

NWS PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Documenting strategies to support and develop partnerships throughout the NWS

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Office of Organizational Excellence

Partnership Strategy

Introduction

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) is increasingly relying on our valued partnerships with the Weather, Water, and Climate Enterprise[1] to achieve our shared vision for a Weather-Ready Nation, where society is ready, responsive and resilient to impending extreme weather, water and climate events. We need to cooperatively develop new capabilities and improve our ability to effectively reach the public with our forecasts and warnings.

The Enterprise is also supporting the rapidly growing demand for weather, water, and climate information across multiple economic sectors, relying on NWS foundational data, models, and forecasts for their services. The NWS continues to strengthen our relationships with other NOAA line offices to provide integrated environmental information and services[2], develop and maintain key observations that drive our forecasts, and transition new science and technology into operations.

Finally, partnerships at the local, state, federal, territorial, and tribal nation levels are essential for realizing a Weather-Ready Nation. Through these strong and successful partnerships we will achieve our mission to "provide weather, water, and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy."

What do we mean by partnership? Partnering as an action.

The NWS values partnerships that help us in meeting, advancing and delivering our mission. While the NWS has recently focused substantial effort on delineating and defining our "core partners" for service delivery[3], the term **partner** in this strategy refers to a broader range of individuals, businesses, interest-based organizations, academia, governments and others that have a shared interest in achieving common goals. **Partnering** is an activity that involves mutual contributions of all parties to a specific outcome. Partnering includes our core partners (i.e. emergency and water resources management communities, government partners at all levels, and the media) who we work hand-in-hand with to ensure public safety while mitigating property loss. It also includes working with our partners in the broader weather, water and climate enterprise (e.g. academia and global providers of weather services), as well as local community organizations, many of which have firmly committed to the strategic outcome of a Weather-Ready Nation as a WRN Ambassador[4] working to improve preparedness and resilience in the face of oncoming extreme weather, water and climate events.

Some partnerships simply involve use of NWS data and forecast information for research or personal decisions. Some partnerships involve greater leveraging of NWS data and forecast information for tailoring to clients or customers they serve, which supports NWS mission goals of public safety and enhancing the Nation's economy. Some involve providers of key observations and other data and information that is used by the NWS. Lastly, as noted above, others serve in the "last mile," saving lives and protecting property through Impact-Based Decision Support Services across all government levels.

Use of the term **partnership** in this document implies some action by a stakeholder that supports the NWS vision of a Weather-Ready Nation, recognizing that there is a range of levels of interaction.

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[1] The Weather, Water, and Climate "Enterprise" includes all entities in the public, private, nonprofit, research, and academic sectors that provide information, services, and infrastructure in the areas of weather, water, and climate.

[2] Note: NOAA has proposed a Model for Service Delivery through the Weather, Water, Climate Board.

[3] NWS IDSS Service Description Document, April 2018.

[4] About Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors™

Why a Partnership Strategy? Why now?

The NWS Strategic Plan includes the following core principle: "We cannot do it alone; teamwork and partnerships are essential for success."

We recognize that Enterprise partnerships are essential as reflected in these NWS Strategic Plan objectives[5]:

- **3.8:** Clarify and leverage the unique roles and capabilities of the Enterprise partners to respond to the increasing demand for actionable weather, water, and climate information.
- **3.9:** Expand public-private partnerships that fast-track Enterprise innovations, strengthen relationships, eliminate barriers, and share best practices to focus continuous improvements.

The NWS desires to broaden its partnerships to advance core resilience principles[6] at the community level that will advance the NWS mission and vision for a Weather-Ready Nation. For example, the NWS desires partnerships with the following entities:

- **Community and Non-Governmental Organizations:** Who serve, prepare for and assist in recovery of local communities.
- **Media:** Who amplify key messages for the protection of life and property and educate the community.
- **Government:** Whose mission responsibilities often intersect with the NWS public-safety mission and who can extend the application of NWS forecasts to their areas of public safety.
- **Academia:** Who train and prepare the next generation of forecasters and decision support specialists and contribute to scientific advances for the entire Enterprise.
- **Industry:** Who build key infrastructure[7], develop new capabilities, and serve a broader set of customers than the NWS can alone.
- **Emergency Management and Water Resource Managers[8]:** Who rely upon key information from the NWS to make readiness, responsive and resilience decisions for communities at all levels.

The purpose of these focused partnerships will be to:

- Realize the NWS vision;
- Advance the weather, water and climate Enterprise;
- Capitalize on opportunities to reach broader audiences (i.e., whole community approach);
- Effectively use resources and leverage enterprise innovations and advances;
- Enhance the NWS organizational culture; and,
- Consistently build on delivering accurate, timely and trusted products and services.

The NWS also acknowledges that customer experience is increasingly a focus for federal agencies[9]. As the NWS seeks to improve and foster partnerships, these activities must consider how we serve U.S. citizens in the most effective and transformative way, working towards a robust customer experience approach by the NWS.

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[5] The following objectives also recognize that partnerships are essential: 1.4; 1:9; 1.13; 2.1; 2.5; 2.8; 2.9; 2.10.

[6] GAO Disaster Resilience Framework: Principles for Analyzing Federal Efforts to Facilitate and Promote Resilience to Natural Disasters, October 2019

[7] For example: Observation or dissemination systems or platforms.

[8] EMs and WRMs are called out specifically because of their close connection to public safety and NWS mission but these partner types could be classified under government or industry.

[9] https://www.performance.gov/cx/

Partnership Strategy

Goals for the NWS Partnership Strategy

1. **Improve the overall NWS partnership experience.**
2. **Further enhance and develop new ways of leveraging and using partnership capabilities to help realize the NWS vision for a Weather-Ready Nation.**
3. **Understand the landscape of NWS partnerships and develop a clear strategic vision of which key partnerships we are looking to enhance or develop.**

Partnership-focused Strategies

Below are strategies that outline how the NWS intends to support and develop partnerships throughout the weather, water, and climate enterprise.

Strategy #1: *Communicate the net value of partnerships*



The NWS should champion the benefits and opportunities for partnering and account for the costs of partnering by leveraging the Strategic Plan. The NWS Partner Engagement team will collaborate across all of the NWS functions to ensure accurate, timely, trusted and useful communication around established and successful partnerships.

Strategy #2: *Leverage the entire NWS organization to identify and develop specific NWS partnership objectives*



The NWS should identify specific objectives for developing partnerships across the broad range of partner classes based on perceived gaps or user needs. Through the NWS Partner Engagement Team, NWS will identify guidelines for appropriate interaction with different classes of partners. The NWS Partner Engagement team will facilitate the development of these partnerships to help us meet the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan.

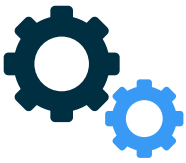
Strategy #3: *Identify key partnerships to pursue or enhance*



Once specific partnership objectives are identified, NWS should prioritize and pursue partnerships, including societal benefits, with achievable objectives to create momentum for measurable success. NWS also recognizes that there are many partnerships, formal and informal, that already exist across the NWS. The NWS Partner Engagement team will serve as the focal point of situational awareness for partnerships to make connections across the organization and up and out to NWS and NOAA leadership.

Partnership-focused Strategies (cont.)

Strategy #4: *Identify and implement partnership mechanisms or approaches*



NWS recognizes that there are multiple mechanisms to establish a partnership. The NWS Partner Engagement team will create a resource guide that outlines both formal and informal mechanisms and approaches that align with NOAA policy and government laws and regulations to fully exploit all possible partnership options.

Strategy #5: *Maintain situational awareness of how the Enterprise is changing and evolving*



To ensure NWS leadership keeps a renewed and vested interest in Enterprise partnerships, the NWS Partner Engagement team will strive to continuously learn and stay abreast of the latest trends and developments from across the Enterprise and report them out on an annual basis for greater agency staff awareness. The Enterprise is rapidly growing and changing, and the NWS should maintain awareness of these changes as well as acknowledge the influence the NWS may have on the broader Enterprise.

Strategy #6: *Gather and spread best practices*



The NWS Partner Engagement team will learn from and capitalize on successful partnership practices. We will share these best practices as we engage with local, regional and headquarters NWS staff. We will leverage the internal NWS Communications structure (e.g. NWS Insider), staff meetings, field conferences (e.g. MIC or WCM), and National Service Programs as well as external opportunities at conferences, workshops, and NWS Partner Meetings. We will also strive to leverage and learn from NOAA headquarters and line offices and other federal agencies on how they successfully identify, develop and manage partnerships.

Strategy #7: *Guide partnership-relevant programs or projects*



NWS recognizes that the integration of external partners and stakeholders to a new or existing NWS program or project could provide a wealth of ideas or perspectives not always considered at the start. The NWS Partner Engagement team will serve as a sounding board and consultant to NWS programs or projects that may have to consider external input or impacts. The NWS Partner Engagement team will assist with making key connections, communicating externally, facilitating needed partner engagements and assisting with establishing new partnerships as a result.

Partnership-focused Strategies (cont.)

Strategy #8: *Measure and monitor partnership outcomes*



NWS will strive to measure and monitor the costs and outcomes established through these partnerships on an annual basis. NWS will explore customer relationship management tools and formal mechanisms (e.g. MOUs), working across the organization to track key partner activities and outcomes and ensure validity and alignment with partnership objectives and the NWS Strategic Plan.

Measuring Impact

NWS will monitor and measure the following:

Metrics[10]

Attendance at quarterly National Partners Meetings/Workshops
Attendance at national webinars
Active MOUs/MOAs or other formal agreements across the NWS
Number of one-on-one Partner calls or meetings with NWS leadership annually
Satisfaction of partner meeting engagements through feedback forms
Net value and costs of partnership relationships
Number of community services (e.g. messages, events, training, resilience standards) enhanced through partnerships

[10] Additional consideration of metrics in development by the COO Performance/Evaluation Division and the Evolve PMO.

Appendix

Context and Activity to Date:

The National Weather Service believes in the organic nature of building partnerships through fostering relationships at all levels of the organization. We have always interacted with representatives from across the Weather, Water and Climate Enterprise. Over the past two years, the National Weather Service has overhauled its partner engagement efforts. In particular, at the national level, we have completely redesigned partner meetings with intentional design to allow for direct NWS leadership engagement as well as partner-to-partner engagement using break-out groups, scenario exercises, live polling, and inviting partners to speak on panels and contribute to meeting content and design. These have resulted in more collaboration and transparency between the NWS and stakeholders as well as across all Enterprise stakeholder types. The NWS has also conducted purposeful conversations with Enterprise stakeholders by holding partner calls to build and foster new relationships. Across NWS, operational staff have been building deeper core partner relationships to facilitate improved impact-based decision support services. Finally, the Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors network has expanded and continues to grow.

Going forward, the NWS desires a new phase of partnership engagement. The NWS should identify key objectives or gaps that need to be filled and use those objectives to seek out more specific stakeholders or groups of partners to collaborate with towards beneficial, measurable outcomes and successes to meet the vision of a Weather-Ready Nation as outlined in the NWS Strategic Plan. The NWS envisions developing an annual work plan to focus partnering efforts each year to meet the goals of this Partnership Strategy.

Establishing the NWS Partner Engagement Team:

To develop and implement this Partnership Strategy, NWS established the Partner Engagement Team with representatives from various NWS offices. Objectives of the team are as follows:

- Coordinate and collaborate on Partnership Strategies.
- Clearly define a range of NWS partners and envisioned level of engagement with each type.
- Develop clear corporate NWS goals and objectives for partnerships and monitor progress towards those objectives.
- Collaborate and discuss how the NWS can manage partner information consistently across all partner types and test available tools that could inform existing or new capabilities currently being developed.
- Develop and support partnership engagement plans and opportunities as needed.

For more information about this NWS Partnership Strategy, please contact the NWS Office of Organizational Excellence at https://www.weather.gov/ooe/