



CFLRP Collaboration Assessment Report FOR THE NORTHERN BLUES CFLRP

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New Mexico
Forest and Watershed
Restoration Institute

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We strive to earn trust by being rigorous and objective in integrating currently available scientific information into decision-making through collaborative partnerships involving researchers, land managers, policy makers, interested and affected stakeholders, and communities. CFRI holds itself to high standards of scientific accuracy and aims to promote transparency in the production and communication of science-based information. Always carefully evaluate sources for rigor and appropriateness before applying them in your own work.

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Preface and Acknowledgements: In FY21, the USDA Forest Service led a collaborative process to develop a CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy that will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The USDA Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERIs) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance within and across CFLRP projects and through time. The collaboration assessment is intended to assess

whether CFLRP is encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach. We developed and deployed a short, online confidential questionnaire to the Northern Blues CFLRP and Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership in FY2021. The report herein summarizes findings from this pilot assessment. The assessment will be re-administered every two to three years. Our objectives are to:

- Develop a rigorous, systematic, and longitudinal assessment of collaborative governance that is grounded in the science and practice of landscape-scale collaborative forest restoration;
- Support program-wide evaluation of collaborative progress and performance and report on findings to USDA Forest Service staff and Congress;
- Facilitate project-level engagement, reporting, and peer-learning to inform local collaborative work and adaptive management; and
- Contribute to the theory and practice of collaborative governance through the synthesis of findings and lessons learned.

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Executive Summary

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaboration assessment as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaboration assessment was designed to assess the following questions:

1. What are the structural and functional dynamics of the collaborative? Does the collaborative exhibit characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?
3. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
4. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability?

The SWERI administered an online survey to members of the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership (henceforth the Partnership) in Fall 2021, the first year of the Partnership.

The majority of respondents indicated that they agreed about key problems impacting their landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the purpose of their collaborative restoration project. Respondents felt that the process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect of others' positions and interests, and they felt that participants were committed to the process. Survey respondents emphasized that there were strong leaders who worked well across organizations and entities, communicated a collaborative vision, and motivated others to work together. A majority agreed that participants worked together to co-generate knowledge and solve problems. Knowledge and information were reportedly shared equally among participants. Respondents felt that the Partnership had adequate funding, knowledge, facilitation skills, and buy-in to carry out tasks and accomplish work. Respondents also generally agreed that the USDA Forest Service was responsive to collaborative input. However, respondents noted several areas for improvement. Some respondents wanted to see more collaborative engagement between the Partnership and USDA Forest Service in planning and implementation of treatments and more opportunities to engage in adaptive management based on monitoring results and feedback. Respondents felt that the

Partnership could be more inclusive of some interests and groups. Respondents agreed that they lacked people and time to accomplish work. Respondents also noted that decision-making processes were not well understood, mechanisms for accountability were lacking, and the USDA Forest Service was not clear about the decisions they made.

Many of these challenges were reiterated in open-ended responses focused on recommendations to improve the collaborative process, which included the need to: 1) increase stakeholder participation, engagement, and outreach to participants that have not been historically involved; 2) increase resource capacity, especially time and personnel dedicated to the collaborative process; 3) establish structures and processes for multi-party monitoring and collaborative adaptive management; and 4) enhance collaborative engagement in planning, prioritization, and implementation within and across boundaries.

Survey results suggested that the Partnership has started to make progress on a number of social, economic, and ecological goals of the CFLRP during the first year of CFLRP funding. However, frequent turnover and limited agency capacity for collaborative engagement challenged collaborative progress and performance.

This assessment will be readministered by the SWERI every 2-3 years to track collaboration on multiple projects over time, with the goal of gauging capacities and identifying areas for improvement.



NBFC 2021 Fall field tour.

Introduction

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA) was passed in 2009 and established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The purpose of the CFLRP was to “encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes”¹ through a competitive funding program administered by the USDA Forest Service. In 2021, CFLRP coordinators, USDA Forest Service personnel, and partners led a collaborative process to develop a CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy consisting of ecological and socio-economic monitoring questions and indicators that will supplement local project multi-party monitoring plans and will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects.²

One core component of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy relates to monitoring collaborative governance.³ While the CFLRP requires projects to collaborate throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring, ‘collaboration’ was not defined in the FLRA or CFLRP requirements, nor did the CFLRP provide specific guidelines by which collaborative groups convened and engaged in collaborative restoration throughout the life of the CFLRP project. This has resulted in a multitude of collaborative structures, processes, and practices implemented in diverse social and ecological contexts across the country. Also, collaborative groups are nested within and impacted by changes that occur within their group, external changes in social and ecological conditions, and a fluid institutional environment, all of which require groups to adjust and evolve their structures, practices, and processes (Beeton et al., 2022; Ulibarri et al., 2020). Yet, a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating attributes of collaborative governance and resilience is lacking. Systemic evaluation could lead to better understanding of what factors promote or challenge collaboration across different contexts, help target what kinds of investments are needed, and where to maintain and enhance collaborative capacity.

To address this need, the USDA Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance.³ During the development of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy, CFLRP coordinators from the Washington Office elicited feedback from CFLRP practitioners, CFLRP coordinators, and subject matter experts to identify monitoring questions, indicators,

and available data sources. With respect to collaborative governance, partners wanted to address the question, how well is the CFLRP encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach? CFLRP practitioners and coordinators expressed interest in documenting collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as performance (perceived outcomes). CFLRP practitioners and coordinators also emphasized the need for a tool that is straightforward, not time-consuming, easy to administer, and longitudinal.

We incorporated stakeholder feedback and questions of interest developed during the drafting of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy to directly inform the components of the collaboration assessment. Our objectives are as follows:

1. Develop a rigorous, systematic, and longitudinal assessment of collaborative governance that is grounded in the science and practice of landscape-scale collaborative forest restoration.
2. Support program-wide evaluation of collaborative progress and performance, and report on findings to USDA Forest Service staff and Congress.
3. Facilitate project-level engagement, reporting, and peer-learning to inform local collaborative work and adaptive management.
4. Contribute to the theory and practice of collaborative governance through the synthesis of findings and lessons learned.

The SWERI developed, administered, and analyzed a pilot collaboration assessment—an online questionnaire—to the Northern Blues CFLRP and members of the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership (henceforth the Partnership) in the fall of 2021, the first year of the Partnership operating with CFLRP funding.

The report herein summarizes findings from the collaboration assessment with the Partnership. We have also integrated, where appropriate, feedback during our final presentation and open discussion with the Partnership on these findings and their reactions to the findings. See Appendix 1 for a report brief summarizing our findings, and Appendix 2 for a presentation we led with the Partnership in May 2022. We briefly highlight the approach, followed by a baseline assessment of findings and document recommendations from respondents to improve the collaborative process.

¹ PL 111-11 CFLRP Authorizing legislation - <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/110th-congress/senate-report/370/1>

² CFLRP National Core Monitoring Strategy - https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/documents/cflrp/CFLRP_monitoring_strategy_20201214.pdf

³ Here, we define governance as “the system of institutions, including rules, laws, regulations, policies, and social norms, and organizations involved in governing environmental resource use and/or protection” (Chaffin et al. 2014).

Approach

We developed an online questionnaire to assess:

1. What are the structural and functional dynamics of the collaborative? Does the collaborative exhibit characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives?
2. To what extent do participants feel the project is meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological goals?
3. What challenges or disruptions affect collaborative performance and durability?
4. What do participants need or recommend to improve the process?

Framework

The questionnaire was structured using concepts from an integrative collaborative governance framework ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)), resilience and adaptability literature ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#); [Folke et al., 2005](#); [Gupta et al., 2010](#)), and empirical findings from the first 10 years of the CFLRP ([Beeton et al., 2022](#); [Butler and Schultz, 2019](#); [McIntyre and Schultz, 2020](#); [Schultz et al., 2018](#)).

Collaboration dynamics – To assess collaboration dynamics, we operationalized the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)). The framework incorporates multiple components of collaborative governance that are grounded in collaborative practice, link collaboration dynamics to socio-economic and ecological outcomes, and promote assessment of collaboratives across settings and time. The components include principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action ([Emerson et al., 2012](#)).

Principled engagement refers to ensuring the right people are involved, i.e., a representative cross-section of people and entities who have a stake in the issue participate. Principled engagement also emphasizes the principles of open and inclusive communication and negotiation, where individuals with diverse perspectives and knowledge work together to identify shared problems, agree on strategies to solve those problems, and agree on the purpose or scope of the collaborative.

Shared motivation refers to the interpersonal and relational elements of collaborative dynamics. Shared motivation includes the sub-components mutual trust, understanding, and commitment. It is often referred to as social capital, or the “glue” that holds groups together through networks, norms, rules, and trust that promote collective action ([Pelling and High, 2005](#)). This glue is crucial for effective collaboration; social capital is built

through investments in social relationships and can be expressed through mutual commitment of individuals and groups to common collaborative goals.

Capacity for joint action comprises four sub-components: leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#)). Leadership is essential for managing collaboratives, and leaders can fill many roles including convener, sponsor, public advocate, facilitator, and others. They are important for: building trust, sensemaking, bringing people together, initiating partnerships, motivating people to work together, compiling, generating, and disseminating knowledge, developing visions of and support for change, and managing conflict ([Folke et al., 2005](#)).

In a collaborative setting, participants should work together to co-create and co-develop shared understanding and knowledge through social learning; knowledge and information should be equally accessible to all members of the collaborative; and learning and knowledge should be used to inform adaptive management ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#)). Social learning occurs through repeated interactions and joint problem solving among participants. It emphasizes testing, monitoring, and reevaluating participants’ assumptions and understanding of ecosystem responses and feedbacks to learn and adapt management actions ([Folke et al., 2005](#); [Lebel et al., 2010](#); [Sharma-Wallace et al., 2018](#)).

Collaboratives often pool and share resources to accomplish tasks and get work done. These can include funding, personnel, science and technical expertise, facilitation, and coordination.

Institutional arrangements are the processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time, i.e., the rules of the game. Collaborative structures, processes, and protocols should be clearly understood, transparent, perceived as fair and equitable, and include mechanisms of accountability ([Emerson et al., 2012](#); [Gupta et al., 2010](#); [Stern and Coleman, 2015](#)).

Capacity needs change through time, and the relative required amount of these four capacity types is contingent upon the local context – e.g., history of conflict, people involved, purpose and objectives of the group, among others ([Imperial et al., 2016](#)).

Perceived outcomes – Our assessment focuses both on perceived “process” outcomes (e.g., did the collaborative process reduce conflict, or increase the ability to plan at a landscape scale?) and socio-economic and environmental

outcomes. The outcome metrics chosen for evaluation were derived from several sources: the intent of the FLRA of 2009 and the CFLRP, the Northern Blues CFLRP proposal⁴, and conversations with local, regional, and national CFLRP coordinators while developing the Common Monitoring Strategy.

Challenges or disruptions that affect collaborative performance and durability – Disruptions—i.e., personnel turnover, legal or policy changes, and biophysical disturbances like wildfires or insect outbreaks—can happen at any time. These disruptions may impact collaborative progress and performance, and/or force groups to adapt. We developed a list of common challenges that CFLRP projects and other landscape scale forest collaboratives reported in: 1) breakout group discussions and focus group sessions at the 2020 SWERI Cross-boundary landscape restoration workshop ([SWERI, 2020](#)) and the 2020 Idaho forest collaborative shared stewardship workshops; 2) the 2020 CFLRP Collaboration Indicator Survey administered by the National Forest Foundation; and 3) a survey administered to USDA Forest Service staff engaged in 2010 and 2012 CFLRP projects ([Schultz et al., 2018](#)). Identifying current challenges or disruptions that CFLRP projects are grappling with can support strategic investment towards solutions to maintain collaborative performance and durability.

Needs or recommendations to improve the process – We captured respondents’ perspectives on needs and recommendations to improve the collaborative process by including an open-ended survey question.

Data Collection and Analysis

We developed a questionnaire in the online survey tool Qualtrics that consisted of 33, mostly closed-ended statements using a Likert scale. The Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership’s Operations and Leadership teams previewed the assessment, and we also piloted the questionnaire and elicited feedback from participants of the Colorado Front Range CFLRP and the Partnership (n=5). The Northern Blues CFLRP coordinator and facilitator provided support in recruiting participants and administering the questionnaire through the Partnership listserv in November 2021. The questionnaire was open for 6 weeks. We received 37 usable responses, representing more than 30% of the population. We used the statistical software program Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) to document mean responses and variation in responses. Open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic analysis ([Ryan and Bernard, 2003](#)). Small sample sizes prohibited further statistical analyses, though this will be possible when more data has been collected.

Findings

Our results are organized as follows. First, we include demographic information of the survey sample. We then provide a description of findings related to collaboration dynamics (i.e., **principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action**). We provide a short description of each collaboration dynamic construct in italics to orient the reader. We follow with findings on perceived outcomes, disruptions that are challenging collaborative progress and performance, and recommendations to improve the process. For scale items (e.g., strongly disagree to strongly agree, progress scales), figures depict the percentage of survey participants that somewhat agree to strongly agree. This was done for consistency in visualization and ease of interpretation. For clarity, we describe majority or strong majority results as greater than or equal to 60% agreement and slight majority as greater than 50% agreement.

Demographics

Participation in the survey well represented affiliated organizations. The majority of participants represented state agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO), tribes, and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) (Figure 1). In addition, survey participants spanned all of the Partnership’s sub-groups (Figure 2).-

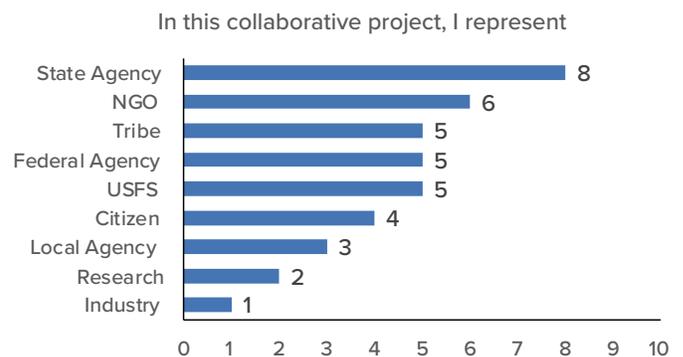


Figure 1 – Respondents self-identified representation of associated organizations.

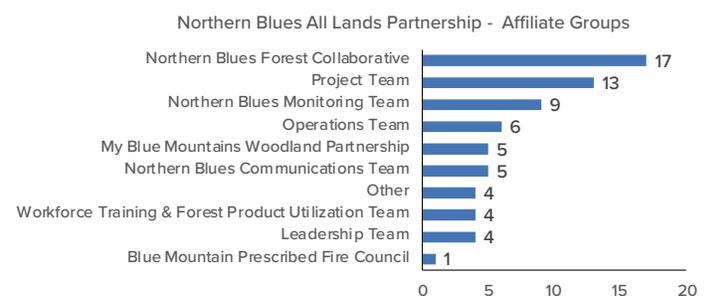


Figure 2 - Respondents’ self-identified team membership within the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership.

Principled engagement

Principled engagement refers to having the right people involved in iterative and inclusive dialogue to determine shared problems, identify shared strategies to solve problems, and agree to the shared purpose of the project.

A majority of respondents (62%) agreed to strongly agreed that a representative cross-section of stakeholders is involved in the project (Figure 3). Open-ended responses to the question indicated that there is a need to be more inclusive of tribes and tribal interests, conservation and environmental groups, representatives from county governments, and USFS District Rangers. Others suggested that participation was skewed towards forest products interests.

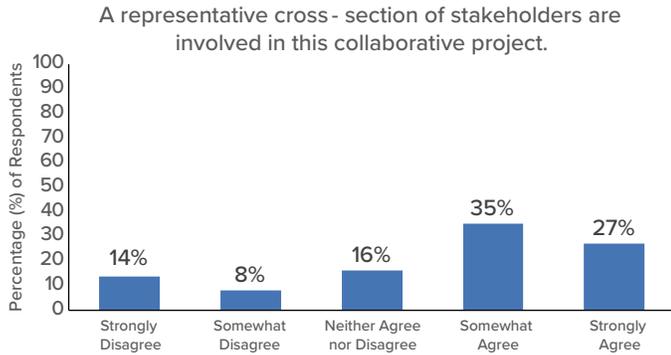


Figure 3 - Respondents' level of agreement that a representative cross-section of stakeholders is involved in the collaborative project.

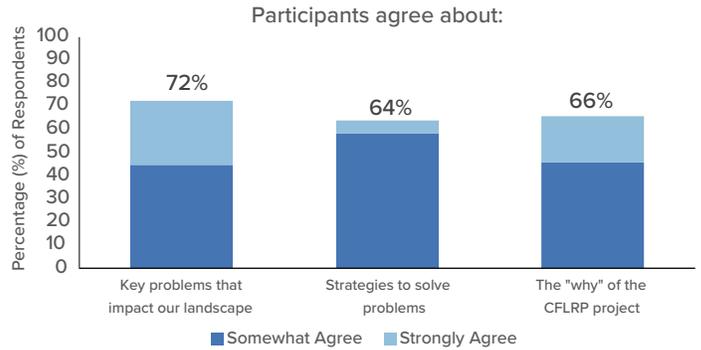


Figure 4 - Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on the key problems that impact the landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the "why" of the collaborative.

A majority of respondents indicated that participants had a shared understanding of the problems they face, the strategies to solve those problems, and the "why" of the project (Figure 4).

A large proportion of respondents felt that the level of collaboration between the Partnership and the USFS did not meet their expectations during planning (Figure 5). A slight majority indicated that collaboration met their expectations during implementation. A majority indicated that the level of collaboration between the Partnership and the USFS met their expectations during monitoring.

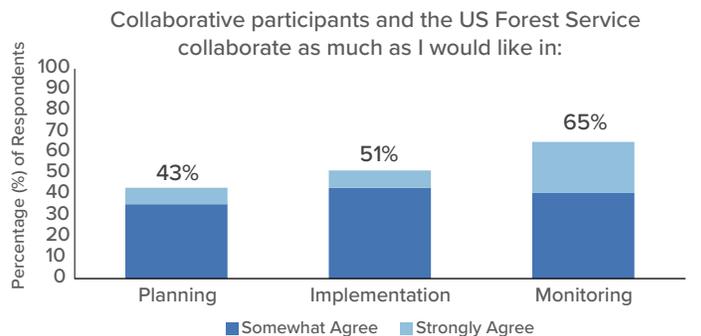


Figure 5 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the US Forest Service collaborates during planning, implementation, and monitoring stages.

Shared Motivation

Shared motivation includes trust, understanding, relationship-building, and commitment to the collaborative process.

As illustrated in Figure 6, improving relationships and trust was one of the primary motivators for engaging in the CFLRP project. Likewise, a strong majority of participants agreed the collaborative process helped build trust, relationships, and mutual understanding among participants. Respondents indicated that they were committed to the collaborative process, and they agreed

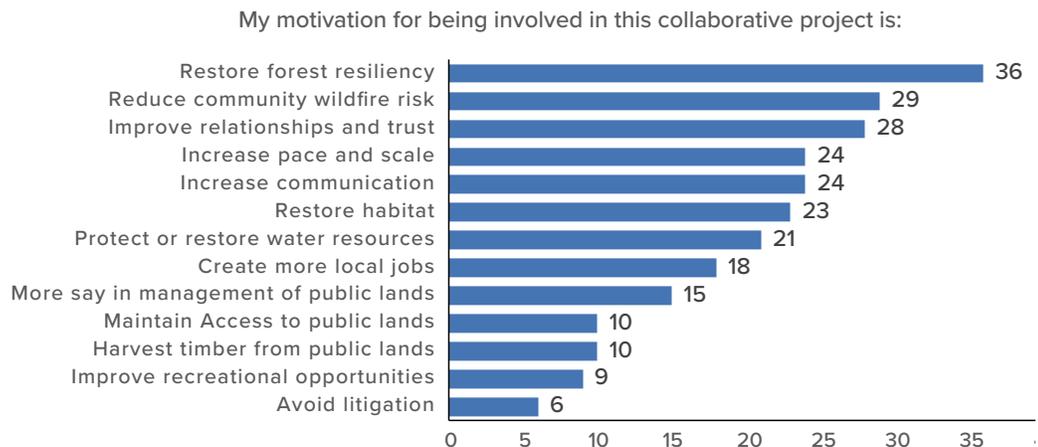


Figure 6 - Total number of times respondents identified the associated motive as reason for their participation in the collaborative. Note - respondents were able to select multiple motives.

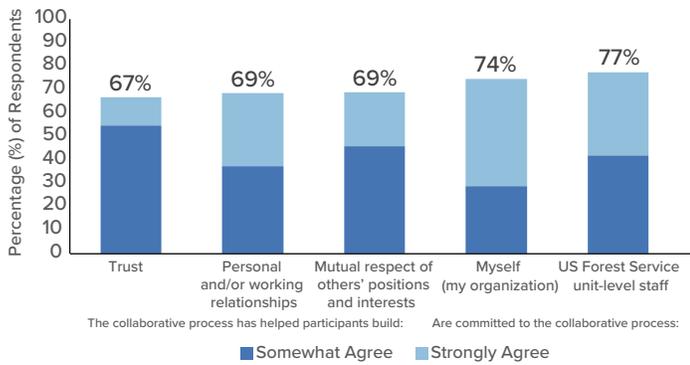


Figure 7 - Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect, as well as the extent to which participants are committed to the process.

that USFS unit level staff was committed to the process (Figure 7).

Joint Capacity for Action

Capacity for joint action includes four components: collaborative leadership, knowledge and learning, resources, and institutional arrangements that support fair governance.

Leadership

Leadership is a critical component for collaborative governance. Leaders are needed to convene partners, communicate a shared vision, and motivate people to work together.

A strong majority of respondents agreed that the Partnership had leaders who work well with other people, communicate a common vision and direction, and motivate others to work together (Figure 8).

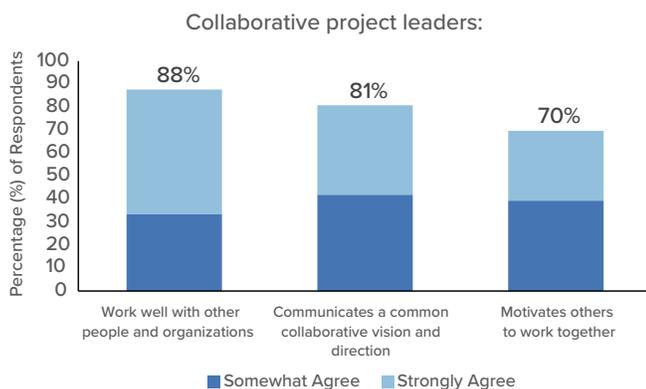


Figure 8 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the leaders work well with others, communicate a common vision and direction, and motivate others to work together.

Knowledge and Learning

Collaboratives should engage in a knowledge generation and social learning process for joint action. Knowledge should be co-produced, equally available to all partners, and be used to implement adaptive management.

For the Partnership, a strong majority of respondents somewhat agreed to strongly agreed that the CFLRP process provided opportunities to co-generate knowledge and solve problems, and that knowledge and information was shared equally among participants. Yet, only a slight majority agreed that the collaborative process facilitated adaptive management (Figure 9).

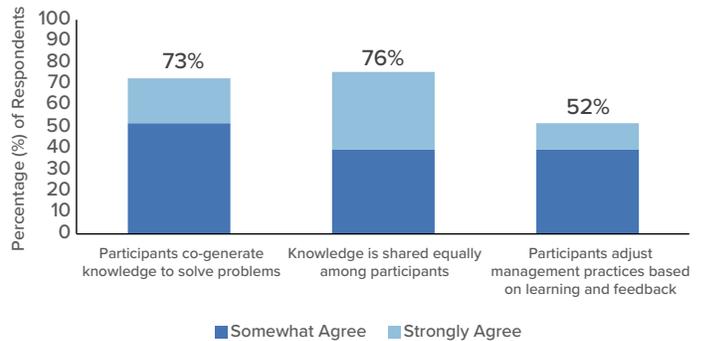


Figure 9 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that knowledge and information is co-generated by participants, shared equally, and used by participants to adjust management practices.

Resources

To accomplish tasks and get work done, collaboratives often pool and share resources, including funding, personnel, technical expertise, and facilitation, which, in turn, can support buy-in.

The majority of participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the project had adequate access to funds, knowledge and expertise, facilitation skills, and participant "buy-in" to get work done. Meanwhile, only 33% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the group had adequate access to people and time to accomplish their work (Figure 10).

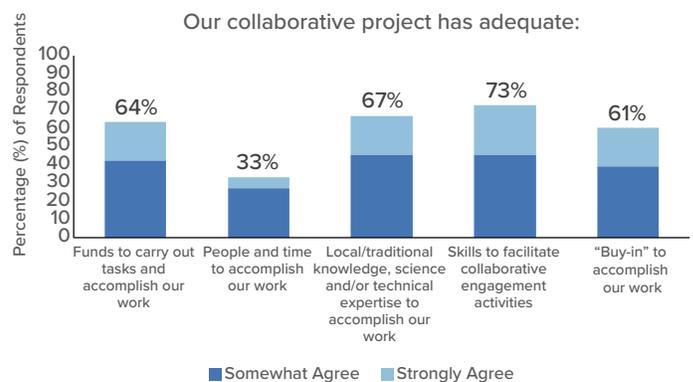


Figure 10 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative has adequate: funds; people and time; knowledge and technical expertise; facilitation skills; and "buy-in" to accomplish work.

Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements are the rules of the game. They include processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage collaboration over time. They should be clearly understood, perceived as fair and equitable, and include accountability mechanisms within and between entities.

Less than half of the survey respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that decision making processes were understood by participants, while a slight majority felt that such processes were fair and equitable (Figure 11). A majority of respondents felt these decision-making processes were transparent among CFLRP project participants.

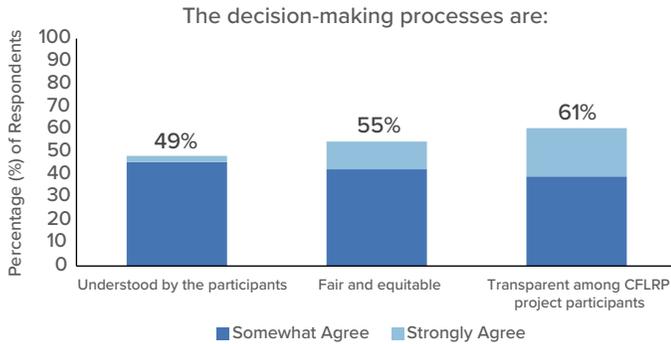


Figure 11 - Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that decision-making processes are understood, fair and equitable, and transparent.

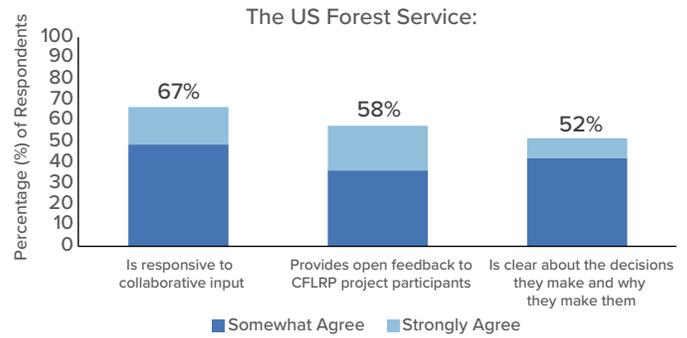


Figure - 12 Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the US Forest Service is responsive, provides feedback, and clear about the decisions they make.

A majority of participants felt the USFS was responsive to collaborative input. A slight majority agreed that the agency provided open feedback, and was clear about the decisions they make and why they make them (Figure 12). Further, a slight majority agreed there were protocols in place to promote accountability among collaborative participants and between collaborative participants and the USFS (Figure 13).

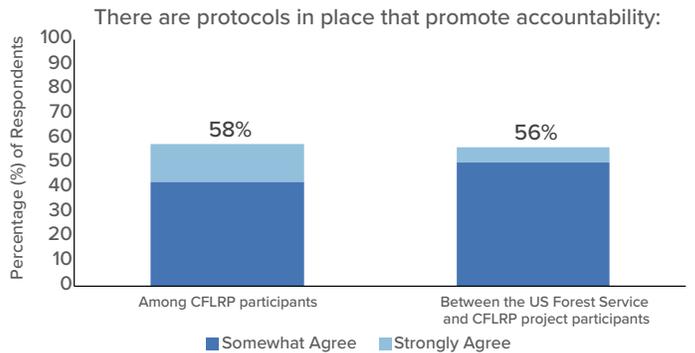


Figure 13 - Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that there are protocols in place to promote accountability among collaborative participants and between the US Forest Service and the collaborative.

Outcomes

We assessed perceived progress on process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes for the Partnership. Notably, the assessment was administered during the first year of the Partnership, and thus several socio-economic and ecological outcomes may not be realized for several years after implementation. Also, several participants did not respond to these questions or chose the option “don’t know/not applicable,” and were subsequently removed from this analysis.

A majority of respondents indicated that the collaborative process enhanced communication among participants, enabled landscape-scale planning, and enhanced planning across boundaries (Figure 14). A slight majority agreed that the process has

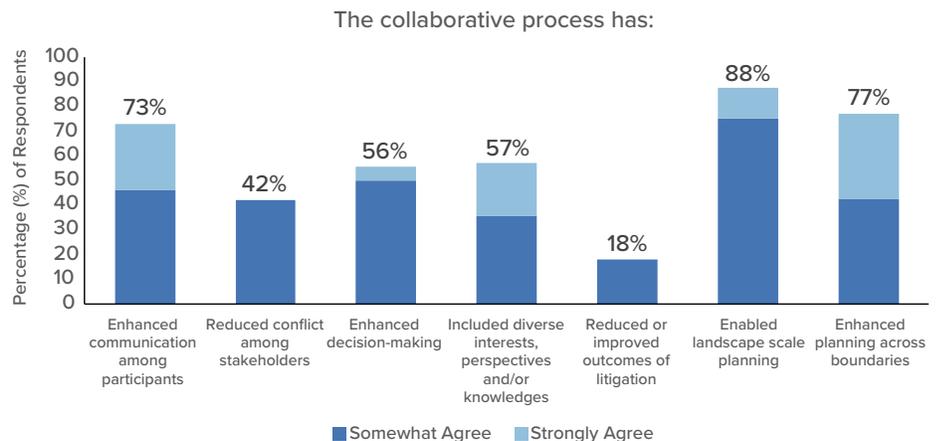


Figure 14 - Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative.

led to enhanced decision making and included diverse interests, perspectives, and knowledges. Less than half agreed that the process has minimized conflict among stakeholders or reduced (or improved outcomes of) litigation. A majority reported moderate to substantial progress in meeting the ecological goals of reducing fuel hazards and improving habitat for focal species (Figure 15). Less than half of the respondents reported the project had made moderate to substantial progress on socio-economic goals (Figure 16).

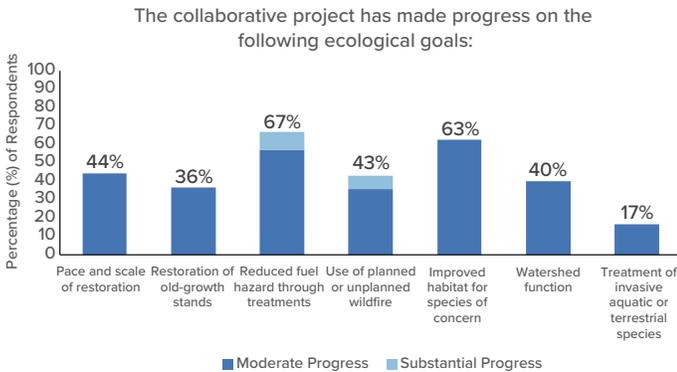


Figure 15 - Percent of respondents who reported “moderate progress” or “substantial progress” towards ecological goals. Note - several participants did not respond to these questions or chose the option “don’t know/not applicable,” and thus were removed from this analysis.

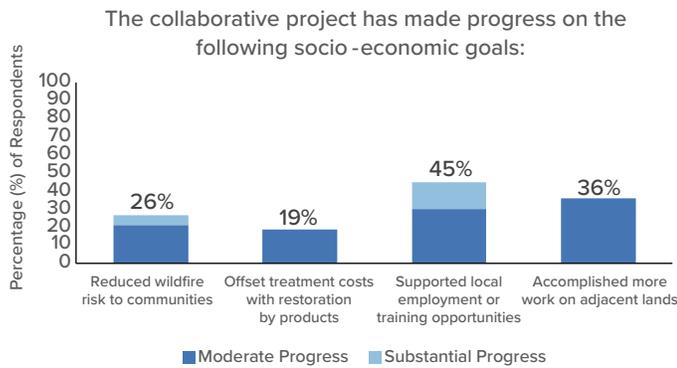


Figure 16 - Percent of respondents who reported “moderate progress” or “substantial progress” towards socio-economic goals. Note - several participants did not respond to these questions or chose the option “don’t know/not applicable,” and thus were removed from this analysis.

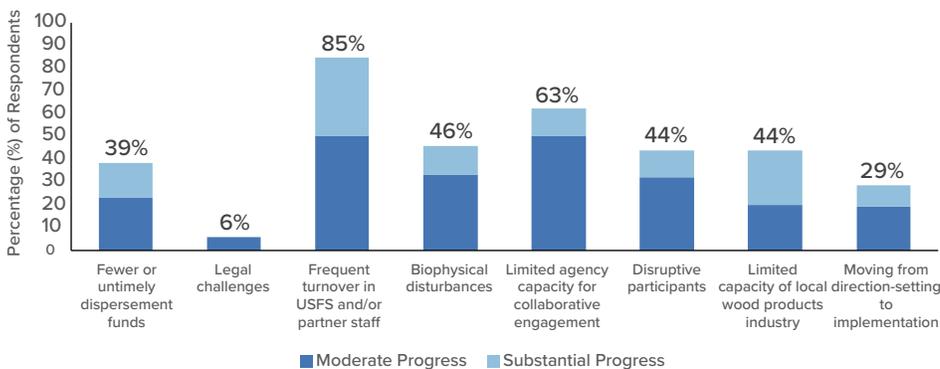


Figure 17 – Percent of respondents who reported disruptions posed “moderate challenges” or “substantial challenges” to collaborative performance and durability.

Disruptions

We developed a list of common challenges CFLRP project participants and other landscape-scale forest collaboratives reported in landscape-scale forest collaborative meeting breakout groups and in the literature. Based on that list, frequent turnover and limited agency capacity for collaborative engagement were the most substantial challenges the Partnership faced at the time of this survey (Figure 17).

Short-term Needs and Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process

We asked participants to identify pressing needs, and make recommendations to improve collaborative process, durability, and performance. Based on open-ended responses and the quantitative data reported herein, we identified four key themes for improvement. These included: 1) stakeholder participation, engagement, and outreach; 2) resource capacity; 3) multi-party monitoring and collaborative adaptive management; and 4) collaborative engagement in planning, prioritization, and implementation within and across boundaries. We expand on these themes by drawing on survey responses and follow-up discussions with the Partnership in May 2022.

Stakeholder Participation, Engagement, and Outreach

Several survey respondents recommended that the Partnership be more inclusive of tribal members and conservation groups. Others recommended engagement with county representatives, USFS District Rangers and staff, and environmental groups. Recreation, tourism, fish and wildlife, and water interests and concerns were also identified as needing more representation within the Partnership. In this vein, some participants wanted to see a more balanced membership composition, and perceived membership interests were skewed towards timber interests. Respondents further suggested that incorporating other interests may necessitate shifting focus towards prescribed fire, non-commercial treatments, carbon sequestration, and protecting old growth forests. Meanwhile, a number of participants suggested the need to maintain or even enhance timber management capacity and implementation (e.g., focusing on small-diameter trees, ramping up NEPA shelf stock, and/or identifying alternative forest products markets).

The topic of participation and inclusion came up again during our presentation of results to the Partnership in May 2022. Some participants reiterated their frustration with perceived exclusive collaborative processes and the need to be more inclusive of the groups, interests, and sectors mentioned above. Members of the Partnership also characterized the complexities they faced in promoting stakeholder participation. On one hand, leaders strived to be inclusive and sought out representation of under-represented groups and perspectives. On the other hand, they acknowledged the need to balance participation among a set group of individuals who, while they may not agree on all strategies, were willing to come to the table and work towards shared priorities and outcomes. Otherwise, progress can stall and participation may wane among groups who perceive no clear path to collective action. While the members of the Leadership and Operations team may sincerely seek to include under-represented groups and perspectives, it can be difficult for those representatives to enter a collaborative environment in progress when norms, expectations, procedures, goals and group values have been previously codified into group governance. A respondent conveyed such difficulty when stating, “the process seems like an echo-chamber of the same ‘good old boys network.’” Meanwhile, another respondent lamented that they felt the collaborative had been an “intentionally exclusive process.” These survey respondents articulate the frustration over the collaborative environment expressed by individuals at the May 2022. Further, some participants emphasized the need to increase transparency about the goals and objectives of the CFLRP and Partnership to help bound participation in ways that may facilitate progress towards feasible and desirable collaborative outcomes. Members should continue to have dialogue around this topic as the Partnership continues to change, evolve, and adapt.

With regards to broader communication and outreach, participants suggested increased public and internal engagement through documentation of success stories, including Story Maps, landowner testimonials, videos, a collective reporting dashboard, and a dedicated website presence for sharing information and institutionalizing knowledge.

Resources, Collaborative Capacity

Several participants emphasized the need to increase collaborative capacity, including funding for planning, implementation, and monitoring across the region. Participants also emphasized the need for increased capacity among workforce/contractors and the USFS to engage meaningfully and develop robust, collaborative processes for planning and implementation, as indicated by one respondent:

Regardless of agreement between stakeholders, projects are dependent on the planning. The Wallowa-Whitman currently has two fish biologists, two botanists, two archaeologists, two hydrologists and two wildlife biologists to plan projects on a forest of over 3 million acres. Planned projects need to be thorough and mindful in order to maintain any trust the Forest Service has earned and that takes time. Greater capacity within the districts will result in larger, solid projects sooner (ex: Malheur National Forest). Less capacity, with the expectation of increased pace and scale, results in poorly designed projects and an erosion of trust among the stakeholders.

Meanwhile, some participants recommended funding to pay salaries of under-represented groups to allow them to meaningfully engage. Others identified funding needs to fill facilitation, coordination, and technical capacity roles:

There is a lot of organizing to make this all work, and we could really use some funding for about 3 FTEs: 1 to manage the public lands collaborative, 1 to manage the cross-boundary work, and 1 to manage the monitoring.

Multi-party Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Many participants emphasized the need to work towards developing a multi-party monitoring plan and adaptive management process for the Partnership and CFLRP. They suggested the need to co-determine desired conditions, identify thresholds that would constitute a change in adaptive management, and establish a collaborative process for adaptive management. In this vein, participants wanted to co-develop processes for sharing monitoring results to encourage shared learning (e.g., Story Maps, field trips, dashboards for outcomes and accomplishments). One participant encouraged the Partnership to consider developing a plan to monitor unplanned disturbances (e.g., treatment impacts to wildfire), stating that the collaborative should “be prepared for opportunistic monitoring of unplanned disturbances.”

Collaborative Engagement in Planning, Prioritization, and Implementation

A large proportion of respondents recommended increased collaboration throughout planning and treatment implementation, which was corroborated by fixed response questions in the survey (Figure 5). Respondents recommended a number of activities to better align expectations for engagement. They acknowledged the need to develop agreement on the purpose, need, and vision for restoration, identify how implementation can be reasonably achieved, and understand how and when to engage on CFLRP implementation and outyear planning

with the USFS. Similarly, participants recommended the Partnership develop a regionwide collaborative prioritization process and associated products (i.e., map delineating treatment priority areas) for multi-year treatment planning on federal and non-federal lands, as illustrated by one respondent:

[We need a] truly collaborative approach to prioritizing projects/implementation areas, with [a] multiyear timeline allowing coordination of public and private land efforts.

As previously mentioned, survey results indicated that a large proportion of respondents felt decision-making processes were not understood by participants (Figure 11). They also felt that the USFS were not clear in the decisions they made (Figure 12). Further, some respondents felt that protocols for accountability were lacking (Figure 13). In other words, participants reported a desire for increased USFS transparency in the decision-making process for the CFLRP, and between the Leadership Team and the broader Partnership.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) deployed an online survey to the Northern Blues CFLRP and Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership (the Partnership) in the fall of 2021 to assess collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as perceived outcomes of collaborative work. Specifically, we assessed: whether the Partnership exhibited characteristics generally associated with healthy, well-functioning, and resilient collaboratives; the extent to which the project has made progress on meeting process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes; what challenges or disruptions affected collaborative performance and durability; and actionable recommendations to improve the collaborative process from respondents' perspectives. The assessment serves as the collaboration assessment for the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy.

The majority of respondents indicated that they agreed about key problems that have impacted their landscape, strategies to solve problems, and the purpose of their collaborative restoration project. Also, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect of others' positions and interests even when they are different from their own. A majority agreed that they themselves, other organizations, and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) were all committed to the process. Mutual commitment, especially among those with decision-making authority, is critical for collaborative durability. The USFS retains decision-making authority in treatment planning and

implementation on USFS-managed land. The agency also gives substantial discretion in decision-making to local units; thus, it is often up to USFS unit-level line officers to make collaboration a priority by providing staff, resources, etc., or not ([Beeton et al., 2022](#)).

Survey respondents emphasized there were strong leaders who worked well across organizations and entities, communicated a collaborative vision, and motivated others to work together. Often, groups benefit from multiple collaborative leaders who represent a diversity of interests across organizational and institutional levels, and provide a variety of functions (e.g., coordination, expertise/experience) ([Emerson and Gerlak, 2014](#); [Ryan and Urgenson, 2019](#)). Having diversity and redundancy in leadership roles is critical for continuity through personnel turnover.

Respondents felt the Partnership had adequate funding, knowledge, facilitation skills, and buy-in to carry out tasks and accomplish their work, and they generally agreed that the USFS was responsive to collaborative input. A majority of respondents also agreed that participants worked together to co-generate knowledge and solve problems. Knowledge and information were reportedly shared equally among participants. A number of activities can be used by collaboratives to support social learning and co-development of knowledge, including field trips, multi-party monitoring, and joint fact-finding missions. Field trips are a critical component of social learning because they provide opportunities for groups to let their guard down and come to common understandings. Field trips can help illustrate how restoration principles translate to operations on the ground and allow collaborative groups to provide feedback on restoration treatments. Joint fact-finding—where stakeholders work together to co-generate local knowledge and translate it into decision-making—provides opportunities to develop contextual understanding of local landscapes to support decisions. Documenting this learning and knowledge exchange is critical to maintaining transparency, equity, and institutional knowledge ([Beeton et al., 2022](#); [Cheng et al., 2015](#)).

However, there were several areas for improvement. Respondents felt some groups and interests were missing from the Partnership and CFLRP. Some respondents wanted to see more collaborative engagement between the Partnership and USFS in planning and implementation of treatments, and opportunities to engage in adaptive management based on monitoring results and feedback. Respondents agreed that they lacked people and time. A large proportion of respondents also noted that decision-making processes were not well understood. Just over

half of the participants agreed the USFS was clear about their decision making and there were protocols in place to promote accountability among the Partnership and between the Partnership and the USFS.

Many of these areas for improvement were reiterated in open-ended responses on the needs and recommendations to improve the collaborative process. Four themes emerged from these responses, including the need for: 1) increased stakeholder participation, engagement, and outreach to participants that have not been historically involved; 2) additional resource capacity, especially time and personnel dedicated to the collaborative; 3) establishing processes and structures for multi-party monitoring and collaborative adaptive management; and 4) increased collaborative engagement in planning, prioritization, and implementation within and across boundaries.

Survey results also indicated that the Partnership has started to make progress on a number of process, socio-economic, and ecological goals of the CFLRP, despite this being the first year of CFLRP funding. Respondents reported enhanced communication, increased landscape-scale planning, and enhanced planning across boundaries. A majority of respondents also reported progress on reducing fuel hazards and improving habitat for focal species. Many of the desired outcomes of the CFLRP may take years to realize.

Frequent turnover and limited agency capacity for collaborative engagement were the most substantial challenges the Partnership faced at the time of the survey. Turnover can undermine relationships and trust, slow progress, and lead to lost institutional knowledge (Beeton et al., 2022; Coleman et al., 2020). Collaborative engagement is often not part of primary job duties for agency staff; when combined with vacant positions and multiple, sometimes conflicting mandates and priorities, agency staff may not have the capacity to engage to the extent that stakeholders expect or desire (Beeton et al., 2022). The Partnership might want to consider whether partners have the capacity to deal with turnover and limited agency capacity, what they have done to address these challenges, and/or what other support is needed to overcome these challenges.

This report provided a baseline assessment of collaborative health and performance among the Partnership. Collaboratives are dynamic - they continue to adapt and evolve as needs or priorities change, and in response to internal and external disruptions (Imperial et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to continue to self-assess collaborative progress, durability, and resilience, so that groups can identify what is working well, what may

need some work, and what support and/or guidance is needed to address challenges to maintain performance. The SWERI will readminister this questionnaire every 2-3 years to track progress and performance through time. There will be multiple opportunities locally, regionally, and nationally for peer-networking and learning events to share successes and challenges and learn together about how to encourage healthy, durable, and resilient collaboration.

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Appendix 1: Report brief for Northern Blues CFLRP and All-Lands Restoration Partnership

The document can be found online at <https://cfri.box.com/s/5uok60e2nvsujkewgrnkchkxxzw6mv8n>



Collaboration Indicator: Summary of findings for the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaboration indicator as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaboration indicator was designed to evaluate collaborative health, function, resilience, and perceived outcomes of collaborative work. The SWERI administered an online questionnaire to members of the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership (henceforth the Partnership) in Fall 2021, the first year of the Partnership. We received 37 usable responses (30% response rate). Figure 1 illustrates what groups were represented in the questionnaire. The purpose of this brief is to:

- summarize high-level findings from the collaboration indicator assessment; and
- document participants’ recommendations to improve collaborative performance and progress.



NBFC 2021 Fall field tour.

Findings

Engaging the right people

Most respondents agreed that a representative cross-section of stakeholders was involved in the project. A minority indicated that some groups and interests were underrepresented. Participants suggested the Partnership could be more inclusive of tribes, conservation and environmental groups, county governments, and district staff. Moving forward, the Partnership will clarify who they are and the goals and objectives of the Partnership in their communications.

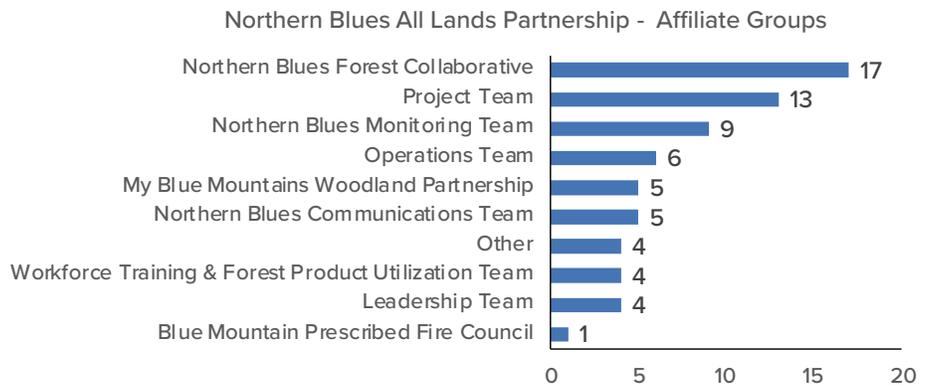


Figure 2 - Respondents’ self-identified team membership within the Northern Blues All Lands Partnership.

Align expectations and clarify capacity for engagement throughout the process

All participants have their own expectations and capacities for collaborative engagement; collaborative engagement opportunities must be tailored accordingly. Respondents expected more collaboration between the US Forest Service, other state, local, private, and tribal partners, and the Partnership during planning and implementation. Specifically, they suggested the need to:

- develop a cross-boundary collaborative prioritization process and products (e.g., priority maps) for treatment planning;
- co-develop zones of agreement and a vision for restoration;
- develop a clear decision-making process between the Partnership and the Leadership Team;
- clarify expectations from partners on how implementation will be accomplished across boundaries and within the CFLRP; and
- periodically reassess expectations and progress of the Partnership.

Trust, relationships, and commitment

Respondents indicated that building trust and relationships was a primary motivator for their engagement in the Partnership, and a majority indicated the collaborative process has fostered trust- and relationship-building, as well as mutual respect of others' positions (Figure 2).

Social learning and adaptive management

Social learning can reduce conflict, increase understanding, and build trust. Most respondents indicated the Partnership has supported co-generation of knowledge to solve problems and provided equal access to knowledge and information. Less agreed the current collaborative process supported adaptive management. Participants recommended the Partnership work to:

- co-identify desired conditions and thresholds for adaptive management;
- develop a collaborative adaptive management process;
- continue opportunities for sharing monitoring results (e.g., field trips, story maps); and
- consider monitoring protocols for (e.g., to learn from wildfire) unplanned disturbances.

Resources

A majority of respondents agreed the Partnership had adequate access to funds, knowledge and expertise, and facilitation skills (Figure 3). Less agreed that the group had adequate access to people and time to accomplish their work. This finding aligns with other forest collaboratives. Often a core group of doers, many of whom are volunteers, are asked to carry out multiple tasks. While some groups function better with a small group of doers, relying on a few individuals may leave groups vulnerable to turnover, which can erode trust and diminish institutional knowledge.

Perceived outcomes

Respondents reported progress on collaborative process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes, including:

- improved communication, enhanced landscape planning, and improved cross boundary planning (Figure 4); and
- reduced fuel hazards and improved habitat.

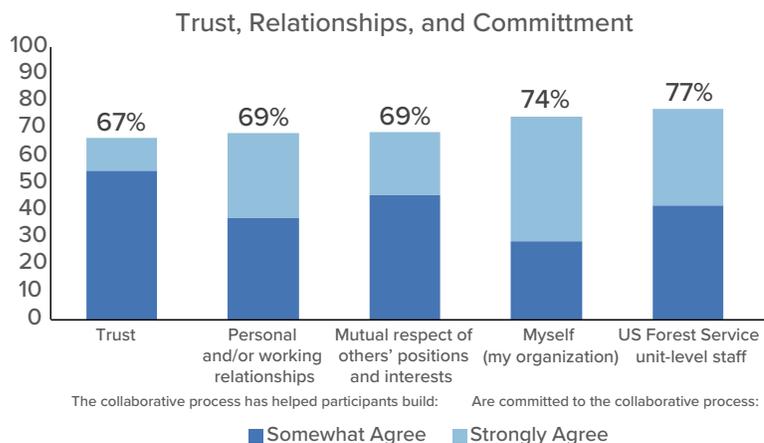


Figure 2 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative process has help build trust, relationships, and respect among members and commitment to the collaborative process among oneself (and their organization) and USFS unit-level staff.

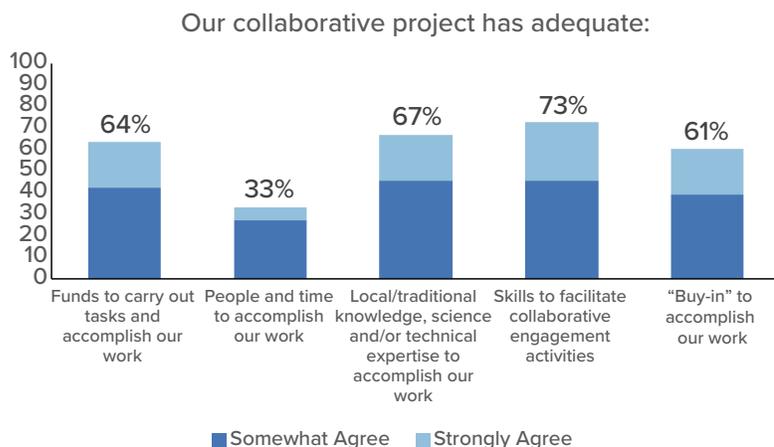


Figure 3 - Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative has adequate: funds; people and time; knowledge and technical expertise; skills; and "Buy-in."

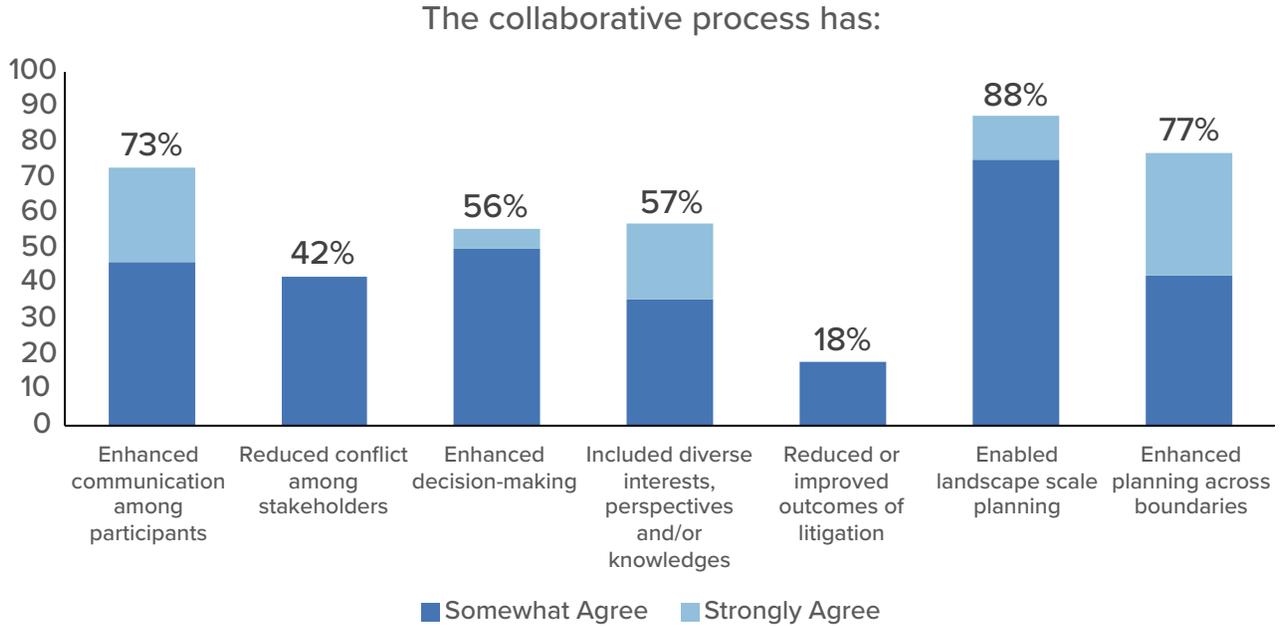


Figure 4 - Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative.

Next steps

This assessment will be readministered every 2-3 years to track collaboration across projects and over time, with the goal of identifying where capacities lie and areas for improvement to target investments and activities accordingly.

Appendix 2: SWERI presentation to Northern Blues CFLRP and All-Lands Restoration Partnership

The document can be found online at <https://cfri.box.com/s/9gw9kdemxm9y19ejdx1pb6qqbu5skb1f>

CFLRP Collaboration Indicator Questionnaire: Summary of findings for the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership

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May, 4, 2022 – N. Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership



Objectives for Today

1. Document primary successes and challenges reported in collaboration indicator questionnaire
2. Discuss if/how results resonate with webinar participants
3. Identify needs to improve collaborative progress and performance
4. Feedback on pilot process
5. Next steps and deliverables



Goals and Expectations

Engage and participate in discussion!

Will pause for facilitated discussion around 4 key themes

1. Getting the right people engaged
2. Aligning expectations for collaborative engagement throughout the process
3. Social learning - collaborative monitoring and adaptive management
4. Feedback on pilot process, roll out, and findings



Background and Context CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy

- 2021 – USFS led a collaborative process to develop national common monitoring strategy
- Core set of social, ecological, and economic indicators
- Required of all newly authorized and extension projects
- Meant to:
 - supplement but not replace local multi-party monitoring plans
 - Provide standardization across projects

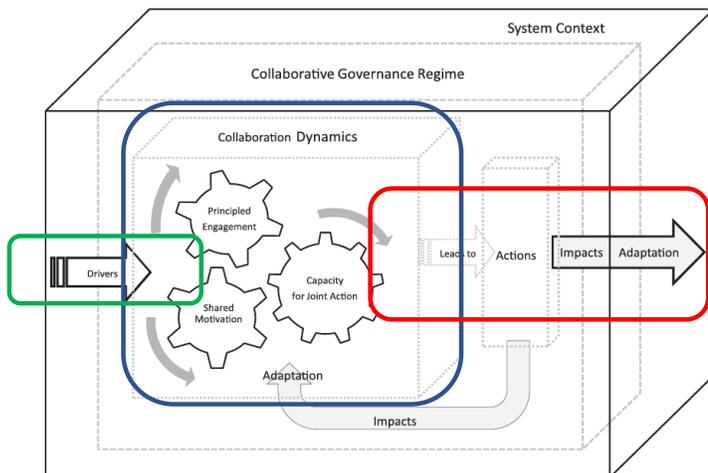


Background and Context

National Monitoring Strategy - Collaboration

Question	How well is CFLRP encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach?
Indicator	Indicator questions to include collaborative health, function, and resilience as well as perceived outcomes of collaborative work.
Capacity Needed	Instrument will be developed nationally. Results will be provided at project-level. Regional support for providing the “so what?” of the instrument responses encouraged
Reporting Mechanism/Tool	Instrument administered to CFLRP collaboratives to complete.
Frequency of reporting	Every 2-3 years

Framework for Collaborative Governance



- 1) Collaboration dynamics – i.e., health, function, and resilience
 - Principled engagement – getting the right people involved, shared understanding
 - Shared motivation – trust, relationships, commitment
 - Capacity for joint action – leadership, resources, decision-making processes
- 2) Perceived impacts/outcomes
 - Process
 - Socio-economic
 - Ecological
- 3) Disruptions that affect collaborative performance and durability
 - Turnover
 - Disruptive members – conflict
 - Industry capacity
 - Legal or policy changes

Discussion Time: 1. Getting the right people engaged

- Do these results resonate with you?
What might we be missing?
- What strategies might be employed to increase engagement with the groups identified?
- What are barriers to increasing this engagement?

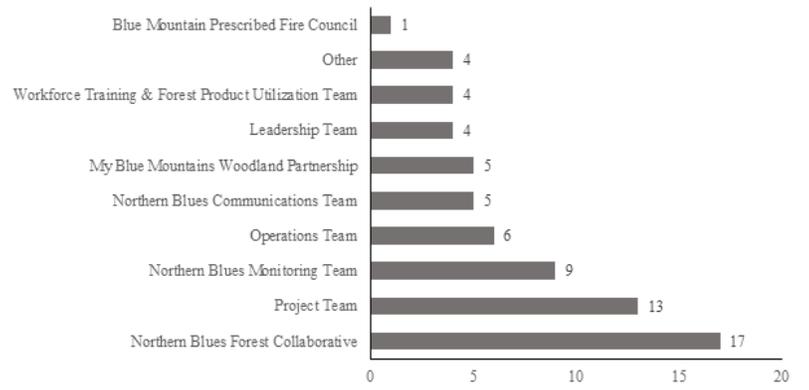


N. Blues Pilot - Approach

Online Anonymous Questionnaire

- Grounded in findings from first 10 years of CFLRP lessons learned and related questionnaires (Beeton et al. 2020)
- 30 *mostly* close ended statements
- Pilot tested with N. Blues participants and Colorado Front Range CFLRP
- Distribution – To All-Lands Restoration Partnership Listserv in Fall 2021
- 30% of All-Lands Restoration Partnership completed survey - 37 usable responses

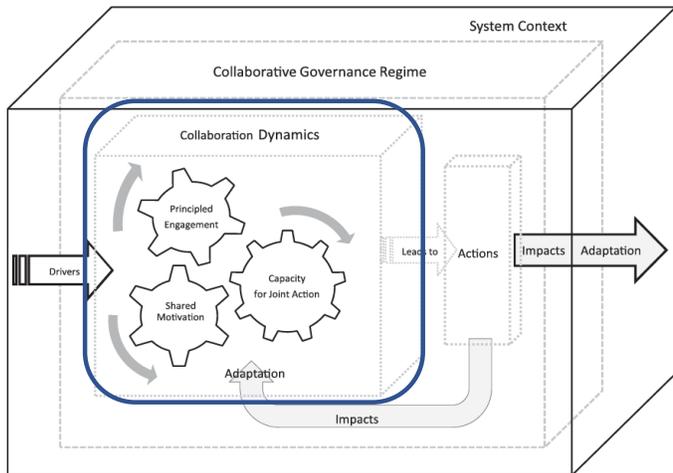
Northern Blues All Lands Partnership - Affiliate Groups



Collaboration Dynamics

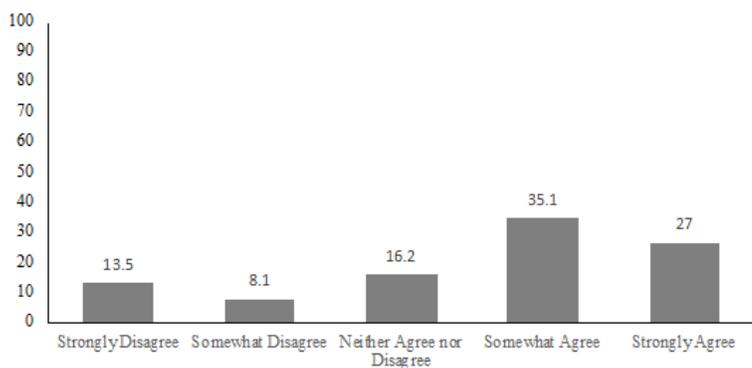
1) Collaboration dynamics – i.e., health, function, and resilience

- Principled engagement – getting the right people involved, shared understanding
- Shared motivation – trust, relationships, commitment
- Capacity for joint action – leadership, resources, decision-making processes



1. Getting the right people engaged

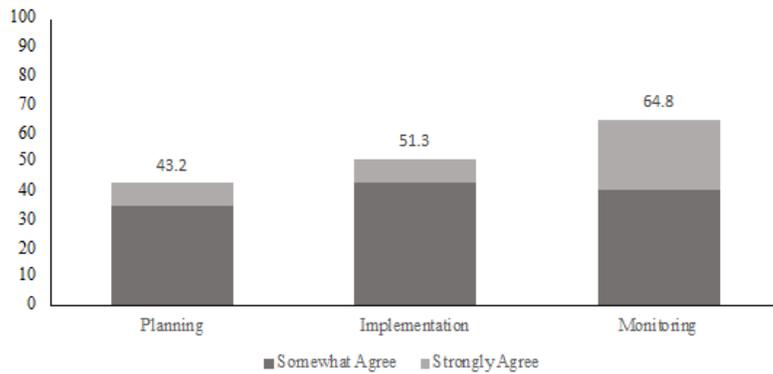
A representative cross-section of stakeholders are involved in this CFLRP project



- Majority agreed that a representative cross-section of stakeholders involved
- Increase engagement with:
 - Tribes and tribal interests
 - Conservation and environmental groups
 - County representatives
 - District Rangers and staff
- Some suggested participation skewed towards timber interests – Needs to be more inclusive of:
 - Recreation and tourism
 - Fish and wildlife
 - Water interests and concerns
- Increase internal and public communication

2. Aligning expectations for engagement throughout the process

CFLRP participants and the US Forest Service collaborate as much as I would like in:



- Collaboration required in planning, implementation, and monitoring
- YET, not defined in CFLRP/FLRA
- Results in different expectations for collaboration
- Some work needed to align expectations for collaboration in:
 - Planning
 - Implementation

2. Aligning expectations for engagement throughout the process

Recommendations

- Develop a regionwide collaborative prioritization process and products (i.e., maps) for for multi-year treatment planning
- Align partner expectations on:
 - Zones of agreement on restoration vision
 - How to accomplish implementation
 - How and where to engage on CFLRP implementation and outyear planning with the USFS
- Transparency in decision-making processes throughout planning, implementation, and monitoring
 - Among CFLRP and USFS
 - Between NBALP and Leadership Team
- Periodically reassess goals, expectations, and progress of collaborative

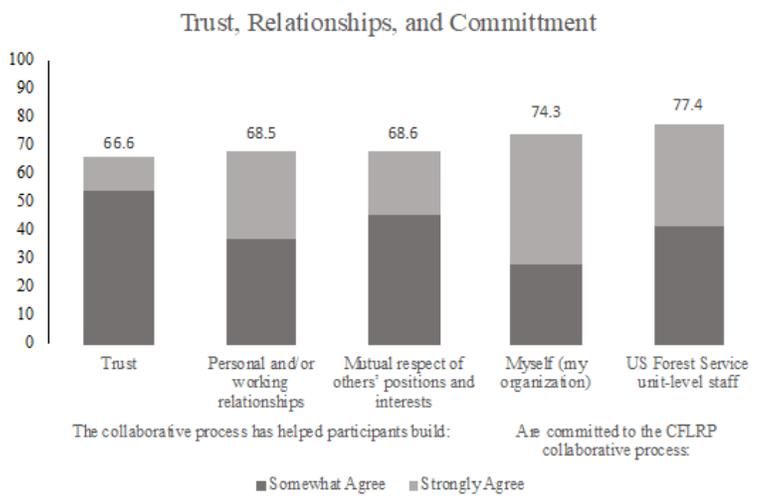


Discussion Time: 2. Aligning expectations for engagement throughout the process

- Do these results resonate with you?
What might we be missing?
- Do these recommendations seem feasible and desirable?
- Where might you need help implementing these recommendations?

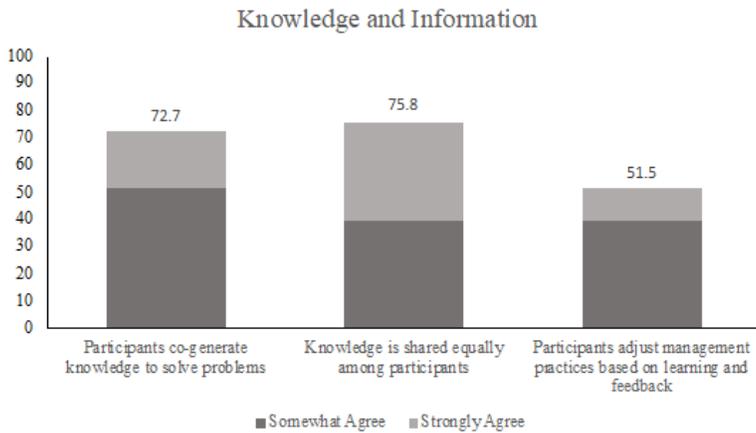


Trust, Relationships, Respect, and Commitment



- Social capital – the “glue” that holds groups together
- Commitment among USFS especially important as decision-making authority
- Survey respondents
 - Building trust and relationships was primary motivators for engagement
 - Process has built trust, relationships, and respect
 - Participants are committed

3. Social learning: Collaborative monitoring and adaptive management



- Social learning occurs through repeated interactions among participants
- Can reduce conflict, increase understanding, action, and trust
- 3 Criteria
 - Participants work together to co-develop shared understanding and knowledge
 - Knowledge and information is accessible to all members
 - Learning used to inform adaptive management

3. Social learning: Collaborative monitoring and adaptive management

Recommendations

- Clearly identified desired conditions
- Identify thresholds for adaptive management
- Process, or framework, for collaborative adaptive management
- Sharing monitoring results for effective learning (e.g., field trips, summary reports, story maps), shared understanding, and informing AM
- Monitoring of unplanned disturbances
- Dashboard for outcomes/accomplishments

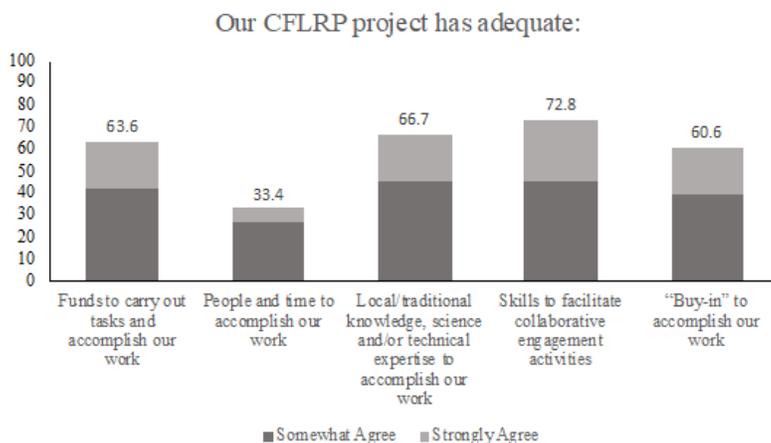


Discussion Time: 3. Collaborative monitoring and adaptive management

- Do these results resonate with you? What might we be missing?
- Do these recommendations seem feasible and desirable?
- Where might you need help implementing these recommendations?

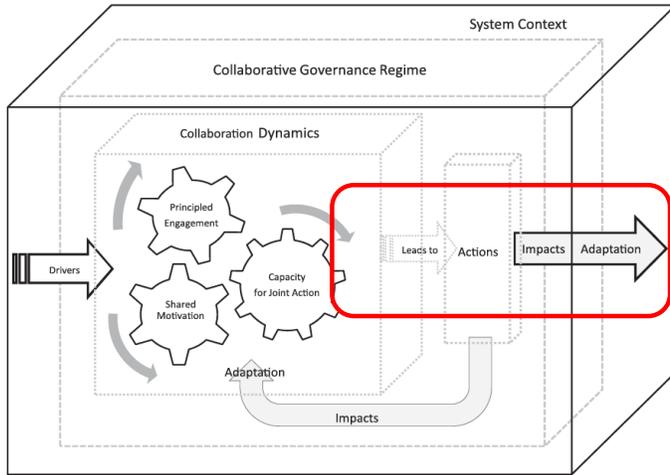


Collaborative capacity - Resources



- Majority agreed adequate:
 - Funding
 - Local, traditional, and/or scientific knowledge and technical capacity
 - Facilitation skills
 - Buy-in from a core group
- Need people and time to accomplish work!
- Struggled with
 - Turnover among agency and partnership staff; and
 - Limited agency capacity to engage

Collaborative Governance Perceived Outcomes to date

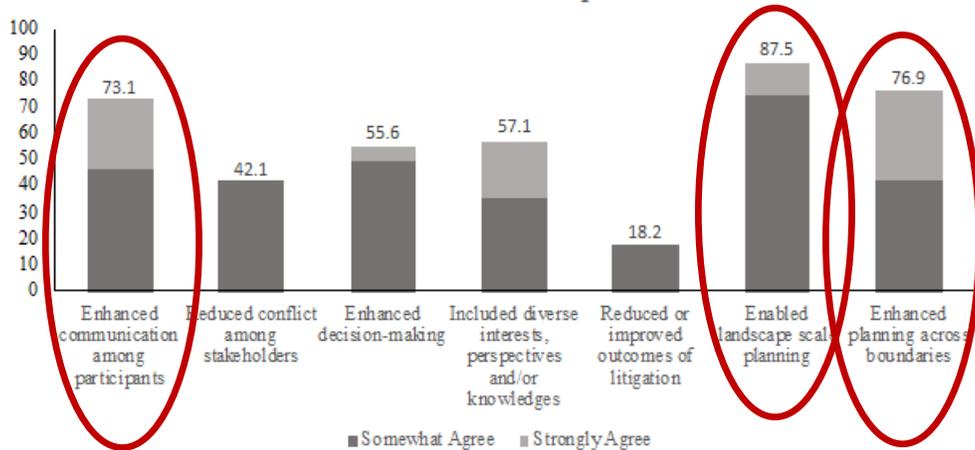


2) Perceived impacts/outcomes

- Process
- Socio-economic
- Ecological

Outcomes Collaborative process outcomes

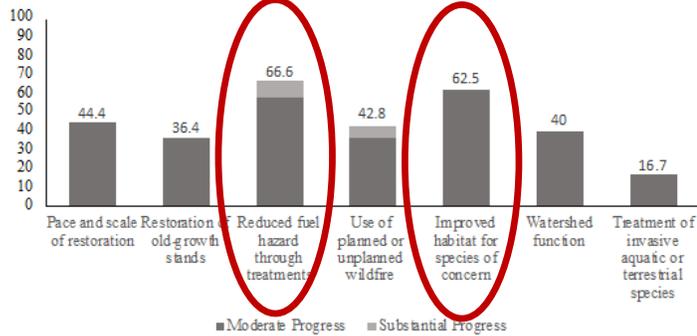
The CFLRP collaborative process has:



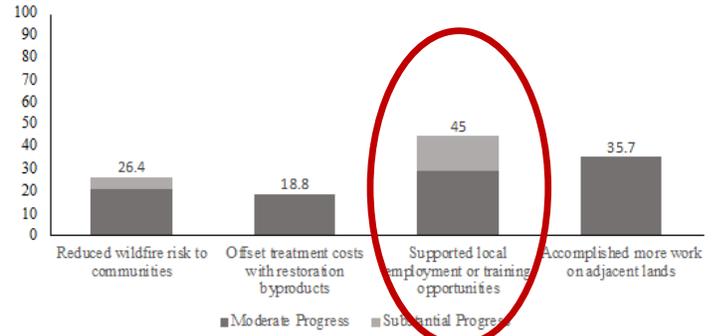
Outcomes

Socio-economic and ecological outcomes

The CFLRP project has made progress on the following ecological goals of the CFLRP:



The CFLRP project has made progress on the following socio-economic goals of the CFLRP:



Discussion Time: 4. Feedback on pilot process, roll out, and findings

- What worked well with this pilot assessment?
- What could we improve?
- Is there anything we did not ask that we should have?



What should you expect next

Short-term

- Presentation slide deck
- Larger report with links, examples from literature
- 1-2 page brief on questionnaire findings and discussion today

Longer-term

- Peer-learning sessions with new CFLRP cohort!

Happy to engage in follow-up conversations and/or provide support if/when needed!

Iterative process – needs, capacities will change – periodically take stock and we will reassess in 2023!



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