



Getting Started With Your Water Trail

Michigan Water Trails Summit
Panel Discussion
September 15, 2016

Panel Participants

- Elizabeth Riggs
 - Deputy Director, Huron River Watershed Council
- Elaine Sterrett Isely
 - Director of Water and LID Programs, West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Megan Olds
 - President & Principal of Parallel Solutions LLC and a Paddle Antrim Board Member

Four Questions To Consider

1. Why?

- Purpose, mission, vision, values

2. Where?

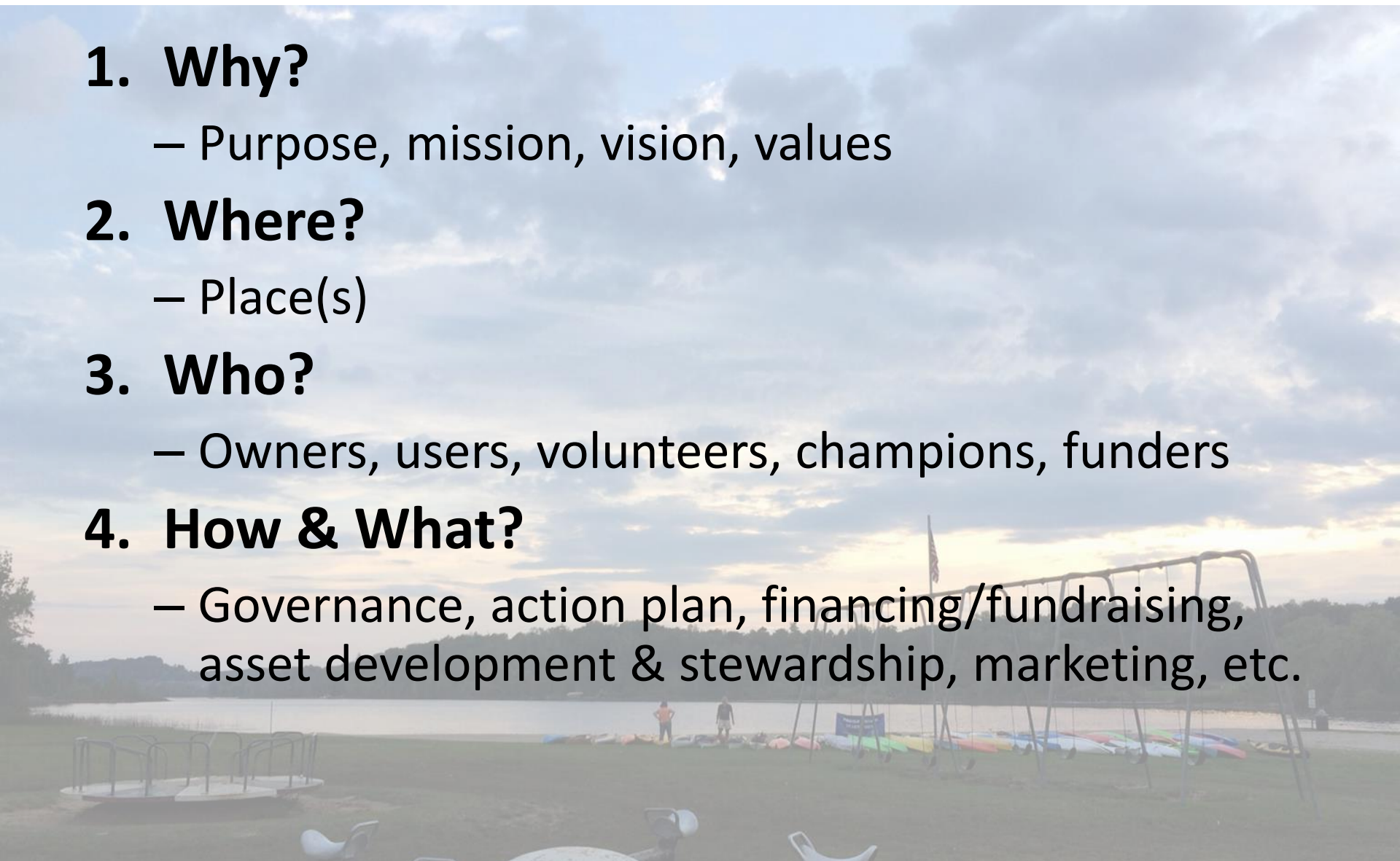
- Place(s)

3. Who?

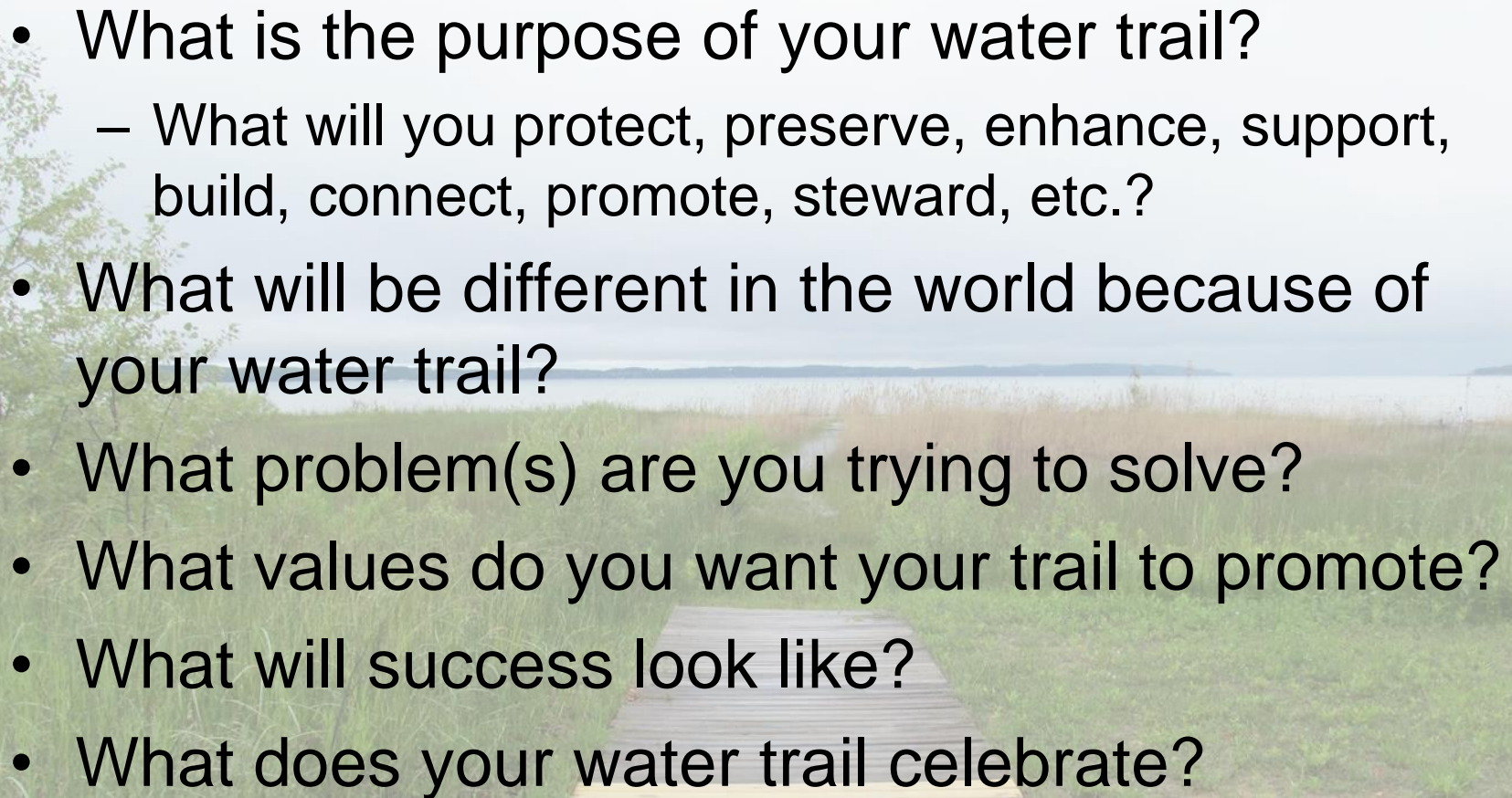
- Owners, users, volunteers, champions, funders

4. How & What?

- Governance, action plan, financing/fundraising, asset development & stewardship, marketing, etc.

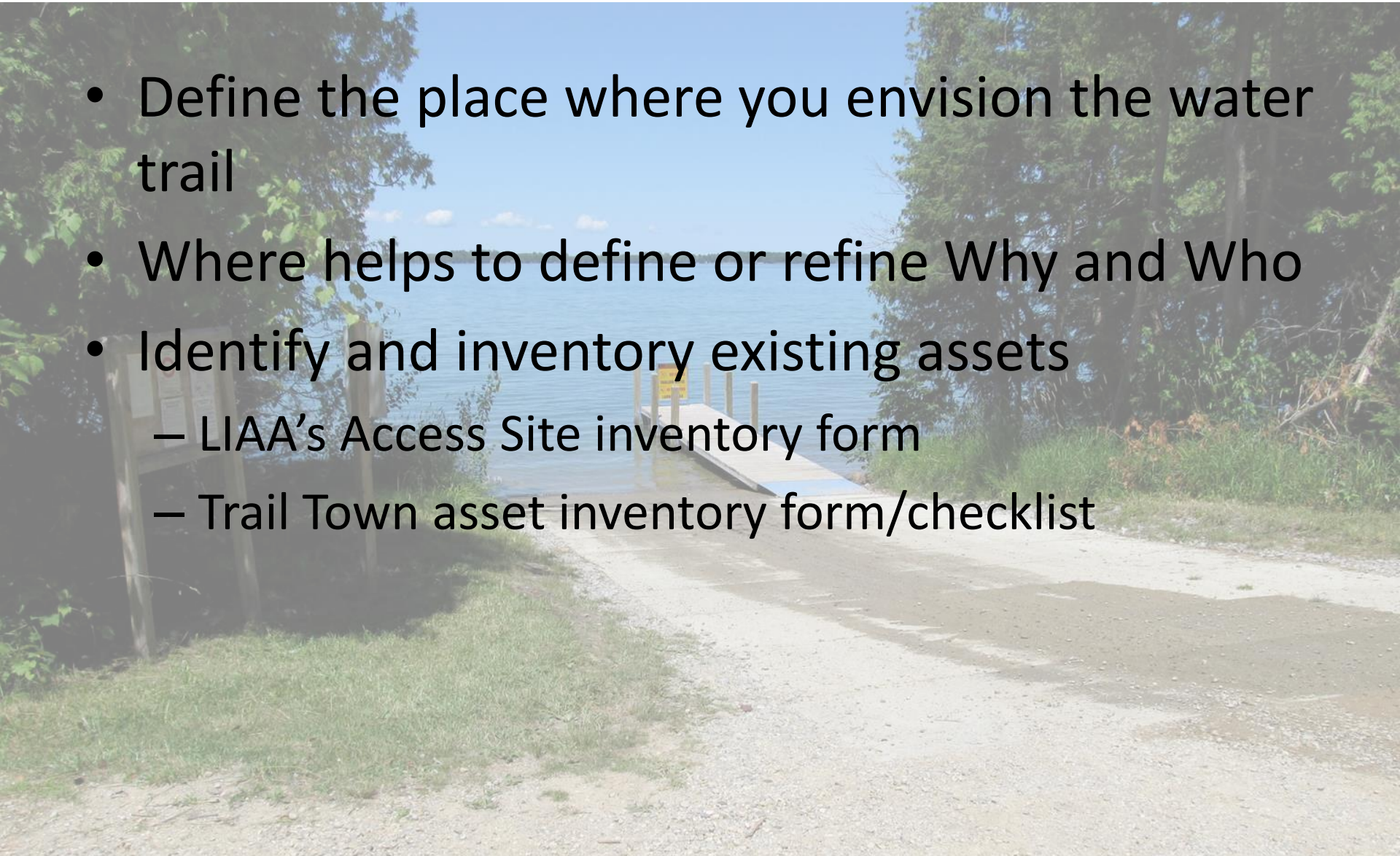


WHY

- What is the purpose of your water trail?
 - What will you protect, preserve, enhance, support, build, connect, promote, steward, etc.?
 - What will be different in the world because of your water trail?
 - What problem(s) are you trying to solve?
 - What values do you want your trail to promote?
 - What will success look like?
 - What does your water trail celebrate?
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- A wooden boardwalk path leads through tall grasses towards a large body of water under a cloudy sky. The path is made of wooden planks and is surrounded by green grass and some trees on the left. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the distance, there are some hills or mountains.

WHERE

- Define the place where you envision the water trail
- Where helps to define or refine Why and Who
- Identify and inventory existing assets
 - LIAA's Access Site inventory form
 - Trail Town asset inventory form/checklist



WHO

- **Leaders and Managers:** Responsible for process, plan, action steps.
 - “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has,” – Margaret Meade
- **Users:** Define target audiences for trail use. Locals, out-of-town visitors, type of paddler/desired experiences, etc.
- **Champions:** Build relationships with people whom other people in the community trust and ask for their support.
- **Supporters/Funders:** Build relationships with people who believe in the vision and are willing to support it financially.
- **Access Site Owners:** Get written permission, resolutions of support.
- **Volunteers:** Need defined roles, training/ability/skill, coordination.
- **Unhappy People & People Who Oppose Trail:** Listen to them.
- To get started:
 - Make lists of names for each “Who” category.
 - Identify your message and desired behavior/outcome.
 - Prioritize conversations.

HOW & WHAT

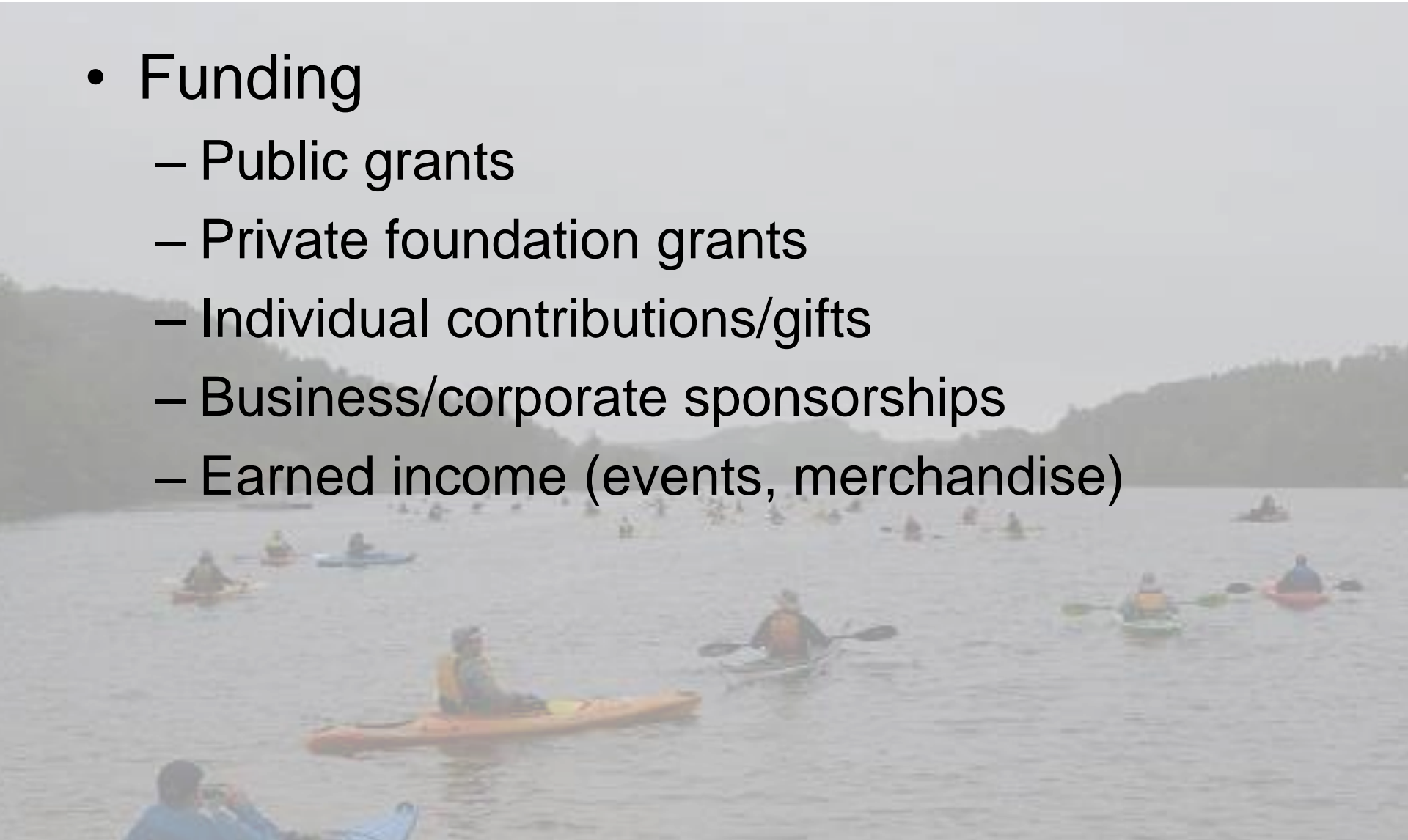
- Leadership and Governance of A Water Trail
 - Government
 - Single unit of government
 - Collaboration among units of government (Interlocal Agreement, Rec Authority, etc.)
 - Department/position “ownership” within government
 - Existing non-profit organization
 - “Program of” an existing organization
 - New non-profit

HOW & WHAT

- Strategy (5 years)
- Action Plan (2 Years, Rolling)
 - Access site improvements and maintenance
 - Events, marketing and communications
 - Waterway stewardship activities
 - Financial and revenue development plan, including capital improvement, maintenance & operations
 - Designation process(es)
 - Roles, responsibilities, timeline for tasks

HOW & WHAT

- Funding
 - Public grants
 - Private foundation grants
 - Individual contributions/gifts
 - Business/corporate sponsorships
 - Earned income (events, merchandise)



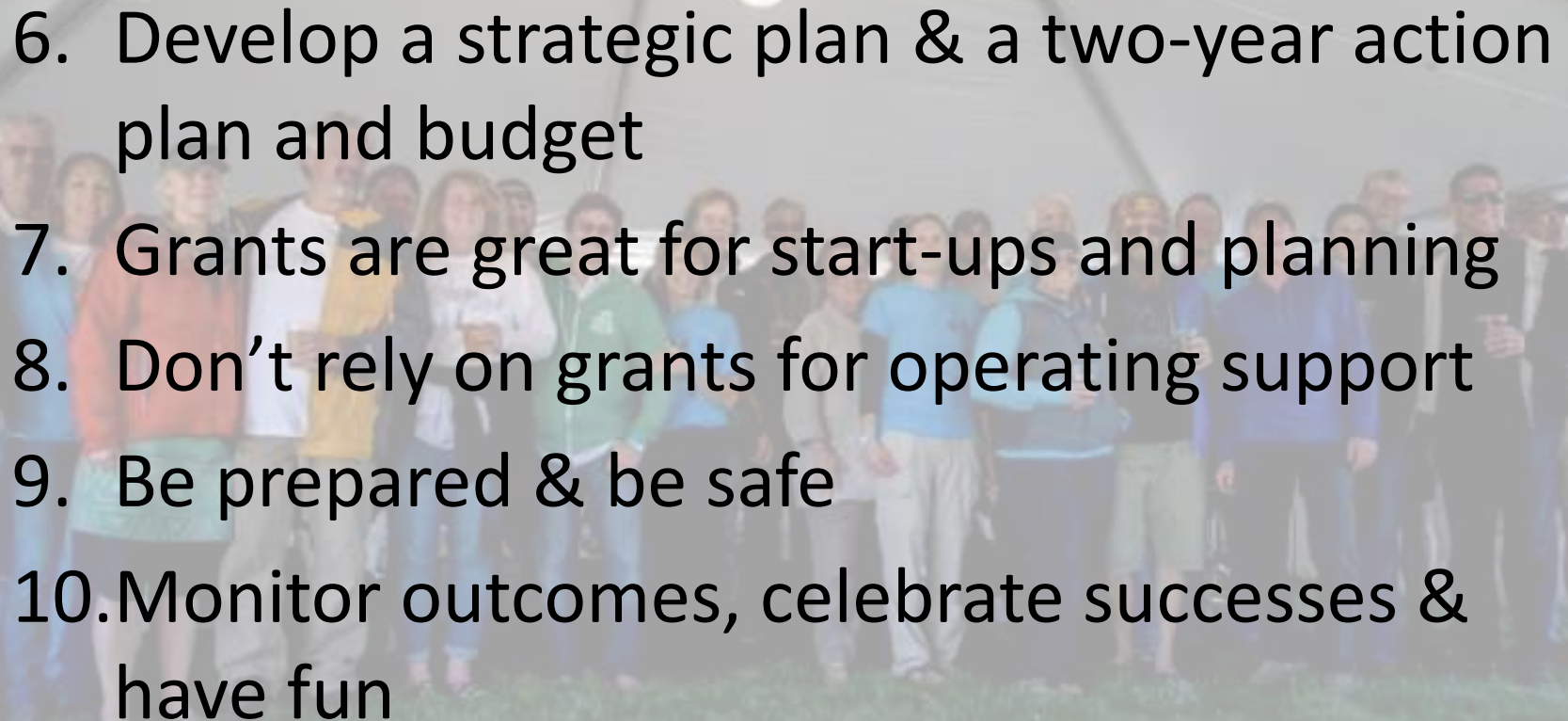
Measuring & Communicating Success

- Should tie back to strategy, plan & goals
- Share stories about outcomes; connect with “Who” audiences
 - Events for users
 - Presentations to government bodies
 - Media releases
 - Volunteer party
 - Newsletter/e-news to paddlers and community members
 - VIP gathering for financial supporters

Top 10 Tips for Starting Your Water Trail

1. There is no “one size fits all” for water trail development & management
 2. Work with people who are ready
 3. Connect with local businesses & government
 4. Map your assets on waterways & in communities
 5. Be realistic about your capacity
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Top 10 Tips for Starting Your Water Trail

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- A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ages, are standing together under a large white tent. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, such as jackets, blouses, and sweaters. The tent has several round lights hanging from its ceiling. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the group. The overall atmosphere appears to be a community or professional gathering.
6. Develop a strategic plan & a two-year action plan and budget
 7. Grants are great for start-ups and planning
 8. Don't rely on grants for operating support
 9. Be prepared & be safe
 10. Monitor outcomes, celebrate successes & have fun