as sources of funding. A financial plan includes two main components:

- Total forecasted expenses (i.e., the cost of undertaking the activities in your implementation strategy)
- Current and potential funding sources, as well as monetary and in-kind contributions.

Often partners can contribute staff time, office space, or other non-monetary contributions. These in-kind contributions should be tracked as they are important sources of support for the Model Forest.

RESULT: Identification of financial resources required to achieve your strategic directions.

STEP 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of your Model Forest's plans and activities helps determine how successful they are and what aspects of your program or activities might need to be adjusted on an ongoing basis. Describing your general approach to M&E should be included in your strategic plan. Details should be outlined in an M&E Framework.

Read more: *Chapter 5: Monitoring and Evaluation*

STEP 7: COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Sharing lessons learned is part of the sixth Model Forest Principle. Whether it is communicating results locally among stakeholders, to local or national governments, or with other members of the IMFN, sharing experiences accelerates sustainability in all of our landscapes and increases access to potential new or additional resources. Yet, communications and knowledge sharing is often overlooked as an important element strategic planning.

Understanding who you need to reach, why, how and how often is key to effective communication. Communications and knowledge sharing should be noted in your strategy in broad terms. Details should be captured in a separate communications and knowledge sharing plan that directly links to your Model Forest strategic plan and supporting program of work.

Read more: *Chapter 6: Model Forest Communications*



Photo: Ifrane Model Forest, Morocco

STEP 8: PRODUCING A STRATEGIC PLAN

Now it is time to consolidate all this information into a single document — a Strategic Plan. Your Strategic Plan answers the questions: Where are we? What resources do we have? What do we want to achieve? How do we get there? A small committee or individual can develop a draft for review. Approval is then sought and required by the larger stakeholder group. Once approved, your Model Forest Strategic Plan should be shared with the IMFN Secretariat.

General outline of a Model Forest Strategic Plan:

1. Description of the Model Forest Area

- Map of your Model Forest
- The size of your Model Forest, including a rationale for the boundary selected
- Biophysical information such as land types, areas and water
- Descriptions of major land uses such as forest resources (ecosystems, species, NTFPs, etc), agriculture and mining
- Land tenure arrangements
- Conservation and protected areas
- Communities, socio-economic characteristics and economic dependencies, significant cultural and historical information.

2. Issues, challenges and stakeholder needs

Briefly describe the critical issues, challenges and needs identified during your strategic analysis and include an overview of how and why you selected these issues.

3. History of Model Forest development

If relevant, include information and analysis about your Model Forest’s past impacts, successes, lessons learned and challenges, to show how you will move forward by building on past activities.

4. Strategic directions

Outline the strategic directions that stakeholders have agreed to: vision/mission, objectives, expected impacts and logic model.

5. Governance and administration

Outline the governance and administrative structure you have identified to complement your stakeholders group: your organizational structure, operating principles, decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities, and other administrative concerns.

6. Work plan

Describe the programs and activities your Model Forest will undertake to achieve its vision, objectives and expected impacts.

7. Financial plan

Prepare a detailed financial plan for the strategic plan period (e.g. 5 years) that outlines your expense forecasts and funding sources.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Describe in broad terms how you will know your project is on track/successful or not. Partners should prepare a separate and detailed monitoring and evaluation framework.

9. Communications and knowledge sharing

Communications and knowledge sharing should be included as a Model Forest activity. Partners should later develop a detailed communications plan that directly links to the Model Forest strategy and program of work.

10. Other

You might want to include a signature page showing your stakeholders’ commitments, an executive summary and any additional information in annexes such as letters of support or funding.

RESULT: A final Strategic Plan for your Model Forest.

NOTE: *The International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) and the Regional Model Forest Networks have considerable experience reviewing strategic plans and can offer sound advice on their content, structure and more. Contact us for assistance.*

NEXT:
CHAPTER 3:
MODEL FOREST
GOVERNANCE



Photo: River Mirna Basin Model Forest, Croatia

