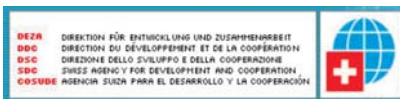


Integrated Water Resources Management in Ferghana Valley



How to establish a Water Users Association?



MARCH 2003

Practical Steps for Social Mobilizers

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C O N T E N T	page
1. Background -----	2
2. What do we mean by a Water Users Association? -----	2
3. Practical steps to establish a WUA -----	4
STEP 1 -----	4
STEP 2 -----	5
STEP 3 -----	5
STEP 4 -----	6
STEP 5 -----	7
STEP 6 -----	8
STEP 7 -----	9
STEP 8 -----	9
STEP 9 -----	9
STEP 10-----	10
4. Elaborating charts on Kyrghyz WUAs (17 charts) -----	11-28

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

1. Background

The central Asian experience shows that in the past, most of the Water Users Associations (WUAs) have been established through a top-down approach, where the ordinary farmers have neither been consulted nor been informed that they are members of the WUA. Rather, a group of knowledgeable people (usually called the founding members or the incentive group) initiated the process of establishing WUA, got it registered with the justice department, and then the initiators became the council of WUA. In many cases, such WUAs have failed or are unable to even recover the costs of water and operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage facilities from the farmers, because the ordinary farmers do not feel ownership and tend to avoid fee payment.

This experience suggests that if the WUAs are established using a top-down approach, they are weak and have a high risk of failure. WUAs should rather be established through a bottom-up consultative approach. There is a need to work with the ordinary grassroots level farmers/ water users to establish WUA so that they understand what is a WUA and how they will benefit from it. Charts 1-17 describe some of the important aspects of WUAs in Kyrgyzstan.

2. What do we mean by a Water Users Association?

A Water Users Association (WUA) is a non-profit organization that is initiated¹, and managed by the group of water users along one or more hydrological sub-systems (distributory² canals which are the higher level than a watercourse) regardless of the type of farms involved. By water users we mean the ordinary cultivators of land, individual members of lease-holding farms and shirkats, owners of private and dehkan farms, owners of home garden plots, etc. These are the potential members of the WUA, who pool financial, material, technical and human resources for the operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage system within their jurisdiction for the benefit of all the members. The membership in the WUA is based on contracts and/ or agreements between the members and the WUA. Likewise, the supply of water and payment of fees to the water service provider is also based on contracts and/ or agreements between the WUA and the irrigation service provider, where rights and obligations of both parties to the contract, time of delivery and agreed-on volumes are specified.

The farmers, by joining a WUA can have some, or all of the following benefits:

¹ To establish a WUA, however, the water users need to be assisted by projects, state structures, or any other facilitating organization.

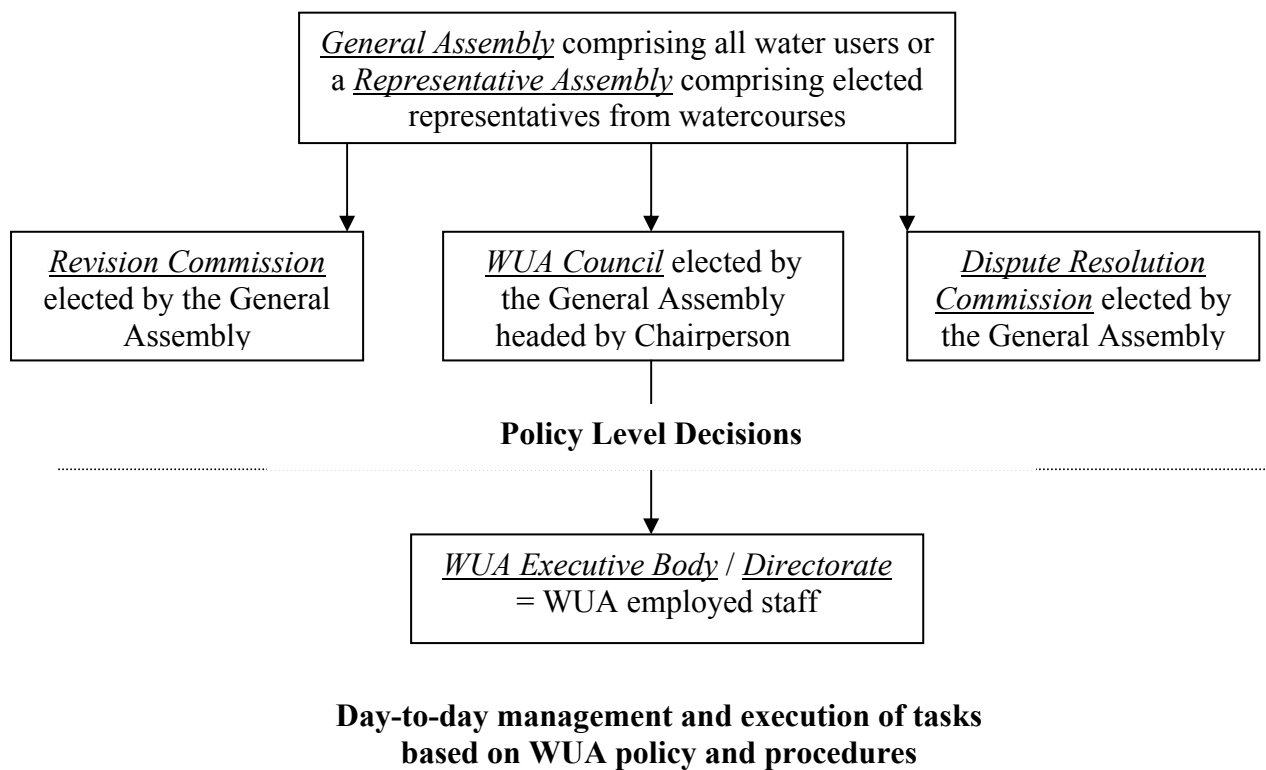
² A distributory canal is the one which supplies water to the canals from where the farmers directly divert water to their fields. Thus, it can be a secondary or tertiary canal. A watercourse is a canal from where the farmers directly divert water to their fields. It can be a tertiary or quaternary canal.

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

- Equitable water distribution among farmers regardless of their location, type of farm, or size of the farm
- More reliable water supply
- Water supply becomes more responsive to crop needs
- Quick dispute resolution at the local level
- Well-maintained canals (decreasing the time of irrigation due to less fluctuation of discharges, reduced losses, etc).
- Less water theft/ stealing

Typically, a WUA has the following *organizational structure*:



How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

3. Practical Steps to Establish a WUA

A WUA can be established by taking the following steps:

STEP 1: Build friendly relationships, and create awareness about WUA, its benefits, structure of WUA, its role, functions and how it is organized with farmers, their leaders, representatives of the water managing organizations (WMOs), *aksakals* and other key actors involved in the service area of the WUA; and collect initial information about farmers, farm types, sizes, key water-related problems, etc. The mobilizers should collect data about distributory canals and watercourses in the service area of WUA and the number of water users by type on each of these canals; prepare layouts of the service area with irrigation and drainage network (already completed for Uzbek and Tajik pilot WUAs).

The mobilizers should meet farmers in small informal groups to create friendly relations, and introduce the WUA and its benefits. To help understand more about the WUAs and their objectives, meetings can be conducted with farmers in small groups at village/ farm / watercourse level, as it might suit the local situation. To initiate the discussion, the mobilizers should provide the farmers a brief overview of the project and its intention to establish WUA in the pilot areas in as simple words as possible. They should also discuss key problems in water management that can be resolved by a WUA rather than existing way of water management. After the explanations, the Mobilizers should talk less and listen more, and answer the farmer's questions or queries. The Mobilizers should make the audience feel that they are from amongst them and not the outsiders. This will build farmer's confidence and trust on visitors.

Mobilizers with help from interested local people should convene group meetings with water users at the watercourse/ village / farm level for comprehensive farmer's awareness. As an essential part of this meeting, the Mobilizers should help the participants of the meeting to carry out a diagnostic analysis. They can start with a brief overview of the project and request farmers to identify problems related to irrigated agriculture and specifically to irrigation water management. Depending on the number of participants, groups of 6-10 people should be assisted to list the problems, and then each group should be requested to present the problem analysis and possible solutions with identifying who should do that.

After these concepts clarifying meetings, the mobilizers should request the participants of the meetings to go back to their community, and further discuss the idea of forming a WUA to resolve these problems.

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

STEP 2: Identify essential components of Irrigation and drainage service plan

During the second set of meetings, the Mobilizers should present the findings of the earlier diagnostic analysis. After the presentation, the discussion should lead to “how establishing a WUA would lead to addressing some or all problems identified” and “how the irrigation service should look like” under a WUA management”. Address the questions like: “What are the essential tasks? Who should perform those tasks and to whom should those performing the tasks be accountable to? Who would pay for that? How to monitor that the objectives are achieved?” Thus, this discussion would lead to some more in-depth discussion and understanding of WUAs on one hand and to definition of the objectives of the irrigation service and identification of a draft irrigation service plan, on the other.

STEP 3: Consult the Water Users on Appropriate Organizational Design, characteristics of the elected representatives, and the way they would like to choose their representatives along each watercourse for forming the Representative Assembly

During this stage, decisions about the structure and organs of WUA, membership criteria, tenure of representatives, election procedure, rules and by-laws for effective functioning of the WUAs at different level of the system should be discussed. The mobilizers should present different examples of structures, by-laws, and membership systems to the participants of the consultation meetings.

For that the Mobilizer should hold meetings in each village/ watercourse, or distributory level as appropriate, to consult water users on tentative plans for establishing water users association. The mobilizers should invite all water users served by the watercourse/ distributory canal/ farm or village system and residing in that village by sending hand written messages, announcing in mosques or through other local communication means. It should be ensured by the mobilizers that all people receiving water know that there is a meeting about organizing a Water Users Association (when and where, to do what). The mobilizers should also paste written notices of information on the public places where farmers pay regular visits (for example door of the mosque, community center, grocery shops, etc). The teams should target to inform all users/ farmers. After a brief overview of the benefits of WUA, purpose, structure, etc. and other clarifications by the mobilizers if needed, the meeting participants should then be consulted about the following:

- Do the participants think that a WUA would be beneficial for all water users (Shirkat and lease-holding farm members, dehkan and private farms and home garden plots owners)?
- Who should be the potential members of the WUA? (all types of users having right to take water should be proposed as equal members by the mobilizers, to start the discussion)

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

- How many representatives should be elected from each watercourse into the representative assembly? When they should be elected? How? Who elects them?
- How many people should be elected to the WUA council out of the representative or general assembly? Who elects them/ when, how
- What should be the characteristics of the representatives/ leaders?
- How many members should be in the Revision Commission and Dispute Resolution Commission? What should be the role of these Commissions? Who elects members to these Commissions? How?
- Should the women farmers having the right to get water be equal members? If not, why not? What will be the mechanism to represent them in the WUA?
- After how long the WUA Council, Representative or General Assembly and Dispute Resolution and Revision Commissions should be elected again?
- Any other relevant issue they like to discuss or feel important.

Mobilizers should also take notes to document the process and note down the suggestions made by the water users using field note books for documentation. The field teams should also note down the important processes as well, like how many people were invited, how many participated, who said what, was the meeting dominated by a few important/ influential participants, or was it more participatory, did all the participants really understand the discussions, etc .

STEP 4: Representative election Meetings for Watercourses level Water Users Groups (WUGs) and for the Representative / General Assembly³

The Mobilizers with active involvement of local people should conduct a series of meetings at watercourse level. Meeting dates, times and venues should be fixed in such a way that suits water users. For example, several water users might like to hold meetings in the evening to let their routine work not suffer. The mobilizers should widely publicize the selection meeting to provide equal opportunity for all eligible water users to come forward for representation. In this regard, announcements in the village two to three days ahead of the meetings and written messages to all water users would be highly useful. The mobilizers should try to ensure maximum participation. If the participation is less than the set criteria (about 50-60% of all water users), the selection meeting should be re-scheduled. Water users present in the meeting should announce the schedule of the next meeting on the spot by consensus, and then the mobilizers make sure that they advertise and publicize the meeting better to trying to ensure better participation.

³ In areas where the number of water users in the service area is too small, all the water users can be the members of the general assembly, and choose WUA council directly.

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

In these meetings, before proceeding to election of representatives for the WUA assembly, water users group (WUG) members will need to be selected, who will oversee the internal affairs of the watercourse, such as

- Organizing periodical cleaning of the watercourse through “khashar”
- Ensuring equitable water distribution within the watercourse level members
- Preventing, identifying, and resolving disputes within the watercourse
- Improving water distribution within the watercourse
- Any other tasks having collective benefits for all watercourse members

In addition, the water users of each watercourse will choose representatives to represent the interests of their watercourse in the general/ representative assembly (if the number of water users in the service area is small, all water users can become the members of a general assembly, otherwise, they will need to elect agreed number of representatives from each of the watercourses to form a representative assembly). It would be highly important to give a brief description at the start of the meeting about the project, functions, tasks, and authority of WUAs, qualities of good leadership (as identified during the consultation meetings) and need for selection of best leadership. Depending upon the size of watercourse, number and type of water users, and other interest groups, water users may select appropriate number of members for representing them in the representative assembly and one or more representatives to oversee the internal affairs within that specific watercourse (for example resolving disputes, motivating people for maintenance).

STEP 5: Introductory Meetings of the Representative Assembly:

After the WUG members and watercourse representatives for representative assembly of the WUA are elected, they should then be invited to attend an introductory meeting. This will give them the opportunity to meet and get to know one another well. The agenda for discussion in these introductory meetings should be to refresh the minds of the representatives about the purpose of the WUA, to consult on the selection procedure for the WUA Council, Dispute and Revision Commissions, and date, time and venue of selection meeting.

The participants of introductory meetings should also be briefed again about the basic objectives of: 1) an organized and participatory effort in irrigation and drainage management, 2) decentralization of management responsibilities and authority to WUA level 3) greater equity in distribution of irrigation water, 4) reliable water supply, 5) better access to government and private sector facilities/inputs and other services as organized group, 6) self governance, and 7) self - reliance.

Afterwards, the Representative Assembly decides on date, time and place for next selection meeting. Ideally the venue of the selection meeting should be at some community center, local body office, school, a training hall or any common place in village where no individual or group has any reservation to participate.

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

STEP 6: Selection of WUA Council, Chairperson of WUA, and Dispute and Revision Commission Members

It is always useful to start with a brief presentation of what has happened till now and where do we go from now on.

Then the mobilizers should help the members of the WUA Representative Assembly to carry out a group analysis of agriculture and irrigation related problems and identify suggested solutions for the irrigation system for which the WUA is meant. This discussion should identify the essential management functions associated with the solutions. This will serve as the definition of irrigation service and identification of irrigation service plan.

A short presentation of the characteristics of good leadership, identified by most of them during earlier meetings will help. Also mobilizers should discuss with the participants the importance of selection that will affect the quality of the services they intend to receive from the WUA, and then providing them sufficient opportunity for negotiation among themselves, develop consensus. The enthusiasm among the Representative Assembly members will be quite visible. Interference from political corners could be possible. Therefore, the Mobilizers again should brief the participants about the basic objectives of WUA and highlight the envisaged benefits of organized behavior through their own efforts. They should explain that dealing with water problems as a group would lead to better service than individual efforts of water users. The group should be allowed sufficient time for negotiation to nominate their candidates with consensus. The important point here to be considered is the sustainability of the organization, which will largely depend upon 1) degree of political interference, 2) consensus among the members, 3) provision of equal opportunity for all in decision making, and 4) equal representation of all the watercourses in WUA Council.

The Representative Assembly can decide to elect persons for various positions using a secret ballot or open voting or consensus.

Similar process should be followed to elect the Dispute Resolution and Revision Commissions and their Chairpersons.

STEP 7: Preparing the Founding Documents

Before the WUA can proceed further, a set of founding documents will be required. These documents include: model charter and bylaws, various maps, service area and other similar documents specific to each country. The Mobilizers need to help prepare these documents. For the IWRM-Fergana Project, the SIC and IWMI teams would already have prepared these and the WUA Council can start with the next step.

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

STEP 8: Adopting the Normative Charter, By-laws, and other documents for registration and applying for registration

The first task of the WUA council will be to act as the founding committee (responsible for applying for registration on behalf of the WUA members), review the founding documents (charter, by-laws, draft plans) and adapt these to their local conditions. The by-laws of an organization are dynamic instruments used to enforce, regulate and promote disciplined action in an organization. They are referred to as a dynamic instrument because the by-laws are not static or permanent, and can be changed by the general/ representative assembly. No organization can function properly or be sustained for longer time unless the organization has some basic and clearly defined set rules to abide by.

The Mobilizers and project staff will provide technical assistance in this regard in shape of providing the model by-laws already farmed by the state legislation or by the project (depending upon site specific situations). The main areas which are generally covered in the by-laws are: 1) cropping plans, water demand, limits, water allocation, and distribution and disposal procedures, and maintenance of the system, 2) duties and function of different office bearers, 3) meeting time and procedures, 4) eligibility for membership, 5) termination of membership or from office, 6) membership fee, 7) fund raising, 8) dispute resolution mechanisms, 9) sanctions; and 10) any other.

The mobilizers should help in explaining these documents to the Council, who should adopt these in the light of the objectives of their draft irrigation and drainage service plans, keeping in view the legal provisions (if already approved by the government). The mobilizers should also assist the council in discussing the implications of the alternative choices WUA council has agreed to in the by-laws.

STEP 9: Capacity-Building and Training for Management

The main objective of this step is to prepare the WUA for its essential tasks, as an independent self-managing autonomous organization. Most of the capacity will be built through an on-the-job training. Though the elected WUA Council might not have to perform all of these tasks themselves, it is useful for the members to know the broader principles so that they can supervise their staff better. After the formation of WUAs, the WUA Council and the staff (Executive Body) should be trained in related activities to be undertaken for irrigation and drainage system management.

The training program should be focused on subjects like flow measurement, water distribution and monitoring, preparing and implementing maintenance plans, preparing and implementing business plans, organizational management, financial management, record keeping, framing of by-laws, and methods of mobilizing resources for the system operation and maintenance. The important aspect here to be considered is a provision of a set of training manuals and

How to establish a Water Users Association?

Practical steps for social mobilizers

competent and experienced trainer. For this appropriate resource persons should be identified (such as Raiselvodkhoz hydro-technicians, staff of other successful WUAs etc.). This training should be a continuous process and be conducted up to grassroots level organizations i.e. WUGs. The watercourse representatives and WUA staff already trained should be used as resource persons for lower tiers of the organizations (WUGs), because farmers learn more from their fellow farmers.

Under the IWRM-Fergana project, a Capacity-Building Program for the WUAs along these lines will soon be launched at the Osh Branch Training center of the ICWC, and jointly prepared manuals by IWMI and SIC will be available as soon as the pilot WUAs are ready.

Though majority of the farming community in Central Asia are used to manage their irrigation system at the watercourse level, they don't have any experience to manage the distribution level of the irrigation system. One of the good ways to build water users confidence to take on the O&M responsibilities is to show them a successfully managed irrigation system by a WUA., in addition to provision of training and operational manuals.

For this appropriate sites inside and/or outside Central Asia will be selected and a manageable group of WUAs representatives will be taken to visit these sites, where water users/ farmers themselves are managing part of the irrigation / drainage system. During such visit the WUA representatives will be briefed not only about how that WUA is managing their system, but also about organizational matters, rules, by-laws, fund raising and irrigation service fee assessment, collection, and its use. This will help in building WUA confidence as "seeing is believing".

STEP 10: System Management Transfer to WUA

The WUA will first review the model transfer agreement and adopt this to their local condition, and then negotiate the arrangements with the water service provider (Raivodkhoz/Oblvodkhoz) as the case may be.

4. Elaborating Charts on Kyrgyz WUAs

Chart 1: Functions/Objectives of WUA

Chart 2: Obligations by a WUA

Chart 3: Procedure for setting-up a WUA in Kyrgyzstan through the Constituent Committee

Chart 4: A WUA Charter

Chart 5: WUA Membership

Chart 6: WUA Members' Rights

Chart 7: Obligations by WUA Members

Chart 8: Termination of WUA Membership

Chart 9: WUA Governance & Management Bodies

Chart 10: Powers of WUA's Supreme Body (Representative Assembly)

Chart 11: Voting Right in a WUA

Chart 12: Powers of a WUA's Governing Body

Chart 13: Powers of a WUA Council-hired Executive Body

Chart 14: WUA's Controlling Body

Chart 15: Working Arrangements for a Disputes Settling Commission

Chart 16: WUA's Sources of Income

Chart 17: Regulatory Body

Chart`1: Functions/Objectives of a WUA

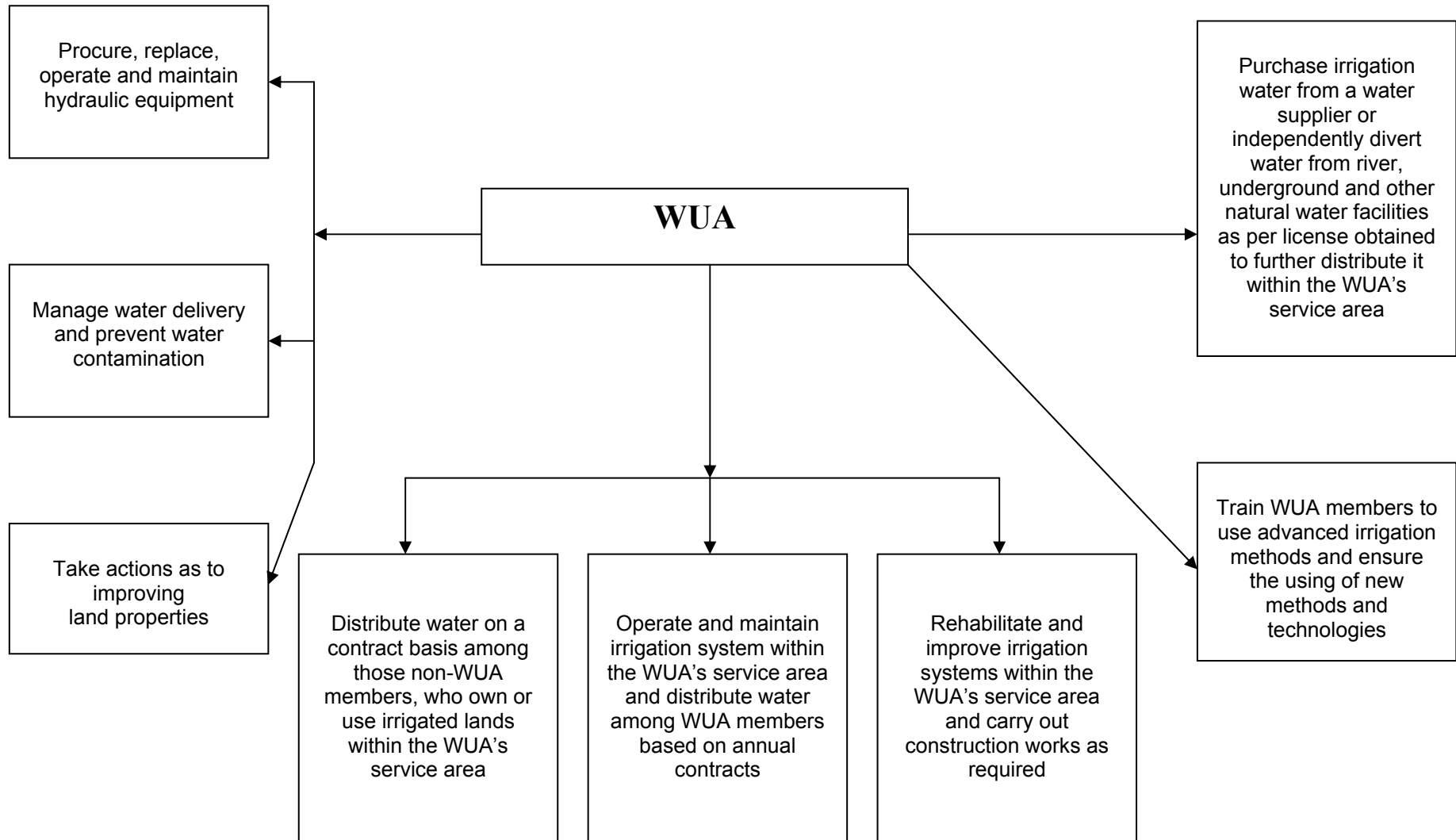


Chart 2: Obligations by a WUA

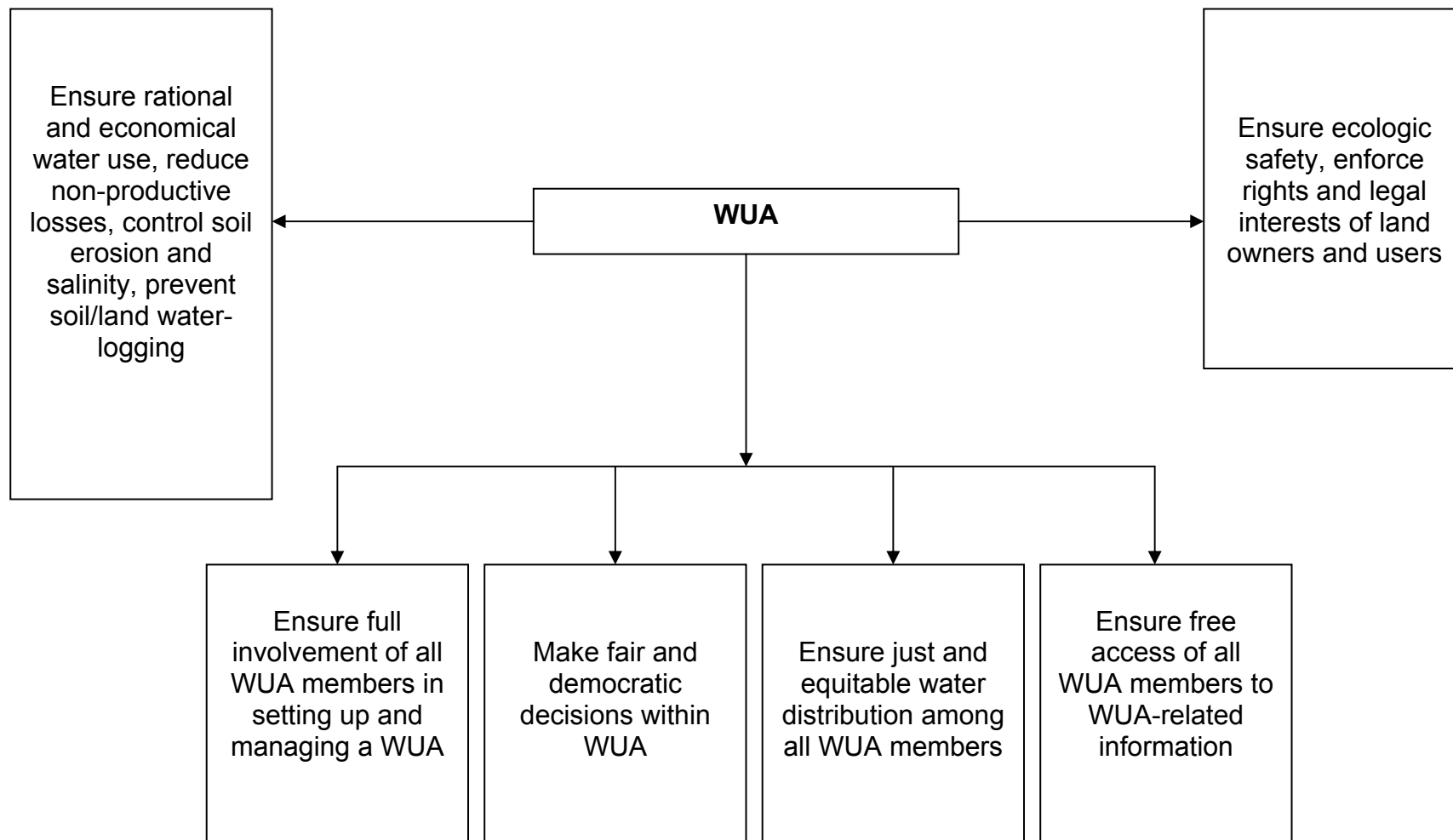


Chart 3: Procedure for setting-up a WUA in Kyrgyzstan through the Constituent Committee

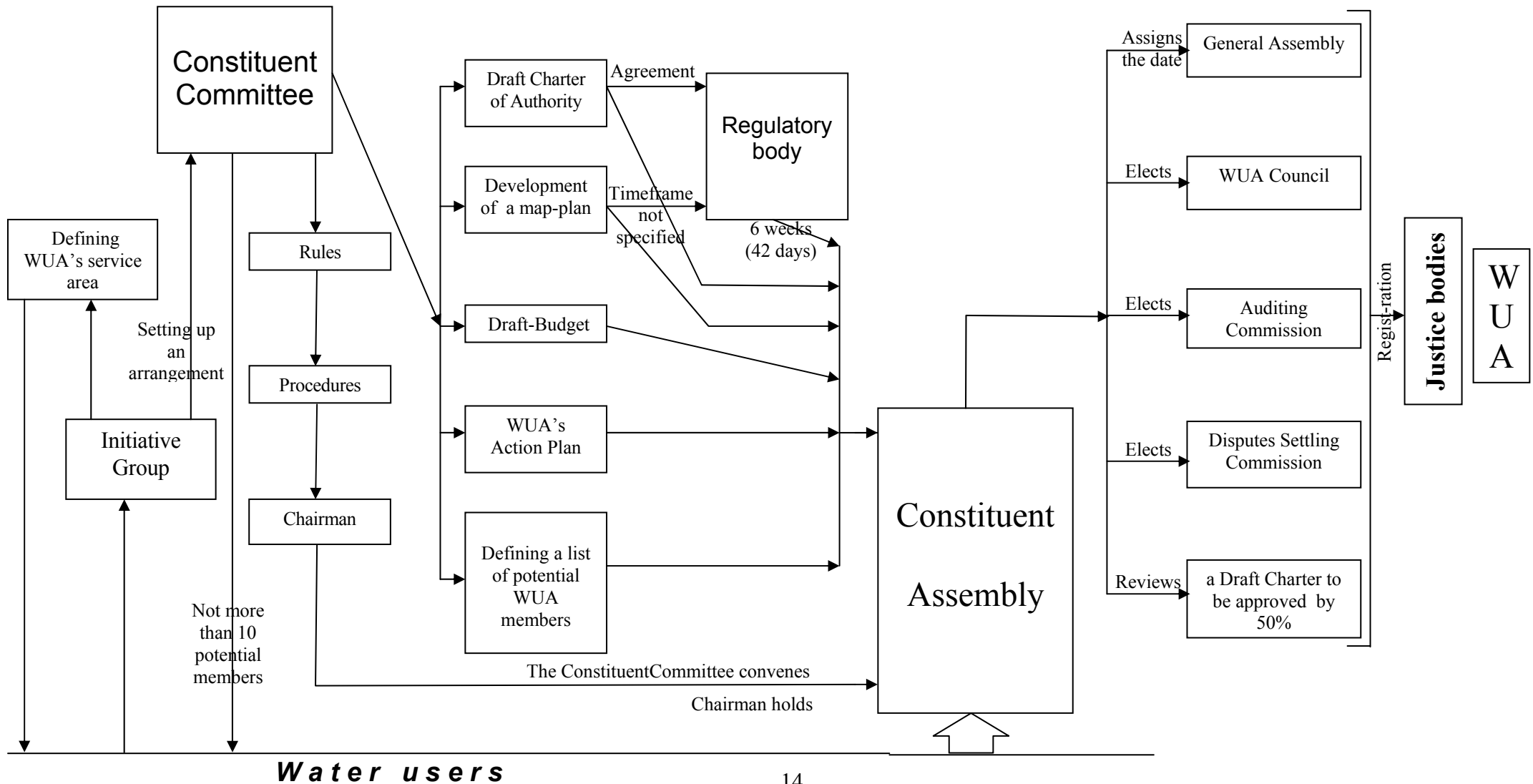


Chart 4: A WUA Charter

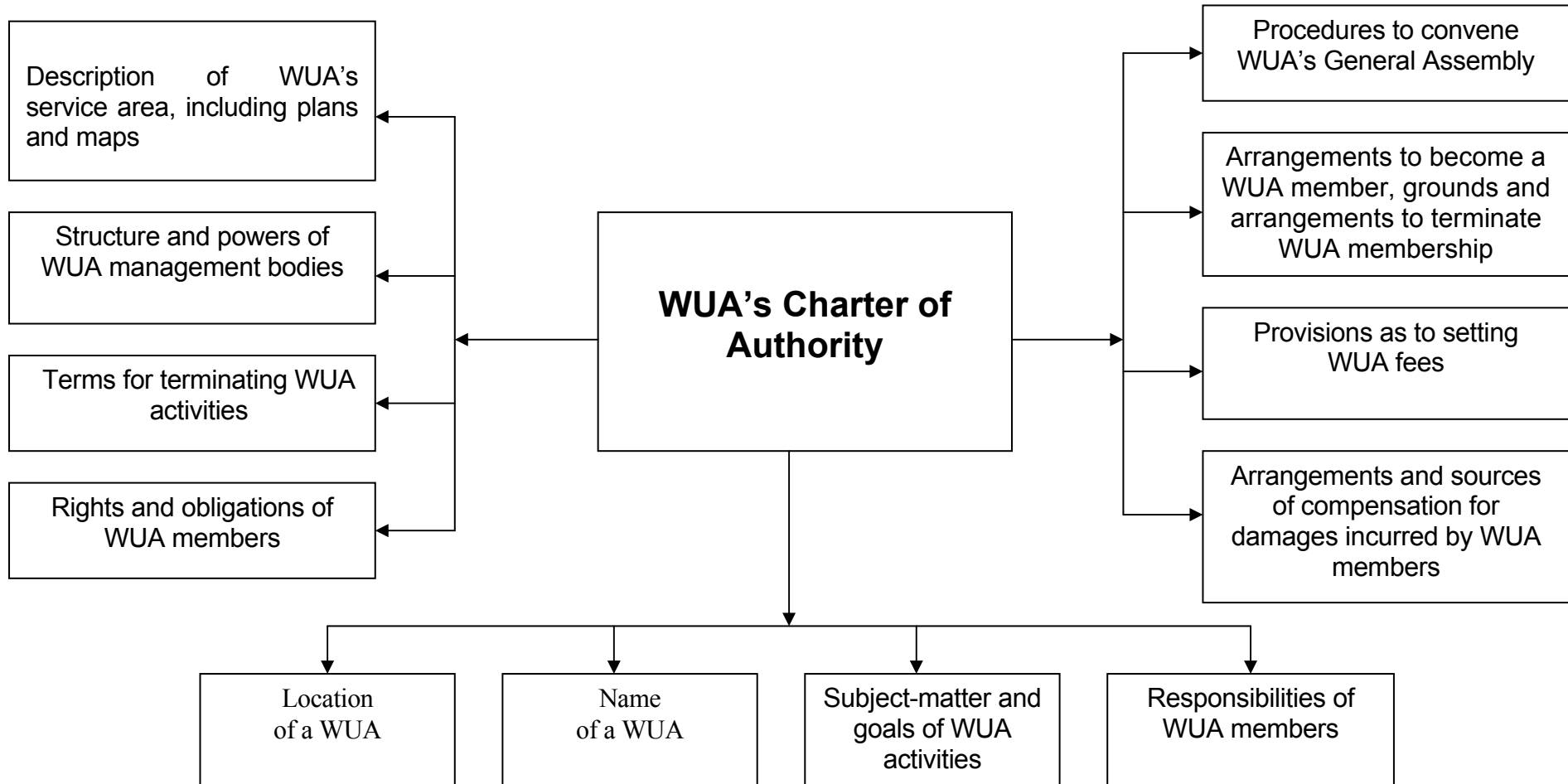


Chart 5: WUA Membership

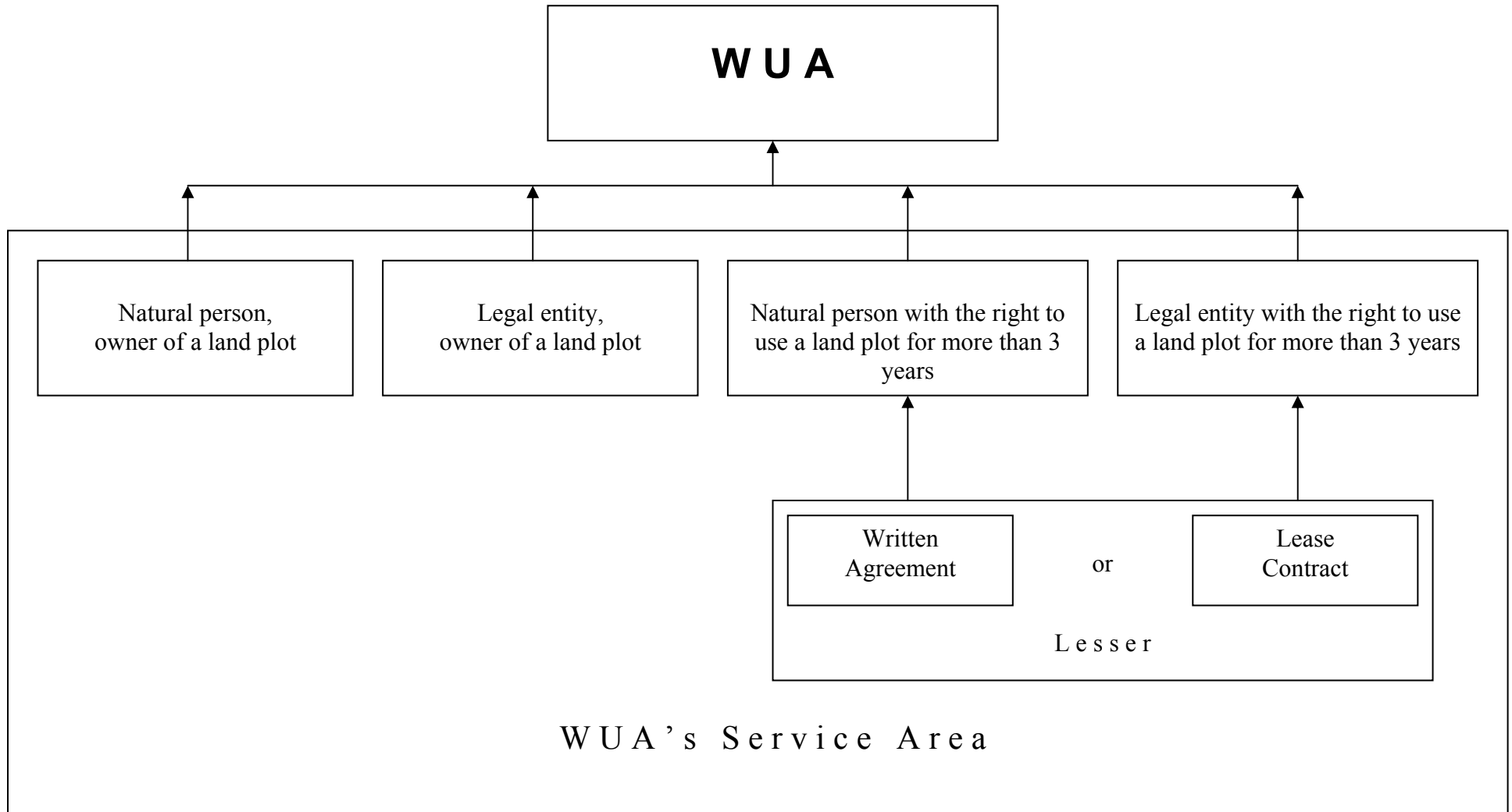


Chart 6: WUA Members' Rights

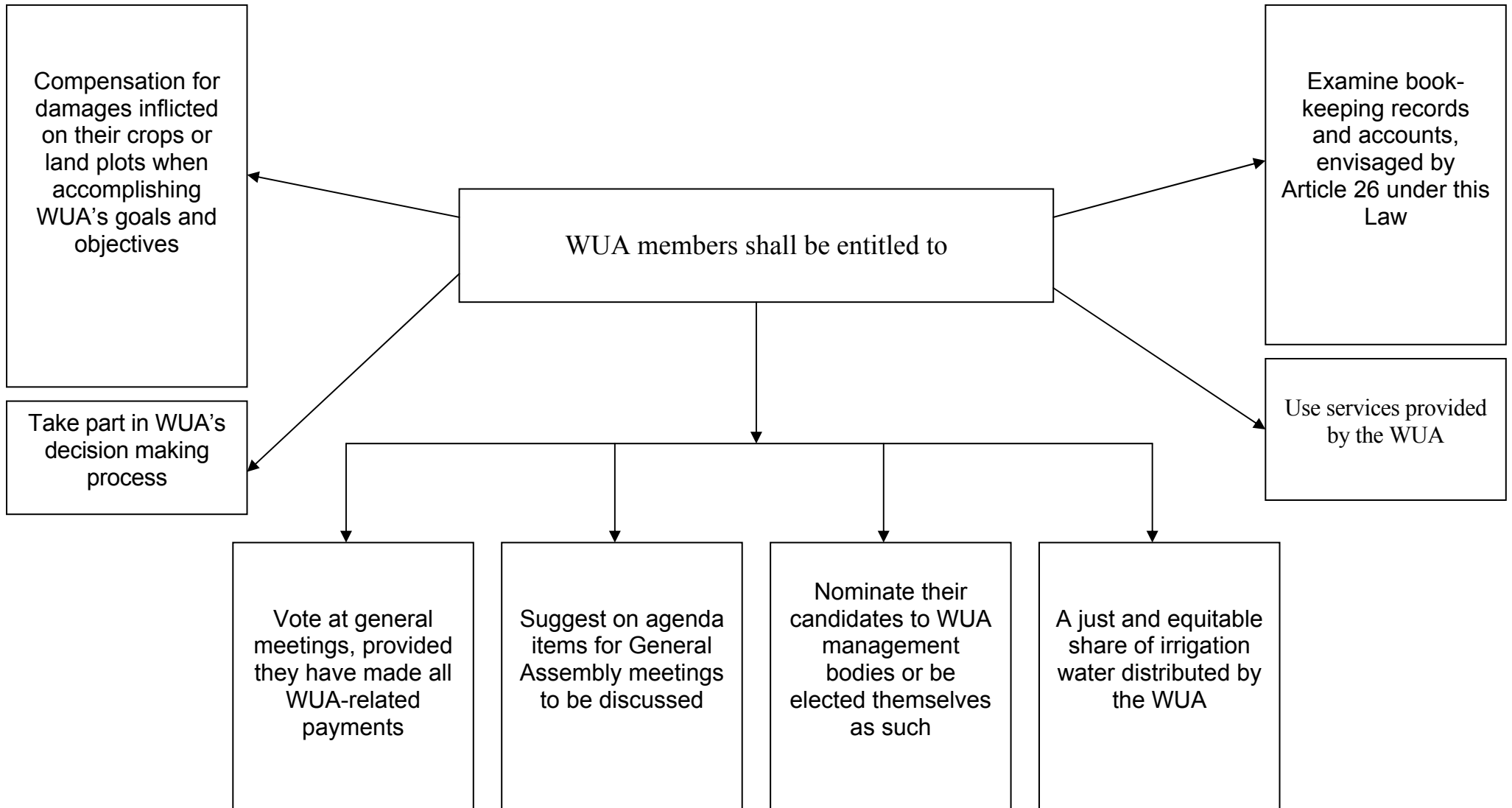


Chart 7: Obligations by WUA Members

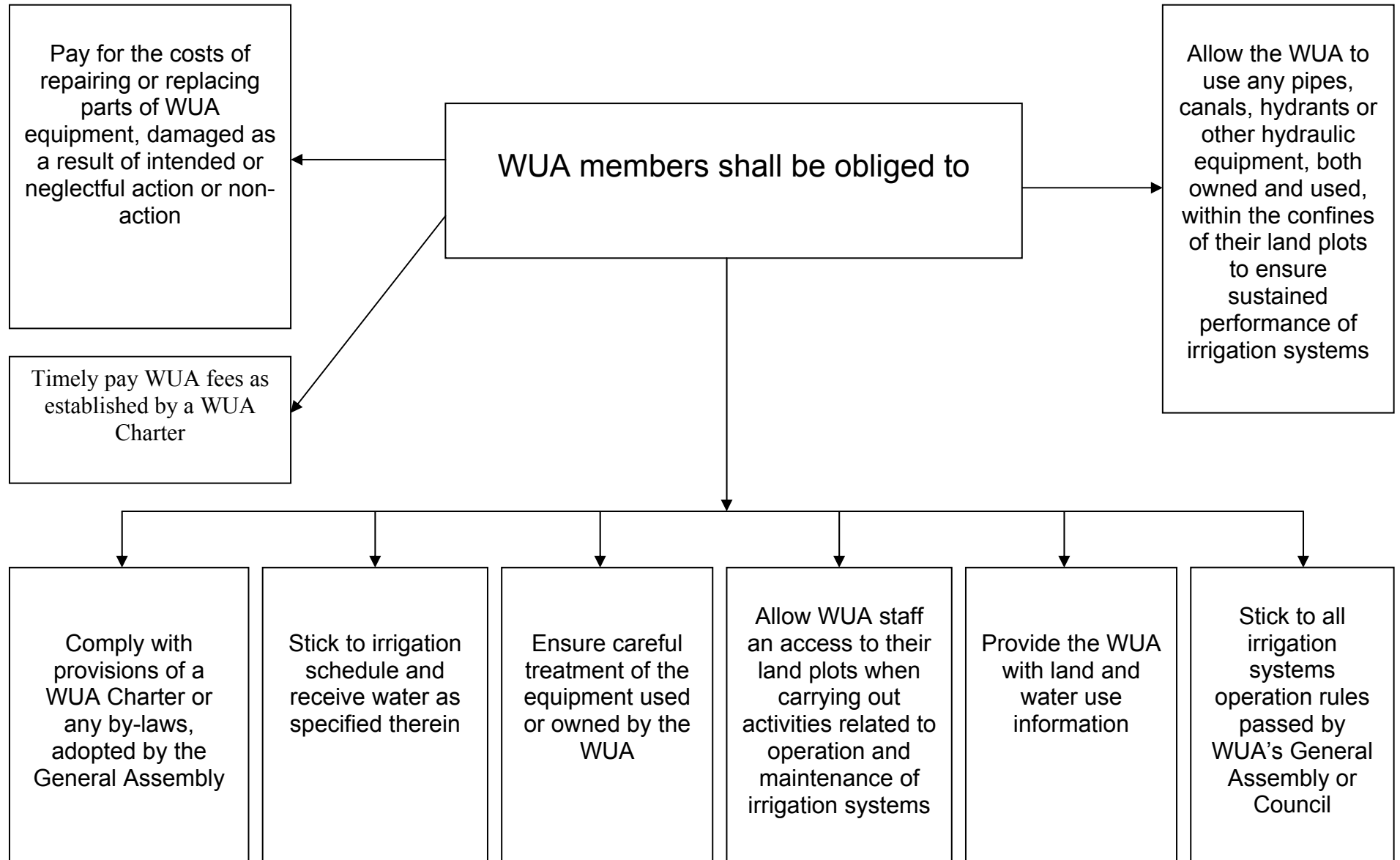


Chart 8: Termination of WUA Membership

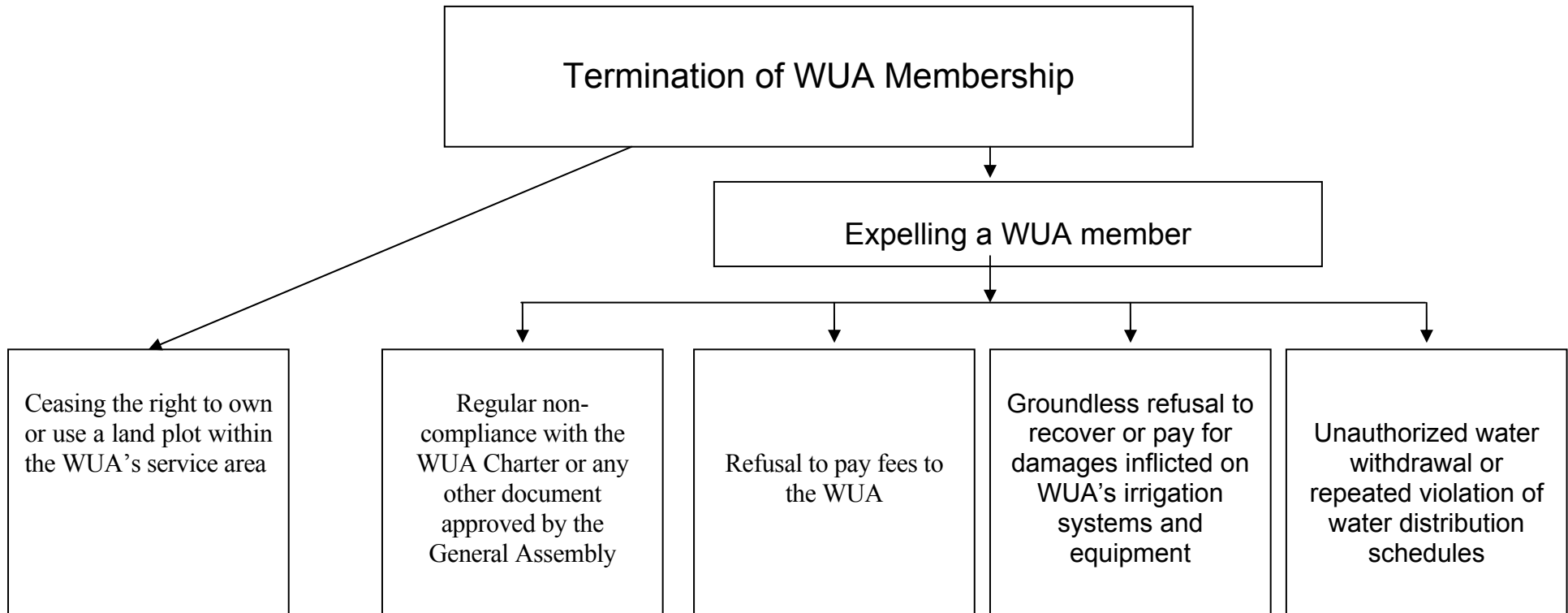


Chart 9: WUA Governance & Management Bodies

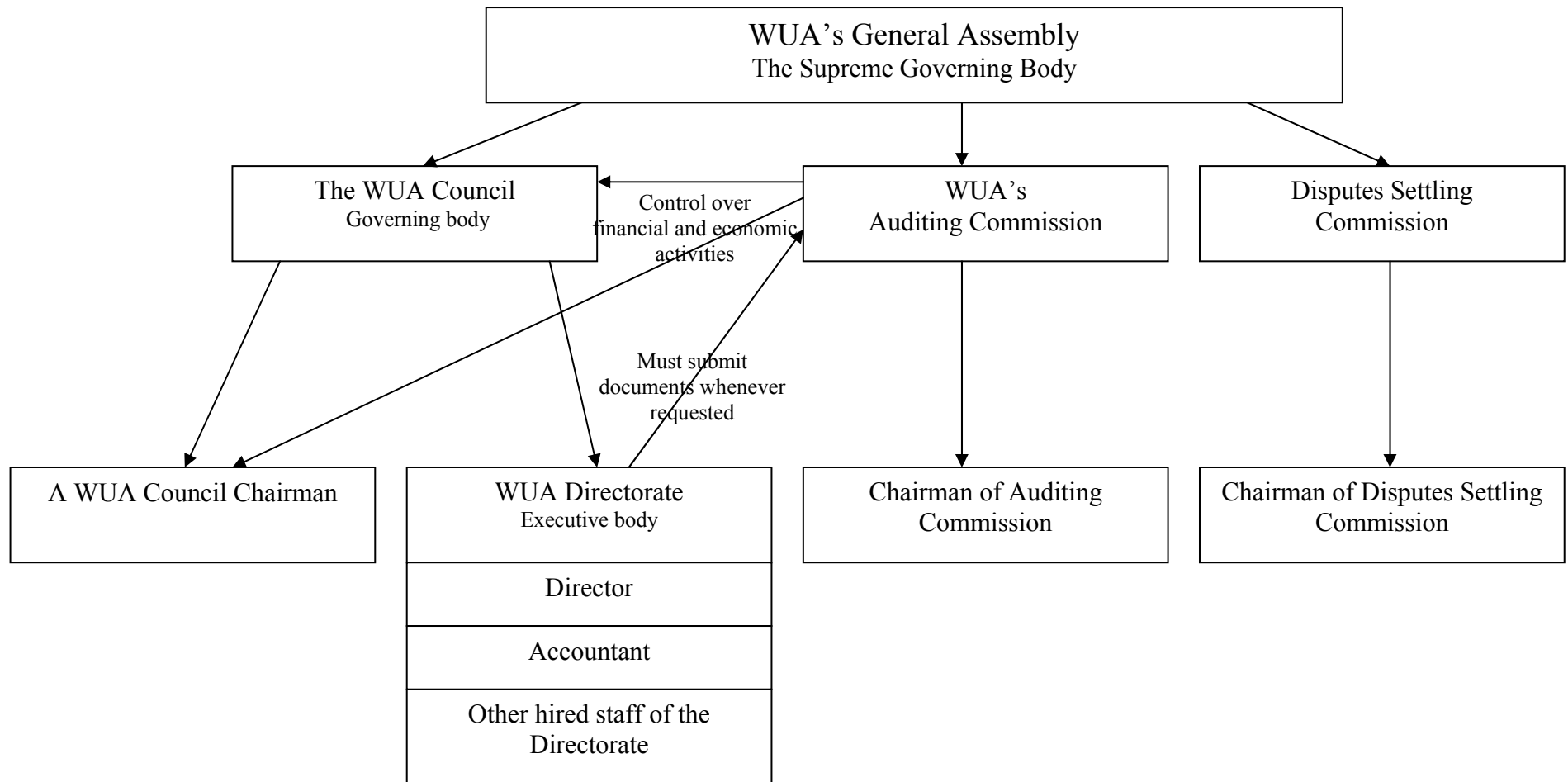


Chart 10: Powers of WUA's Supreme Body (Representative Assembly)

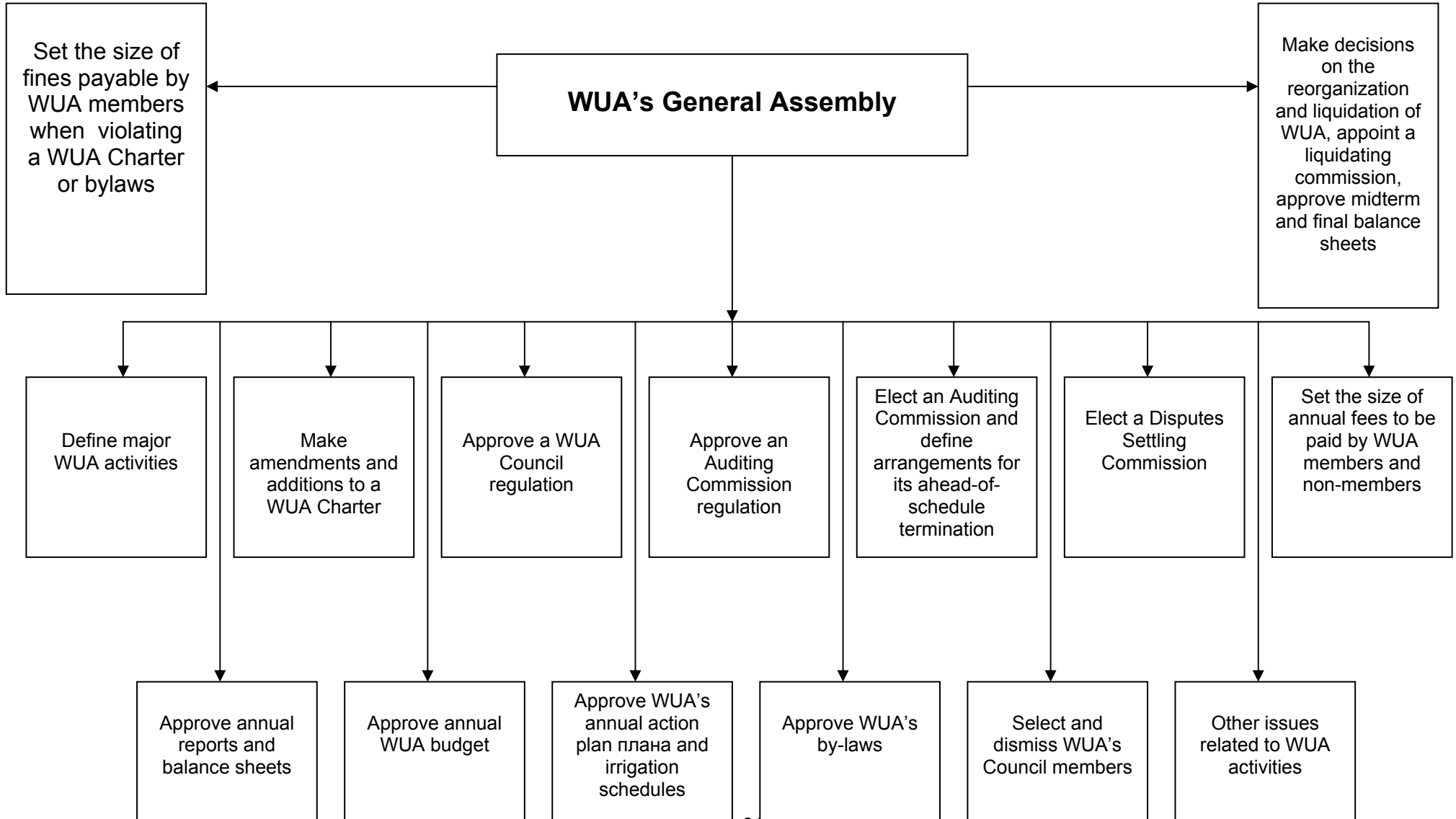


Chart 11: Voting Right in a WUA

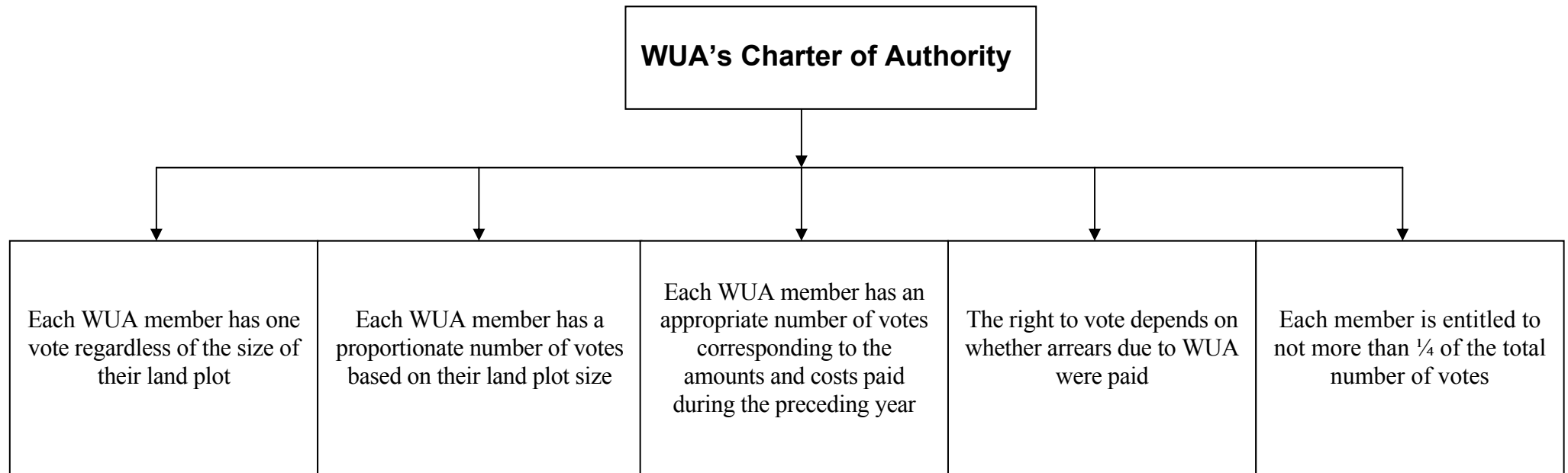


Chart 12: Powers of a WUA's Governing Body

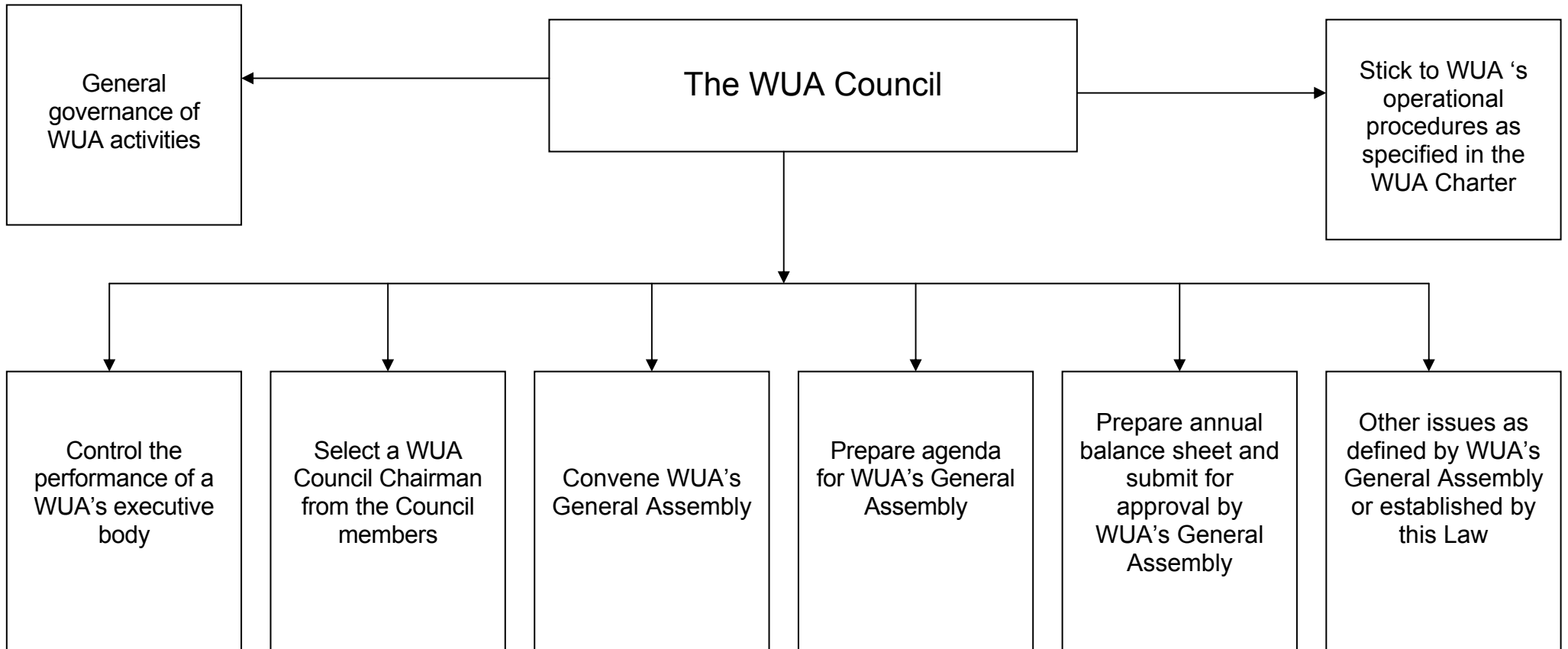


Chart 13: Powers of a WUA Council-hired Executive Body

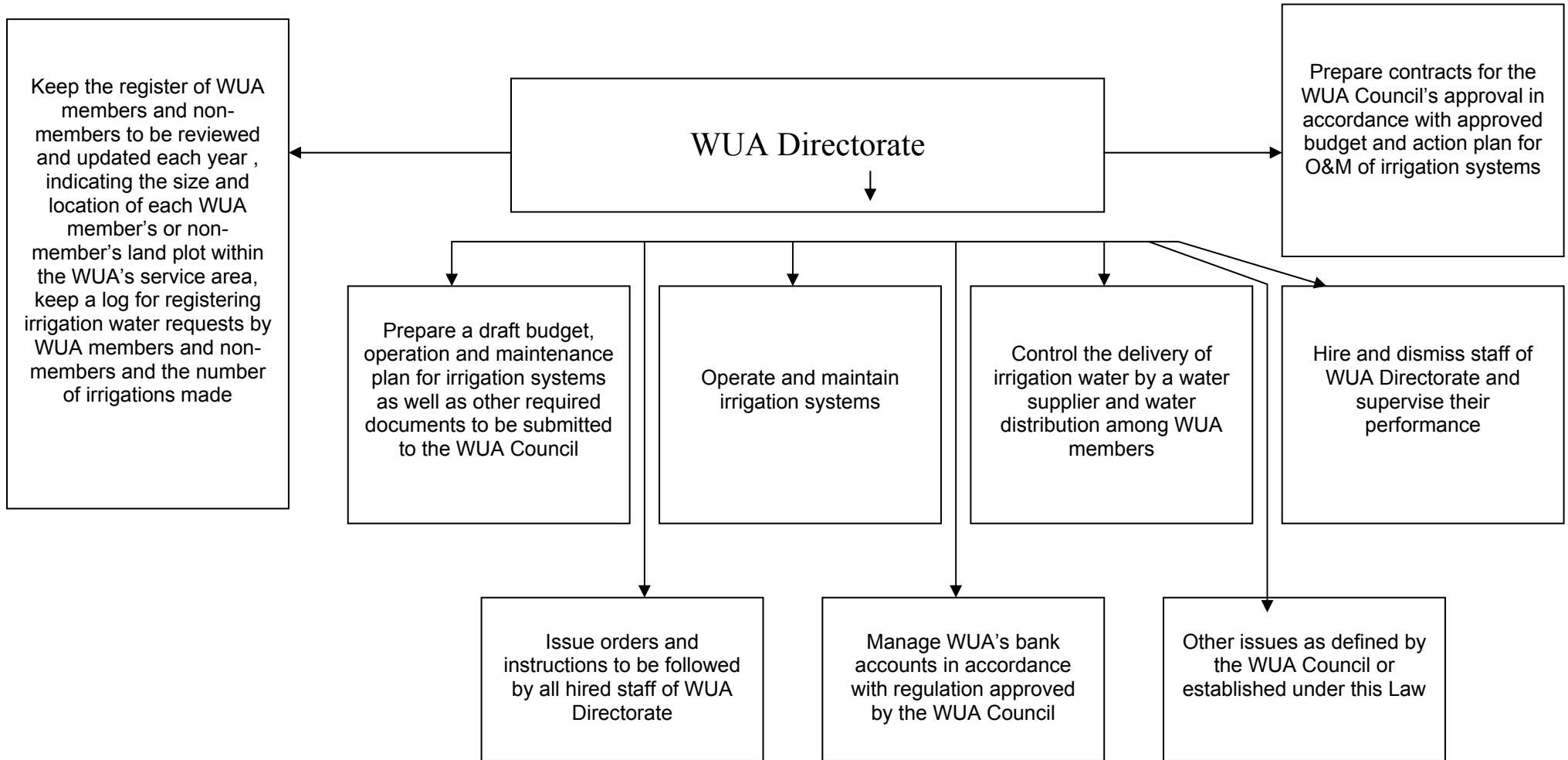


Chart 14: WUA's Controlling Body

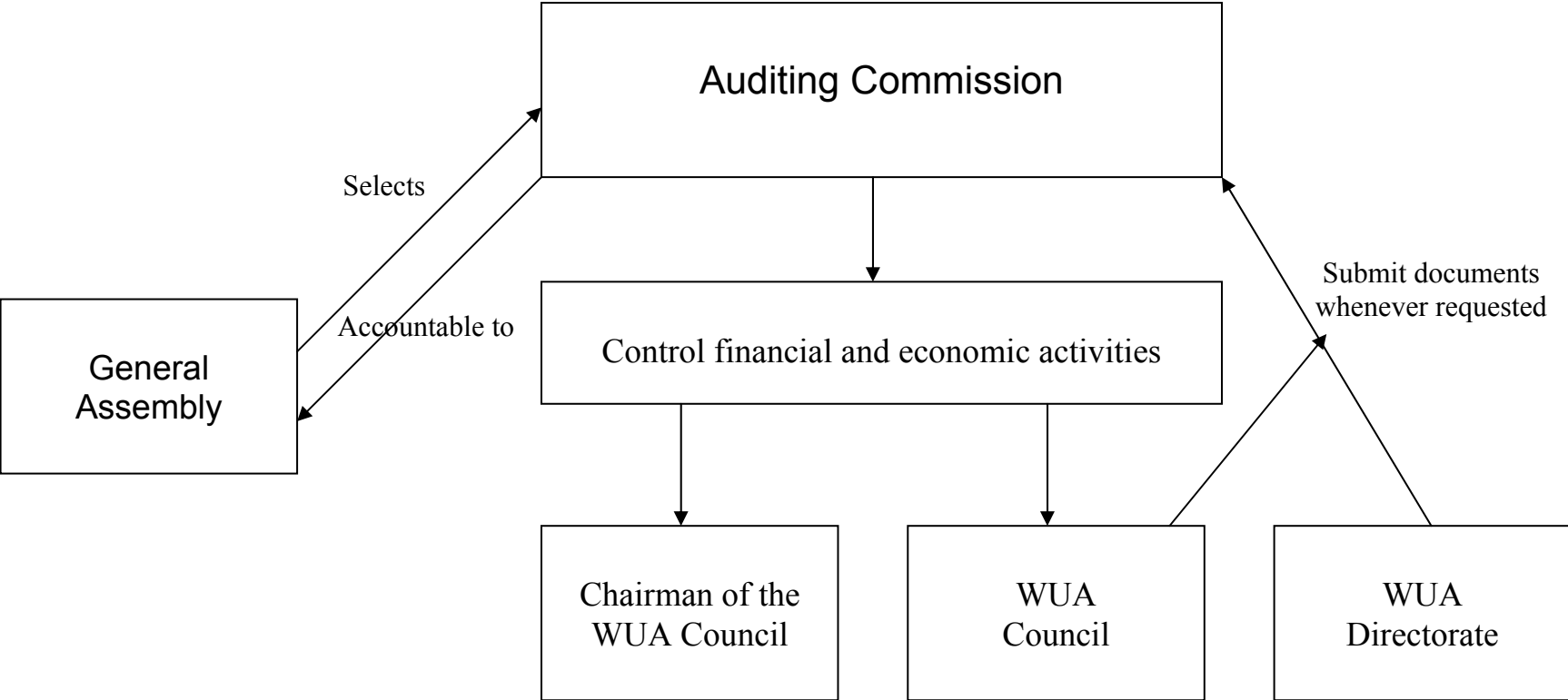


Chart 15: Working Arrangements for Disputes Settling Commission

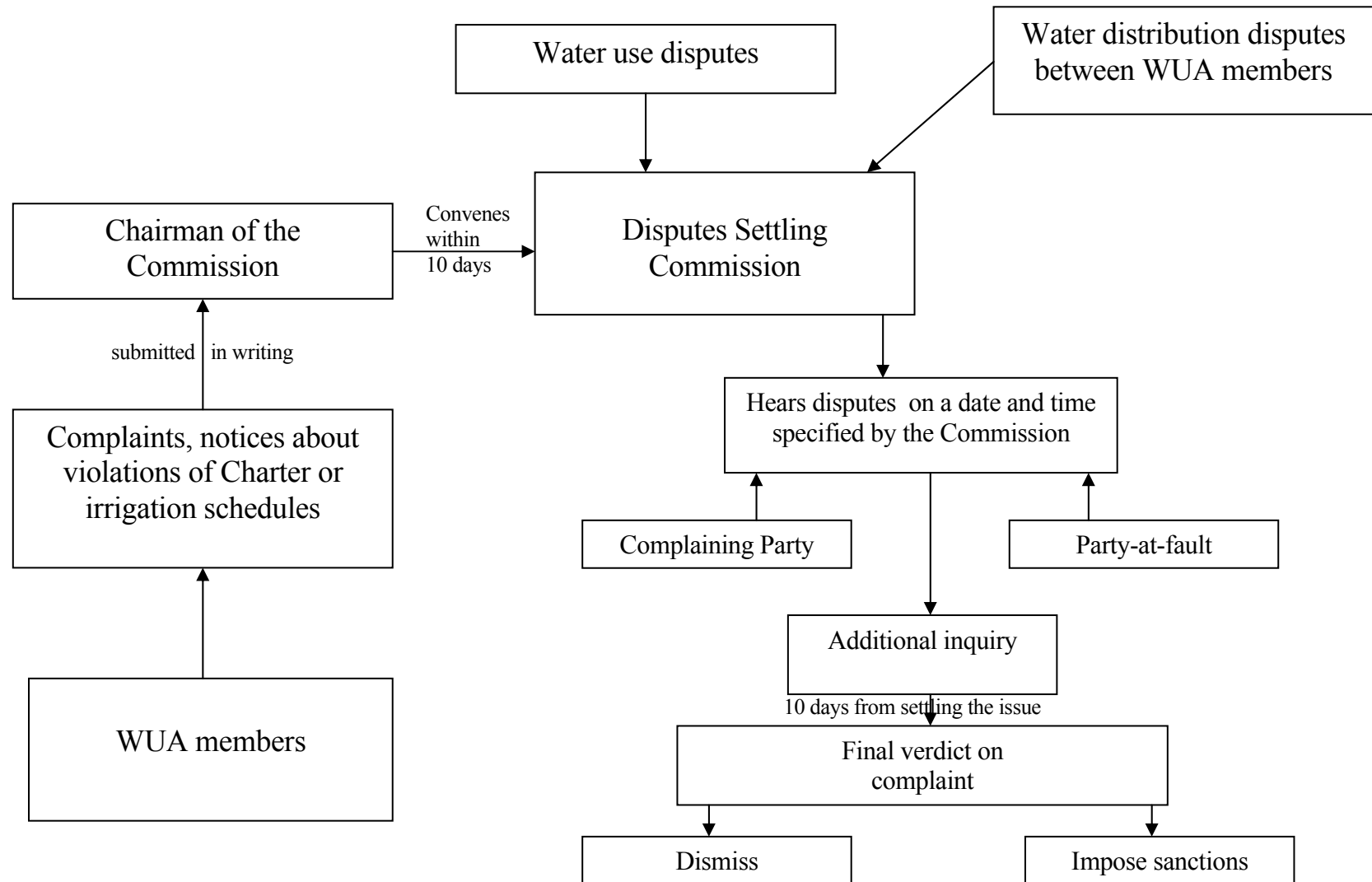


Chart 16: WUA's Sources of Income

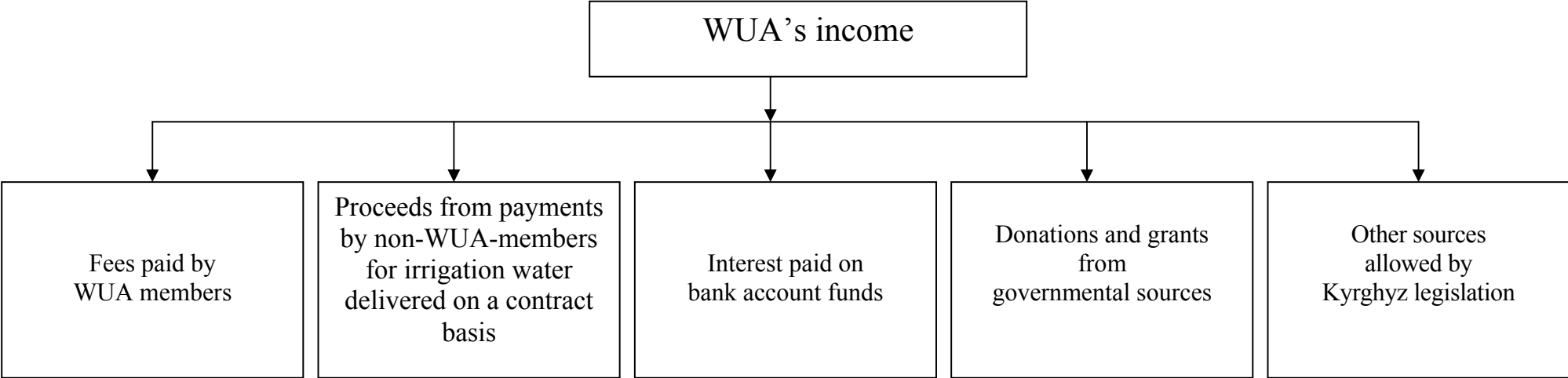
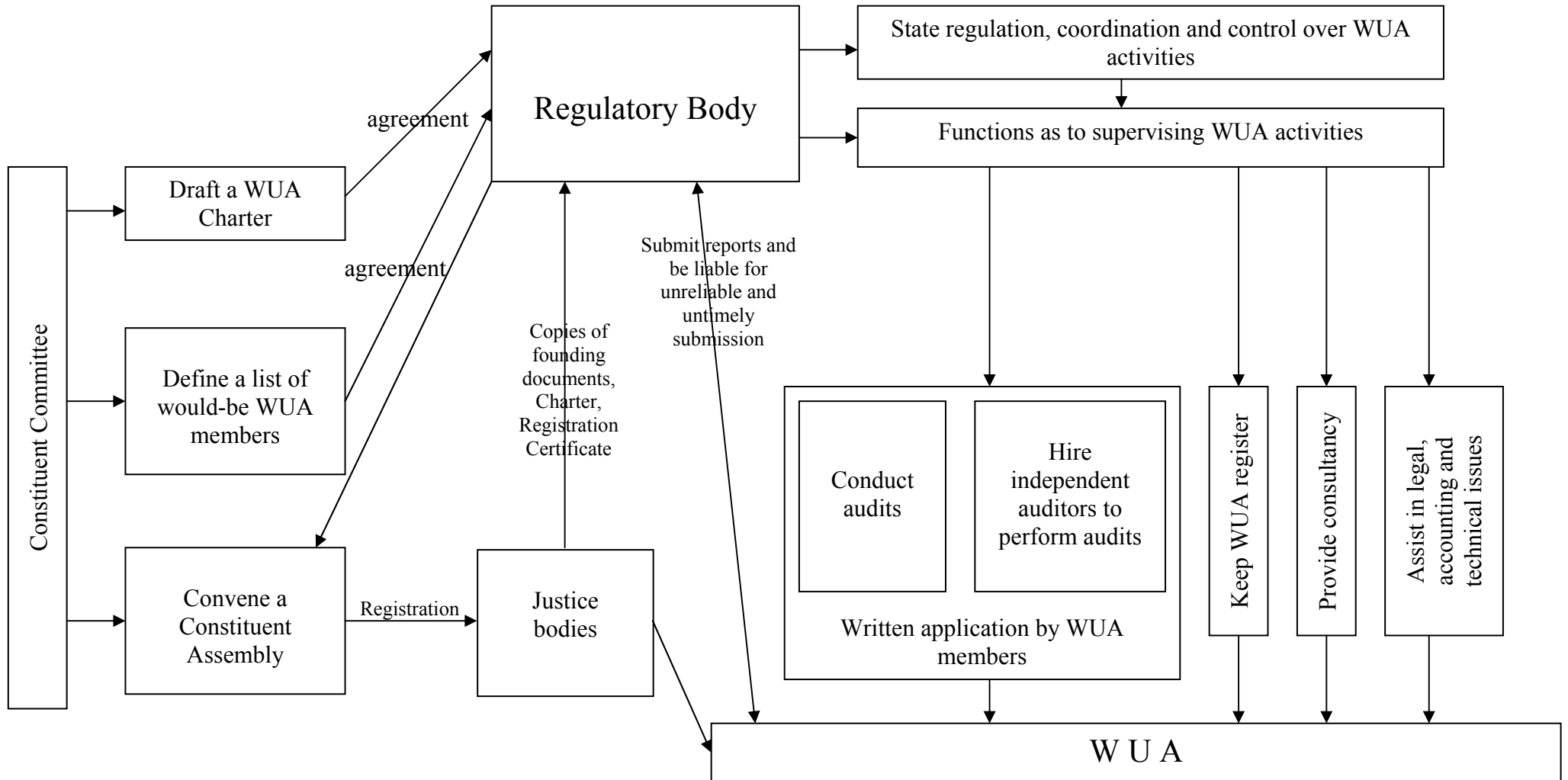


Chart 17: Regulatory Powers



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