

Strategic Plan 2022-2026





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Summary

In October and November of 2021, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for the Wood Buffalo Environmental Association (WBEA) participated in workshops to develop a five-year strategic plan. Specific objectives of our process included:

- Developing a practical vision for the WBEA for five years from now;
- Identifying obstacles to this vision, and;
- Establishing and prioritizing strategic initiatives, and;
- Identifying milestones to operationalize the strategy.

Process

We chose to use a participatory process to give members of the committee an opportunity to share our insights, debate our thinking, and create a consensus around the strategic plan. The Steering Committee participated in a series of online workshops including:

- Workshop 1: Looking backward at our organization's recent journey; confirming Mission, Vision, and Values
- Workshop 2: Articulating a desired future state and vision for the WBEA;
- Workshop 3: Identifying the obstacles that stand in the way of our vision, and;
- Workshop 4: Creating strategic initiatives to achieve our vision.

Process

The Operational Leadership Team participated in a series of online workshops including:

- Workshops 5, 6: Identifying milestones to operationalize the strategy
- Workshop 7: Sequencing milestones

The process helped build alignment among the Steering Committee and the Operational Leadership Team and created more clarity about our mutual priorities for the WBEA. At completion, it represents our mutual view of the best way for the WBEA to move forward.



Stakeholder Engagement

Prior to our strategy workshops, the WBEA engaged nearly twenty individual stakeholders representing industry, community, and government partners. During a series of small group discussions and interviews, they were asked the following questions.

- How well does the WBEA meet stakeholder and partner expectations?
- What is the effectiveness of the Governance structure?
- What is the importance of the multi-stakeholder nature of the WBEA?
- What could the WBEA do in the future?
- What words of advice would you offer the WBEA as it creates a new strategic plan?

Stakeholder engagement revealed some important insights.

We learned **the WBEA is extremely well regarded for what it does and how it operates**. Our community partners value our demonstrated commitment to multi-stakeholder practices, and we have a reputation for technical expertise that produces high-quality data. Overall, the WBEA is viewed as a responsive, well-run, and transparent organization.

However, **our relationship with the Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) Program relationship requires additional attention**. Creating stronger alignment between the OSM and the WBEA will aid both organizations, and there are opportunities to prioritize collaborative program development. At the same time, the WBEA should address the risks and limitations of working with a single funder.

The WBEA has unique assets that can be leveraged for greater strategic impact. By pursuing a more strategic approach, the WBEA could proactively apply its deep knowledge to better inform development of policies and regulations. It should also leverage its abilities in developing meaningful relationships, and pursue options for growth that might include consulting, advising, training, or monitoring services.

Our Mission

A multi-stakeholder, consensus-based organization providing world-class environmental monitoring and reporting.

Our Vision

Empower all stakeholders and rights holders with environmental data to make informed decisions.



Our Values

- Scientifically independent
- Recognize and respect Indigenous Knowledge
- Transparent and timely in communicating accurate and accessible data
- Dedicated to using best practices and technology
- Support diverse stakeholder participation and consensus-based decisions

The Practical Vision

The practical vision is a description of the desired future. It answers the question “What do we want to see in place in five years' time, because of our efforts?” and offers a multi-dimensional description of our future.

In five years, the WBEA will see the following in place:

Demonstrated Respect of Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Indigenous Knowledge and western science are braided together in the WBEA’s monitoring programs.

Diversified Long-Term Sustainability: The WBEA has diverse and sustainable forms of funding in place and has built upon its reputation for leadership and expanded its geographical reach, delivering services outside of the Wood Buffalo region.

Enhanced Influence: The WBEA has influenced public policy and informed regulatory decisions.

Passing of the Torch: With succession planning and knowledge transfer plans in place, the WBEA has maintained its level of monitoring program delivery and communities have acquired capacity to deliver monitoring programs.

Relevant Monitoring Strategies: The WBEA offers practical, logical solutions as monitoring questions and objectives change and become more complex. The WBEA has a robust, rationalized monitoring network that collects data from a spectrum of sources.

Engaged and Reliable Leader: Through the dissemination of trusted data, the WBEA is known across Canada as a credible expert in environmental monitoring.

Meaningful Stakeholder and Partner Engagement: By delivering useful data and enhanced community engagement, the WBEA has even stronger relationships among community members and stakeholders in the Wood Buffalo region.

Recognition of the WBEA’s Value: The WBEA’s high-quality data is central to regional environmental reporting. Budget approvals are streamlined and efficient.

Strategic Directions

Strategies answer the question “What can we do to address obstacles and move towards the desired future state?”, and are clustered into strategic initiatives.

They emerge from the tension between our desired future state and the current reality, and that tension sets the direction for moving toward something while allowing a way to discover the real nature of the path along the way. Strategic initiatives reveal the path forward.

Not every strategy is bold and new. We focus our strategic initiatives on those current strategies that are no longer working for the organization and on new strategies that are required to achieve our vision.

Together, we can move the WBEA towards its vision by delivering:

- World-class environmental monitoring programs
- Enhanced collaboration and focused purpose
- Credibility and social acceptance
- Independence and program security



Our Strategies

World-class environmental monitoring programs

We will define and excel at what we do by working to find our “lane” and focusing on the strength of our deliverables.

We will continually evaluate and improve our programs. We will start by developing an ideal monitoring strategy with performance indicators. We will collaborate with communities to develop Indigenous community-based monitoring programs and stakeholders to address broader monitoring questions.

Enhanced collaboration and focused purpose

We will meet our members' needs by committing resources to build our engagement skills, expand relationships with Indigenous partners, understand member needs, and enhance communications.

We will provide feedback and recommendations to partners when necessary. We will start by understanding what we can and can't influence and developing strategies to address changes by the regulator.

Credibility and social acceptance

We will strategically promote the WBEA's value with the help of members who are engaged with the AEP, AER and OSM, and by clarifying the WBEA's value proposition and raising the WBEA's profile.

We will build a network to inform government decisions through better government relations, and relationship-building efforts with key decision-makers.

Independence and program security

We will enhance financial stability and take control of our funding situation by setting a minimum for the annual funding the WBEA requires, and examine the implications of deficit funding and develop an appropriate strategy.

Milestones

Milestones outline how we see a strategy unfolding over time and represent significant change points or stages of the strategy. Achievement of milestones indicates progress.

The WBEA's Operational Leadership Team (OLT) was given the responsibility to identify milestones, listed below, and tasked with developing corresponding tactics and action plans to ensure progress toward implementing each strategy. Milestones will be reported on annually to the WBEA's membership.



Our Milestones

World-class environmental monitoring programs

Strategy #1. Defining and excelling at what we do

- 1.1 Increase WBEA program awareness
- 1.2 Consulting business framework
- 1.3 Internal leadership development program

Strategy #2. Continually evaluating and improving our programs

- 2.1 Analytical Services Group (ASG) lab operations launch
- 2.2 Change management and decision framework
- 2.3 Responsive monitoring programs

Enhanced collaboration and focused purpose

Strategy #3. Meeting our members' needs

- 3.1 Stakeholder communication / engagement strategy
- 3.2 Member needs identification
- 3.3 Strengthen relationships with current WBEA partners
- 3.4 Explore relationships with new partners

Strategy #4. Providing feedback and recommendations to partners

- 4.1 Inform and equip our members to be successfully engaged
- 4.2 Share knowledge and technical expertise with our members / partners

Our Milestones

Credibility and social acceptance

Strategy #5. Building a network to provide technical input on government decisions

- 5.1 Engage with government and provide technical expertise on monitoring programs
- 5.2 Network of technical experts

Strategy #6. Strategically promoting the WBEA's value

- 6.1 Government relationship strategy
- 6.2 Active outreach strategy

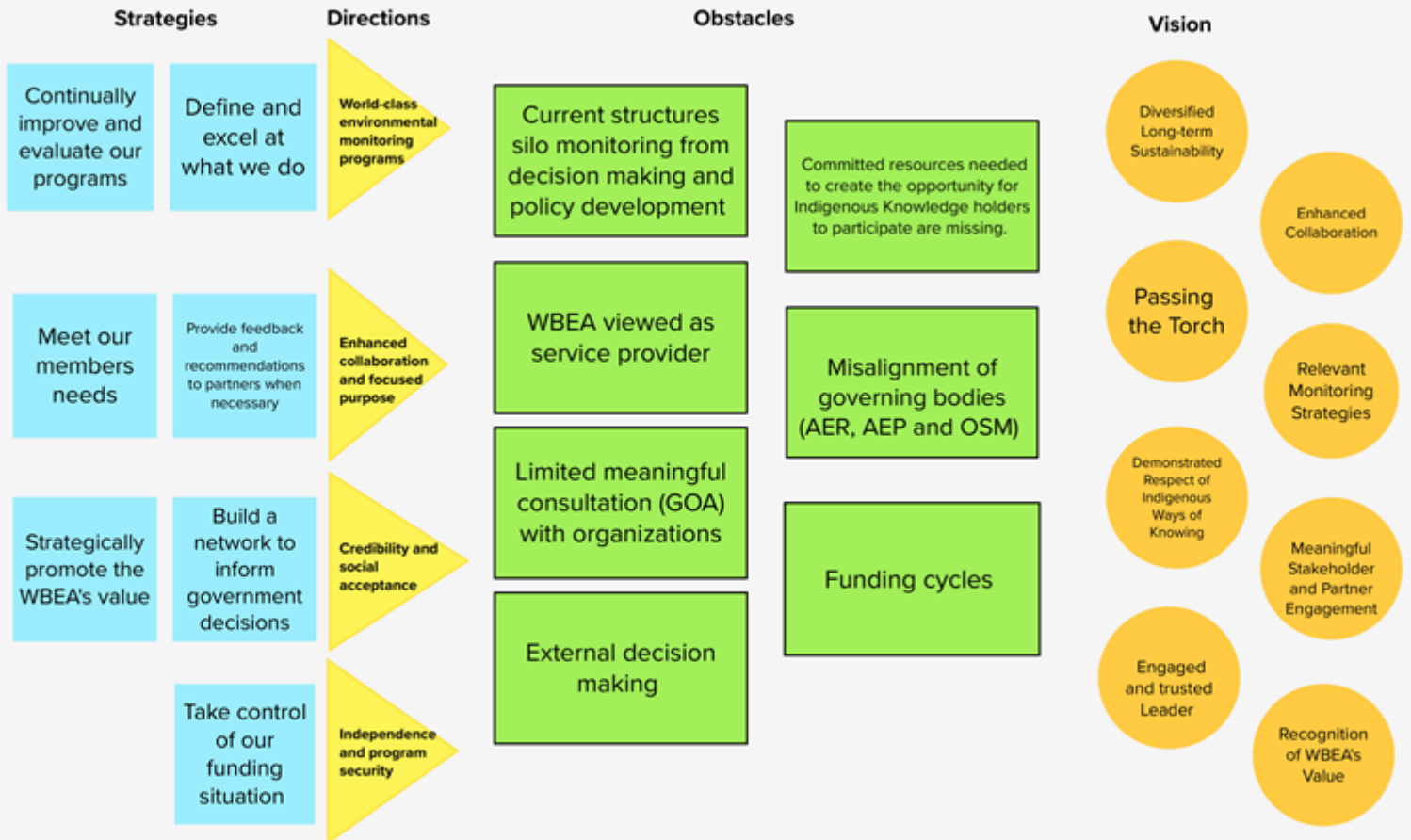
Independence and program security

Strategy #7. Enhancing financial stability (taking control of our funding situation)*

- 7.1 Long-term fixed funding envelope
 - 7.2 Financial bylaws aligned with process for securing funding
- *Strategy is also linked to Milestones 1.2 Consulting Business Framework, 6.1 Government Relationship Strategy, and 6.2 Active Outreach Strategy*

Appendix 1: Strategy Map

Strategy Map - 2022 - 2026



Appendix 2: Vision Elements & Supporting Strategies

Enhanced Collaboration

- Meeting our members' needs
- Provide feedback and recommendations to partners
- Building a network to influence government decisions

Diversified Long-Term Sustainability

- Building a network to influence government decisions
- Strategically promoting the WBEAs value
- Taking control of our funding situation
- Define and excel at what we do

Passing the Torch

- Taking control of our funding situation
- Define and excel at what we do
- Continually improving and evaluating our programs

Relevant Monitoring Strategies

- Continually evaluating and improving our programs
- Define and excel at what we do
- Provide feedback and recommendations to partners

Appendix 2: Vision Elements & Supporting Strategies

Demonstrated Respect of Indigenous Ways of Knowing

- Continually improving and evaluating our programs
- Meeting our members' needs

Meaningful Stakeholder and Partner Engagement

- Meeting our members' needs
- Provide feedback and recommendations to partners

Engaged and Trusted Leader

- Continually improving and evaluating our programs
- Define and excel at what we do
- Provide feedback and recommendations to partners
- Strategically promoting the WBEA's value
- Building a network to influence government decisions

Recognition of WBEA's value

- Continually improving and evaluating our programs
- Define and excel at what we do
- Provide feedback and recommendations to partners
- Strategically promoting the WBEA's value
- Building a network to influence government decisions
- Taking control of our funding situation

Appendix 3:

Obstacles

Obstacles create pain or paralysis and reflect a real, tangible, present state that is a legacy of previous structures, strategies, and decisions. When we identify them, they become a doorway to change, answering the question, “What is blocking us from moving towards our desired visionary goals?”

The following are some critical challenges to overcome as we strive to fulfill our vision.

External decision-making limits budget control and complicates project execution:

Demands on the WBEA are increasing, but funding levels are not. Factors that influence funding decisions are beyond the WBEA’s control.

The WBEA is viewed as a service provider, limiting how monitoring should be done:

Perceptions of the WBEA by government and regulators reduce our ability to inform policy and regulatory decisions. We do not have the relationships we need to influence policy.

Funding cycles prevent adequate staffing and capacity building: The WBEA is challenged in obtaining the resources and personnel it requires to continue and grow its programs.

Limited meaningful consultation by the Government of Alberta with organizations hampers ability to effectively plan programs to meet decision-makers’ needs: When the priorities of the funder shift, the WBEA may struggle to achieve and maintain alignment.

Misalignment of governing bodies and regulators is preventing development and maintenance of a “relevant” regional program: Without an agreement on what is most relevant, our regional monitoring program isn’t as effective as it could be.

Current structures silo monitoring from decision-making and policy development creating knowledge translation problems and competing priorities: The current division of responsibilities is exacerbated by limited education, outreach, and engagement of members.

Committed resources needed to create the opportunity for Indigenous Knowledge holders to participate are missing, preventing real work from happening: Resources are limited to properly engage with Indigenous Knowledge holders and to identify opportunities to improve and expand WBEA monitoring programs.

Appendix 4: Strategic Plan Steering Committee Members

Name	Affiliation
Gillian Donald, Chair	McMurray Métis
Curtis Brock	Alberta Environment and Parks
Craig Dockrill	Alberta Environment and Parks
Brendan Schiewe	Alberta Health
Fred Kuzmic	Canadian Natural
Rene Morales	Cenovus
Peter Fortna	Conklin Resource Development Advisory Committee
Carla Davidson	Fort McKay First Nation
David Spink	Fort McKay First Nation
Ryan Abel	Fort McKay First Nation
Adi Adiele	Fort McKay Métis Nation
Diane Scoville	Lakeland Métis Community Association
Natasha Bouliane	Suncor
Brooke Bennett	Synchrude
Cliff Dimm	Synchrude
Nerissa Hernani	Synchrude
Sanjay Prasad	Wood Buffalo Environmental Association
Emilie Briggs	Wood Buffalo Environmental Association
Dianne McIsaac	Wood Buffalo Environmental Association
Julie Carter	Wood Buffalo Environmental Association
Robin Parsons	Facilitator - Parsons Dialogue
Dave Robertson	Facilitator - Parsons Dialogue



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