



**CASE STUDY**

# Malaysia: Changing the Business Model of the Malaysia Water Resources Management Forum



## Summary

The Malaysian Water Partnership (MyWP) works to bring together different stakeholders to identify and discuss strategies to address IWRM and related issues through its bi-annual Malaysia Water Resources Management Forum (MyWRM Forum). With the Covid pandemic, the MyWP adapted its forum to an online format. This case study explores how the Business Canvas Model can be applied to understand and sharpen value propositions in changing environments.

## Background

Malaysian Water Partnership (MyWP) is a Non Governmental Organization with the main objective to support and promote the adoption and practice of the IWRM in Malaysia and South East Asia. Aligning with their objectives to offer strategic advice, create awareness and foster capacity building among stakeholders, they serve as a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue.

To further enhance their role to bring different stakeholders together, MyWP organizes a biennial Malaysia Water Resources Management Forum which creates a space for Malaysian water stakeholders to review, highlight and discuss strategies to address IWRM including its related issues. The forum also promotes advocacy in IWRM and strengthens private/political commitment towards IWRM implementation.

The forum allows MyWP to diversify its financial income supporting its economic sustainability as an organization. This is done through paid registration of participants

which allows them to attend different sessions and exhibits; participants comprise government officials, private companies, non-governmental organisations and academia. The inaugural forum was hosted in 2012 by MyWP and continues to be hosted biennially. The 5th edition of the forum encountered challenges due to COVID-19 and was hosted in the virtual environment in October 2021. The following case study highlights the financial mechanisms of the forum and presents business canvas as an effective tool for adaptive planning.

## **Actions taken**

The Business Canvas Model was applied to map out how the cost structure, the revenue streams, the value proposition for the forum including their resultant changes while they were held online.

The cost associated to the event were significantly reduced with the online shift. Traditionally, the most important costs include the venue for the conference and some related to the facilities. The staff costs, although the MyWP secretariat benefits from GWP partners and host members who volunteer their time, efforts and knowledge in planning and executing the forum, which helps with keeping the costs to a minimum. One change while hosting the event online was associated with the logistics of the event.

There were no longer going to be income through exhibitor booths and advertisement, which was a significant change to the revenue stream. Revenue depended solely on participant registration fees which was reduced reflecting the reduction in event hosting costs. The reduction in registration fees and online nature opened the event to a wider audience and a larger number of participants attended the event. Two international speakers were also able to present. Two types of registration packages are available which includes one for MyWP non-members and another one with reduced cost for MyWP members. The difference between the cost of the two different packages is the registration fee to join MyWP. This provides participants a financial incentive to sign up as a MyWP member and continually engage with them in the future.

MyWP maintained some of their value propositions such as being a unique forum for knowledge exchange and a networking event. However, not having exhibitor booths affected some of the customer segments such as the private sector. Commonly MyWP would invite a minister or other high-level government official to officiate the opening before visiting exhibits from the private sector allowing them an opportunity to easily connect with the public sector. Furthermore, the exhibits provide visibility and networking opportunities. Although this was not possible in a virtual setting, the forum managed to facilitate interactions between different stakeholders allowing them to share knowledge and experience and advocate for water resources management. The high-level government official who opened the event sets the tone for the forum discussions. This itself attracts the participation of many stakeholders. In order to accommodate the online environment, the forum was transformed as half-day sessions rather than a full day of events.

The business canvas allowed MyWP to identify the value proposition, key activities, resources, cost structures, revenue streams, impacts, partnerships and customer segments. Using the tool, MyWP understood how to maintain their main value propositions and partnerships while readjusting their customer segments, revenue streams and cost structures in order to adapt to the online environment.

## **Outcomes**

The event attracted many countries, international organizations, key water players and influencers with a total of 80 attendees out of which 60 are through paid registrations. This allowed the forum to breakeven its costs with one-third of the attendances in a virtual setting. Some active organizations were WWF Malaysia, Water Watch Penang, RPM Engineers Sdn Bhd, Malaysia National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage and many others.

The event maintained its value proposition to bring government officials, NGOs, private consultants, planners, professionals, academia and international organizations together for networking, policy information sharing, discussion, ideation. Furthermore, being a paid event, more engagement was observed from the participants as they asked more questions and linked conversations with their ongoing work. All participants had a stake in influencing other individuals and the platform provided a space to discuss and resolve any issues that they foresaw.

## **Lessons Learned**

Multi-stakeholder partnerships have the potential to provide financial co-benefits for organizations.

Multi-stakeholder engagement can be adjusted and adapted effectively in an online environment.

The business canvas can be applied as a tool to ideate, evaluate and share information on multi-stakeholder partnership platforms.

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**Related IWRM Tools**

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, Information Gathering and Sharing Networks, Communities of Practice, Business Model Canvas

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