Collaborative Governance Assessment Report

FOR THE NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON CFLRP

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SWERI Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes
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Document Development: In FY21, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (Forest Service) led a collaborative process to develop a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy that will be required for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects under the CFLRP. The Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance within and across CFLRP projects through time. The collaborative assessment is intended to assess whether CFLRP is encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach, and addresses question #12 of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. We developed an online, confidential survey that was administered to CFLRP project participants. With support from the USDA Forest Service Forest Management, Range Management, and Vegetation Ecology program, SWERI conducted regional webinars to introduce the assessment and identify project-level points of contact, which were followed by in-depth engagement with key contacts to determine recruitment strategies, administration timing, and project-specific questions. In FY22 and FY23, SWERI will be collecting baseline information for all newly authorized and reauthorized projects. SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects. The Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University funded survey administration using state funding (Arizona Board of Regents through the Technology, Research and Innovation Fund), which was used as a match to annual federal appropriations to the SWERI.

Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI)
The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes include three university-based restoration institutes: the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI), the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), and the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) in Arizona. These institutes were congressionally appointed in 2004 by the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (PL 108-317), and the institutes work together to develop a program of applied research and service to help create healthy forests, prevent uncharacteristic wildfires, sustain the resiliency of water supplies to wildfires, and create jobs. The SWERI receive funding from five primary sources: 1) federal appropriations; 2) additional federal funding (e.g., the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act); 3) state appropriations; 4) in-kind support from host universities; and 5) extramural funding such as grants and agreements. The SWERI receive federal appropriations under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act administered through the Forest Service. In accordance with federal law and USDA policy, these institutions are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights Room 326-A, Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice & TDD).

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The Ecological Restoration Institute is nationally recognized for mobilizing the unique assets of a university to help solve the problem of unnaturally severe wildfire and degraded forest health throughout the American West. ERI serves diverse audiences with objective science and implementation strategies that support ecological restoration and climate adaptation on western forest landscapes.

Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI), Colorado State University (CSU)
The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute is a science-based outreach and engagement organization hosted by the Department of Forest and Rangeland Stewardship and the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. Colorado State University (CSU) is a land-grant university with a mission to provide teaching, research, public service, and engagement that CFRI strives to uphold. CFRI was established by Congress as part of the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes to serve as a bridge between researchers, managers, and stakeholders working to restore and enhance the resilience of forest ecosystems to wildfires in Colorado, the Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Intermountain West. CFRI leads collaborations between researchers, managers, and stakeholders to generate and apply locally relevant, actionable knowledge to inform forest management strategies. CFRI's work informs forest conditions assessments, management goals and objectives, monitoring plans, and adaptive management processes.

NAU Land Acknowledgment: Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.

CSU Land Acknowledgment: Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed. CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.

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Executive Summary

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy. The collaborative governance 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 North Central Washington CFLRP in spring 2023, which included members of the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC, henceforth referred to as the Collaborative) and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Overall, there was agreement on most indicators, demonstrating that the collaborative process was working well and accomplishing goals, although some responses indicated disagreement. There was strong agreement that a representative cross-section of individuals who have a stake in the issues were involved in the Collaborative, although tribal perspectives were not represented in the survey responses. A majority of respondents agreed that there was a shared understanding of the purpose and key problems addressed by the CFLRP project and strategies used to address those key problems. Most respondents' expectations were met in collaborating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service hereafter) through planning, but not in implementation or monitoring. Respondents strongly agreed that the collaborative process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect. A strong majority of respondents trusted the group to achieve desired outcomes and believed that they and other partners were committed to the collaborative process. A majority of respondents indicated that leaders worked well across organizations and entities, helped maintain a common vision, and motivated others to work together. Participants agreed that there were opportunities to co-generate knowledge and be flexible when there were personnel changes, although there was concern about flexibility in the face of landscape change such as wildfire. Respondents felt that the Collaborative had adequate technical expertise, time, and funds, but were evenly split on their perception of adequate facilitation skills. Respondents perceived that collaborative participants were held accountable, and that protocols were fair, equitable, and used appropriately.

Most respondents thought that the CFLRP project was moving toward achieving many desired collaborative, ecological, and socio-economic goals, including but not limited to including diverse perspectives, enhancing communication, enabling landscape-scale planning, improving restoration pace and scale, reducing fuel hazards, and improving watershed function. There was not agreement that progress has been made on such goals as minimizing conflict, restoring old growth, improving fire use, improving habitat, controlling invasive species, offsetting treatment costs, supporting local employment, and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands. Respondents were evenly split on their perception of progress toward the CFLRP enhancing decision-making, minimizing litigation, and enabling cross-boundary planning.

Respondents indicated some areas where there was room for improvement and made pertinent recommendations. The Collaborative has dealt with several disruptions, such as moving from direction-setting to implementation, personnel turnover, biophysical disruptions like wildfire, conflict among participants, and limited industry and agency capacity. Commenters also noted challenges with variable Forest Service communication and leadership direction, slow implementation, and lengthy NEPA processes. Only a minority of respondents thought that existing protocols were understood, that participants understood how to inform Forest Service decisions, and that the Forest Service was responsive to feedback from the Collaborative. Three key recommendations emerged: 1) clarify protocols and enhance facilitation, 2) clarify input processes and increase input in project prioritization, and 3) move beyond planning toward collaborative adaptive management.

The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects, with the goal of gauging capacities and identifying areas for improvement.

Oly Mingo

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 U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service hereafter). In 2021, CFLRP coordinators, 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 Forest Service Washington Office requested assistance from the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in developing and deploying an assessment tool to track collaborative governance. 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. To directly inform the components of the collaboration assessment, we incorporated stakeholder feedback and questions of interest developed while drafting the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy. Our objectives were to:

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 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 administered the collaborative governance assessment—an online survey—to the North Central Washington CFLRP, which includes the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC, henceforth the Collaborative) and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, in the spring of 2023. While the Collaborative has existed since 2013, it received CLFRP funding beginning in 2022. The Collaborative formed around interest in upland watershed management by groups such as the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board and the Yakama Nation; a need to increase capacity of the Forest Service beyond fire management; and the Forest Service's desire for help in project prioritization. Thus far, the Collaborative has focused largely on planning and has more recently moved into increased implementation pace and scale.

The report herein summarizes findings from the collaborative governance assessment. We have also integrated, where appropriate, feedback during our final presentation of the survey results and open discussion with the Collaborative and Forest Service, as well as

[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.usda.gov/restoration/documents/cflrp/CMS-Fact-Sheet-final-20221013.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).

information gathered during group interviews on the Collaborative context. See Appendix 1 for a report brief summarizing our findings, and Appendix 2 for a presentation we led with the Collaborative and Forest Service in November 2023. We briefly highlight the approach, followed by a baseline assessment of findings and document recommendations from respondents to improve the collaborative process.

Approach

We developed an online survey 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 survey 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. 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 flexible, 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 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, project proposals, 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[4]; and 3) a survey administered to 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 toward 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 open-ended survey questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

We developed a standardized survey in the online survey tool Qualtrics that consisted of 21, mostly closed-ended statements using a Likert scale. SWERI piloted the assessment with and elicited feedback from the Northern Blues All-Lands Restoration Partnership and Northern Blues CFLRP project participants (n=37), as well as participants of the Colorado Front Range CFLRP (n=3) in FY21 (Beeton et al., 2022).

In FY22, SWERI and the Forest Service held regionally focused webinars to introduce the assessment and identify key points of contact for each newly authorized and reauthorized project to help with recruiting participants, scheduling the assessment, and identifying project-specific questions of interest that were appended to the standardized survey, which is outlined in our standard operating procedures document.[5] Drawing on experience from Northern Blues and conversations with the next round of CFLRP projects rolling out the survey, SWERI developed a menu of 15 possible appended questions that the projects could add to the end of the standard survey to capture additional information of interest to the project. These questions addressed collaborative structure, participation and engagement, general expectations, successes, and challenges, and acceptance of wildfire mitigation and management techniques. The points of contact also identified key informants to complete a group interview or worksheet to answer questions about collaborative function that provided context for the interpretation of results. These questions included information on collaborative governance structure, rules for participation, dispute resolution processes, defining partnership vision, methods of collaboration with the Forest Service on planning, implementation, and monitoring, and a brief history of the collaborative. The initial survey results were presented to each CFLRP project to give survey respondents the opportunity to participate in an open discussion and provide feedback for this final report.

The Forest Service's Eastern Washington Area Ecologist and the Collaborative's facilitator provided support in recruiting participants and administering the survey through the Collaborative listserv in March 2023. The survey was open for just over 7 weeks. We received 23 usable responses, representing more than 44% 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. The first section includes responses related to respondents' affiliations, motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project, level of engagement, and the degree to which respondents felt the project was collaborative. 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

[4] https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Collaboration-Indicator-Survey-Results-2020-publish.pdf
[5] https://cfri.box.com/s/hfu5cdk599j5gp5ixphm2qj7gdp4h1ef

outcomes, disruptions that are challenging to collaborative progress and performance, and recommendations to improve the process. Finally, we present results from the appended question (Appendix 3) set that was developed in coordination with key points of contact affiliated with the North Central Washington CFLRP. 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. Some participants did not respond to certain questions or chose the option, "don't know/ not applicable," and thus their responses were removed from the analysis of those questions.

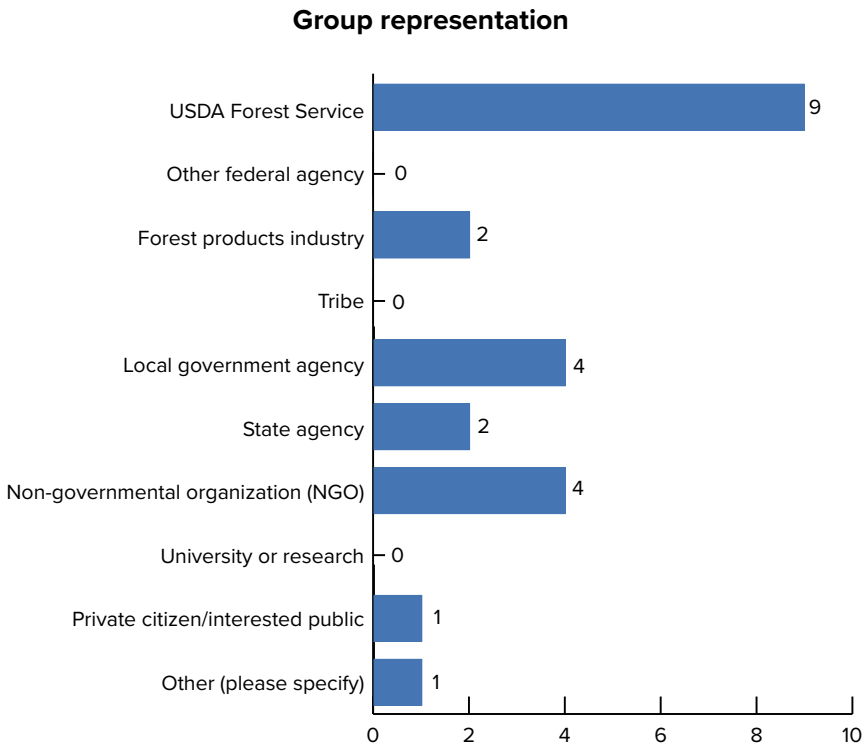

Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations.

Introductory questions

The majority of participants represented the Forest Service (39%), local government agencies (21%), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs, 21%) (Figure 1). There were no respondents representing tribes, other federal agencies outside the Forest Service, or university or research entities, and the respondent classified as "other" represented a conservation district. The Collaborative is comprised of representatives from 22 entities, including the local conservation districts and counties, nonprofits (The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Northwest, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, etc.), the forest products industry (Boise Cascade, American Forest Resource Council, Vaagen Brothers), state agencies (Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife), the Yakama Nation, and local community organizations ("Our Members," NCWFHC). The most frequently reported motivations for being involved in the CFLRP project were to restore forest resiliency (78% of respondents), to increase the pace and scale of restoration work (48%), and to reduce community wildfire risk (35%) (Figure 2). The level of engagement in the CFLRP project during the past 12 months varied among participants – 91% reported that they were

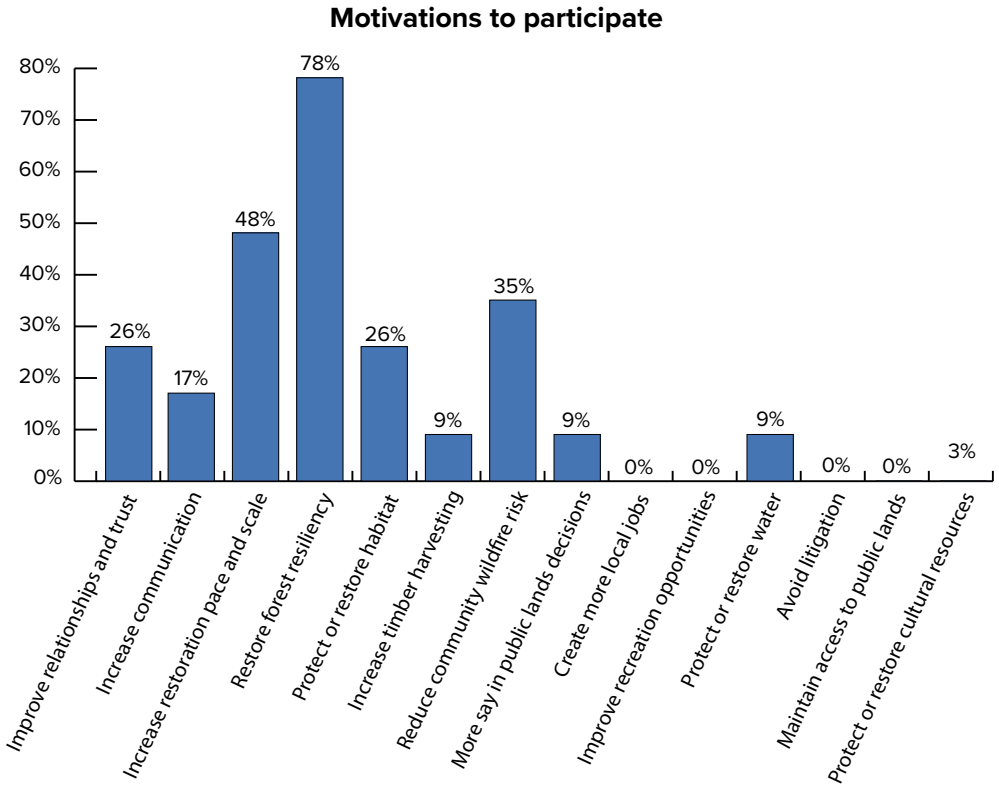

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who identified the associated motive as reason for their participation in the collaborative. Note – respondents were able to select multiple motives.

moderately to highly engaged, while 9% reported low engagement, and no one reported that they were not engaged (Figure 3). Those respondents who reported still being engaged in the CFLRP project recorded an average of 3.5 years of engagement.

We asked respondents to reflect on the degree to which they thought the CFLRP project was collaborative (on a scale from not collaborative at all to very collaborative), which we defined in the survey as:

> *Collaboration occurs when multiple parties come together to address problems that could not be achieved by acting alone. Effective collaboration should typically include: inclusive and diverse stakeholder interaction throughout the process; venues for open communication and negotiation about values, interests, and appropriate management actions; and opportunities for social learning.*

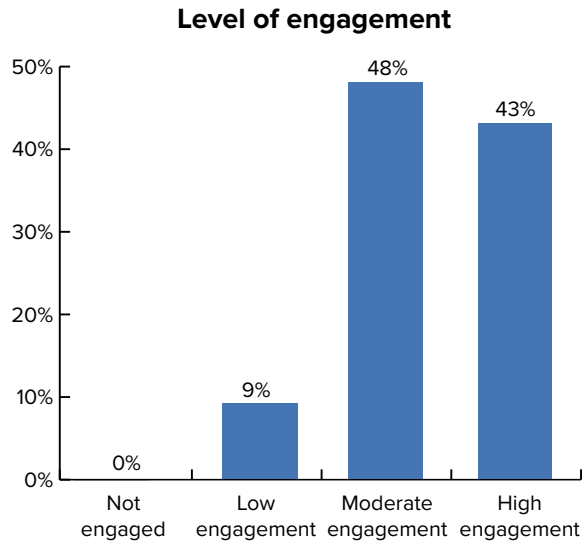

Figure 3: Percent of respondents who rated their involvement in this project as "Not engaged," "Low engagement," "Moderate engagement" or "High engagement."

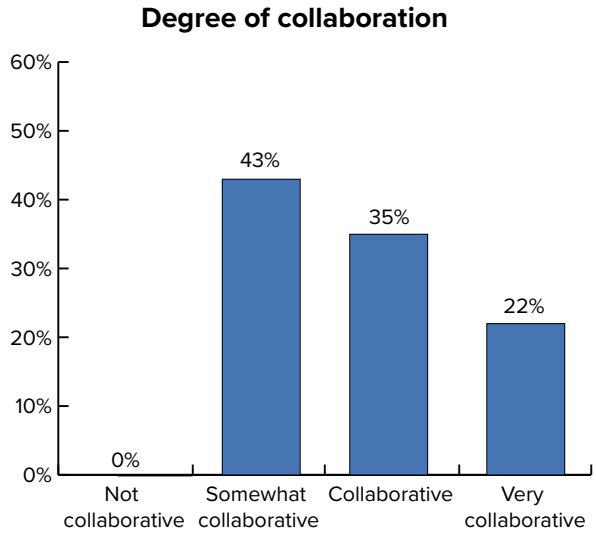

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who reported this project to be "Not collaborative," "Somewhat collaborative," "Collaborative" or "Very collaborative."

A strong majority of respondents (73%) indicated the CFLRP project has been collaborative to very collaborative (Figure 4).

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 strong majority of respondents (85%) agreed that a representative cross-section of individuals who had a stake in the issues and outcomes of the project were involved (Figure 5). A strong majority of respondents (67%) agreed that participants worked together to identify shared interests and concerns, and a smaller majority (53%) felt the collaborative process created a neutral space for CFLRP participants to openly discuss controversial issues (Figure 5).

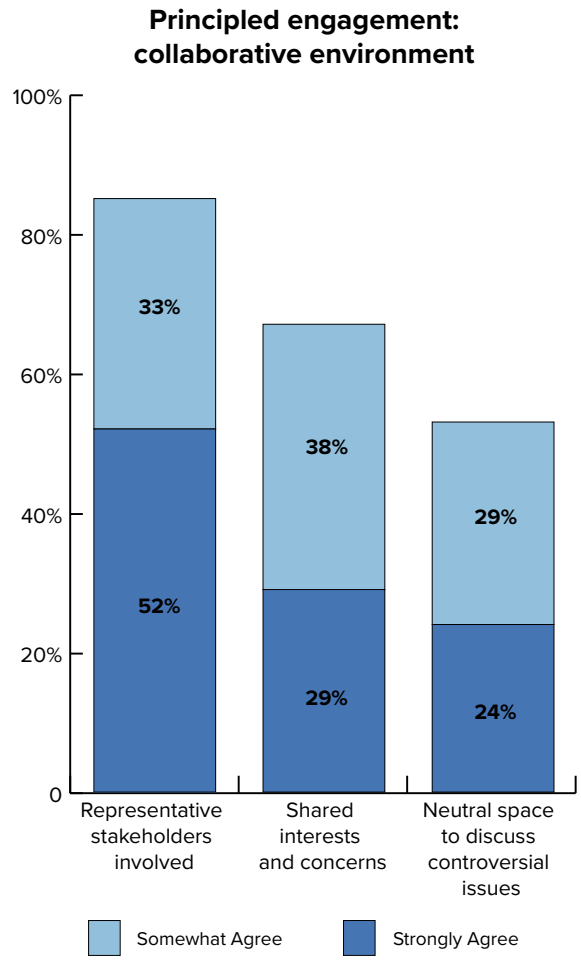

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that representative stakeholders are involved, stakeholders have shared interests and concerns, and the collaborative is a neutral space to discuss controversial issues.

A strong majority of respondents indicated that participants had a shared understanding of the problems that impacted their landscape (71%) and the purpose of the CFLRP project (82%) (Figure 6). A smaller majority (55%) felt that participants agreed on shared strategies to solve these identified problems.

A strong majority of respondents (60%) felt that the level of collaboration between the Collaborative and the Forest Service met their expectations during planning (e.g., environmental analysis, NEPA) (Figure 7). In contrast, a minority indicated that collaboration between project participants and the Forest Service met their expectations during implementation (e.g., post-NEPA, operations) (35%) and monitoring (31%). Interviewees indicated that while the pace and scale of restoration were increasing, only one project (the Mission Project) has been implemented from start to finish with Collaborative input. Commenters noted that the emphasis in the past 10 years of the Collaborative has been on planning, and shifting into implementation has highlighted some challenges the Collaborative had not yet faced and led them to reevaluate Collaborative protocols (see "Institutional Arrangements" below).

Shared Motivation

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

A strong majority of participants agreed the collaborative process helped build trust in each other (65%), relationships (80%), and mutual respect of others' positions and interests (65%) (Figure 8). A strong majority (70%) of participants also trusted the group's ability to achieve desired actions and outcomes (Figure 8). Respondents indicated that they (90%), the Forest Service unit level staff (76%), and other project participants (63%) were committed to the collaborative process (Figure 9).

Capacity for Joint 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.

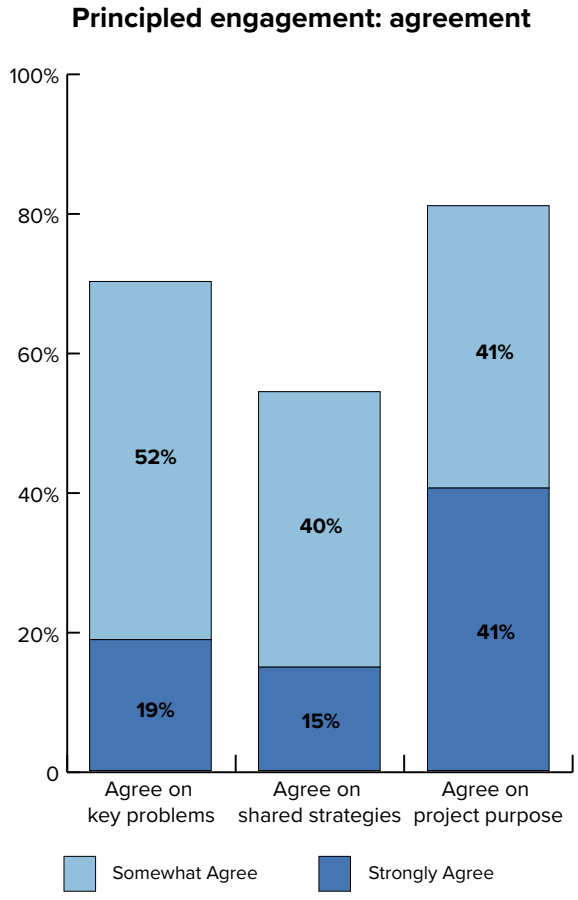

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on the key problems that impact the landscape, strategies to solve problems, and purpose of the collaborative.

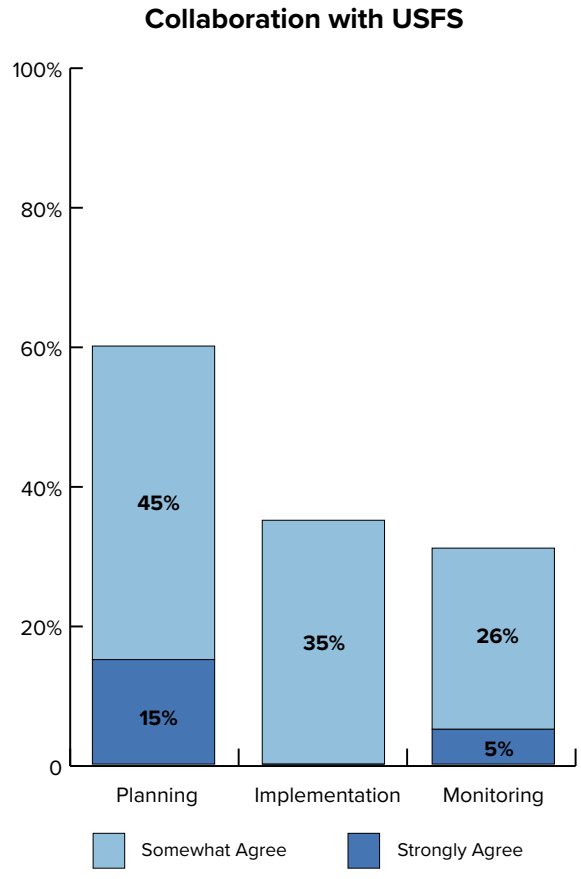

Figure 7: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that collaboration between members and the Forest Service has met their expectations during planning, implementation, and monitoring.

A majority of respondents agreed that the Collaborative had leaders who worked well with other people (85%), maintained and communicated a common vision and direction (70%), and motivated others to work together (58%) (Figure 10).

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 Collaborative, a majority of respondents agreed that the CFLRP process provided opportunities to co-generate knowledge to learn and solve problems together (58%). Only a minority (47%) of respondents thought that knowledge and information were shared equally among participants. Respondents were evenly split in their perceptions that participants were committed to informing adjustments to management practices based on learning and feedback (i.e., adaptive management). A strong majority (60%) felt that participants had the flexibility to alter course when landscape conditions change (e.g., wildfire affects a planning unit). In contrast, a minority (39%) felt that participants had the flexibility to alter course when the collaborative itself changes (e.g., new faces or priorities) (Figure 11).

Resources

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

A strong majority of participants agreed that the project had adequate access to funds (78%), time (70%), and technical expertise (85%) to carry out tasks and accomplish their work. Respondents perceived the most limiting resource to be adequate facilitation skills, with 50% agreeing that the group had adequate facilitation skills to get desired work done (Figure 12).

Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements are the rules of the game. They include processes, protocols, and structures needed to manage

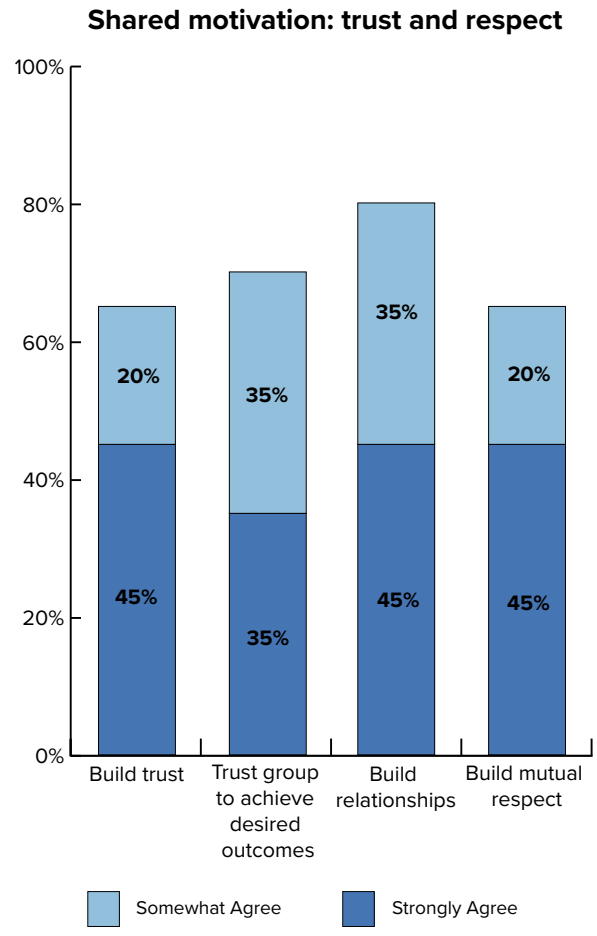

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative process has helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect, as well as the extent to which participants trust the group to achieve desired outcomes.

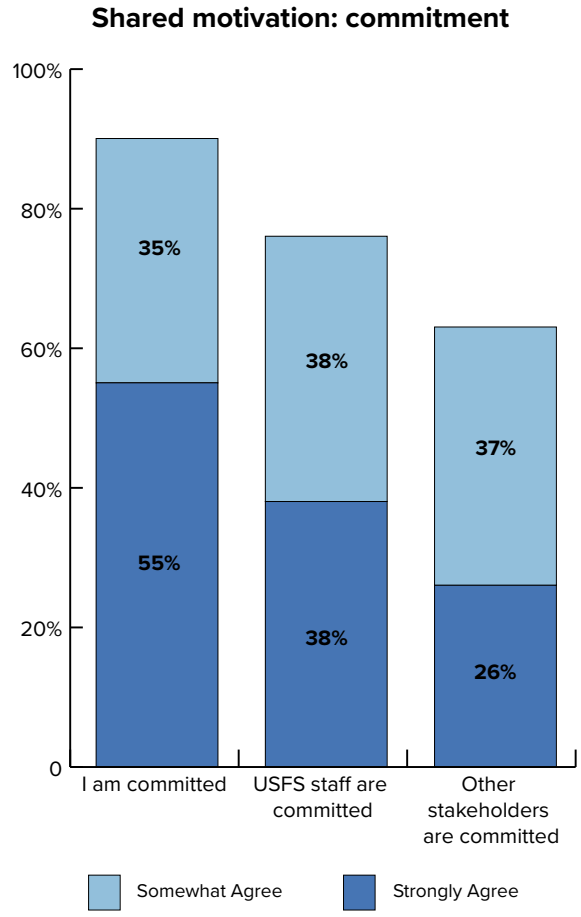

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that they, the USFS, and other stakeholders are committed to the process.

collaboration over time. They should be clearly understood, perceived as fair and equitable, and include accountability mechanisms within and between entities.

A slight majority (55%) of survey respondents somewhat to strongly agreed there were protocols in place that promote accountability among CFLRP participants, yet only 42% agreed that there were protocols in place that promote accountability between the Forest Service and CFLRP project participants (e.g., decision rules, charters, memoranda of understanding) (Figure 13). A majority agreed these protocols were fair and equitable (53%) and used appropriately (63%) (Figure 13). In contrast, a minority of respondents (43%) agreed that protocols were clearly understood among participants (Figure 13). Existing protocols call for making decisions by consensus, which means that "all members agree that their organization/agency will support a recommendation or decision and endorse its implementation." If consensus is not reached, then those in opposition of the decision should offer an alternative proposal, and if consensus is still not reached, "the attempted consensus decision and any divergent opinion will be recorded" (NCWFHC "Operating Protocols" 2019). Commenters noted that at the time of the survey there was a governance subgroup that was revisiting the operating protocols in order to "modernize" them and create a more structured process around what to do when consensus is not achieved and how to convey this to the Forest Service.

Less than a third of respondents (31%) felt that project participants understood when and what collaborative input was useful to inform Forest Service decisions (Figure 14). Further, a slight minority (46%) reported the Forest Service was responsive to collaborative input, while a slight majority (54%) agreed the agency was clear with CFLRP project participants about the decisions they make and why they make them (Figure 14).

Outcomes

We assessed perceived progress on process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes for the Collaborative. Notably, the assessment was administered in 2023 after starting the CFLRP project in 2022, and thus several CFRLP outcomes may not be realized for several years after implementation, although the Collaborative itself was established in 2013.

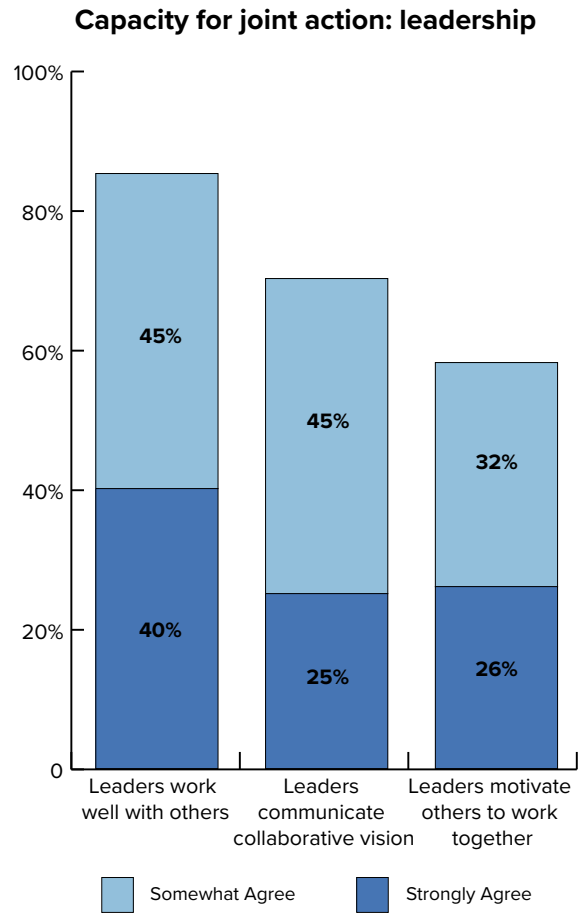

Figure 10: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the leaders work well with others, communicate a common vision and direction, and motivate others to work together.

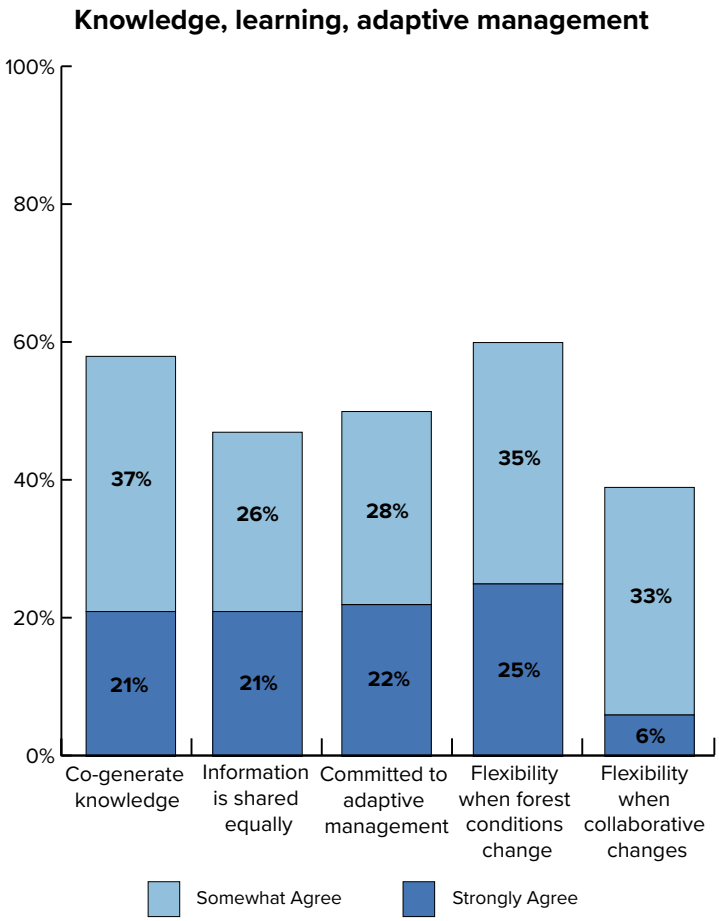

Figure 11: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that knowledge and information is co-generated by participants, shared equally, and used by participants to adjust management practices.

A majority of respondents agreed to strongly agreed that the collaborative process enhanced communication among participants (64%), enabled landscape-scale planning (66%), and included diverse perspectives (73%) (Figure 15). Half of respondents agreed that the process has led to enhanced decision making, minimized or improved outcomes of litigation, and enhanced planning across boundaries. In contrast, less than half agreed that the process has minimized conflict among stakeholders (32%).

In terms of ecological outcomes, a majority reported moderate to substantial progress in meeting the ecological goals of improving or maintaining restoration pace and scale (64%), reducing fuel hazards (64%), and improving or maintaining watershed function (72%) (Figure 16). In contrast, there was less agreement that other ecological goals had shown substantial progress, including improving use of planned or unplanned fire (22% reported moderate to substantial progress), improving habitat for focal species (30%), restoring old growth (33%), and controlling or treating invasive species (40%) (Figure 16).

In terms of socio-economic goals, a slight majority of respondents reported that the project had made progress on reducing community wildfire risk (54%) (Figure 17). Less than half of the respondents reported the project had made moderate to substantial progress on accomplishing more work on adjacent lands (25%), offsetting treatment costs with restoration byproducts (27%), and supporting local employment and training opportunities (45%) (Figure 17).

Disruptions

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[6]; and 3) a survey administered to Forest Service staff engaged in 2010 and 2012 CFLRP projects (Schultz et al., 2018). Based on that list, the most substantial challenges faced at the

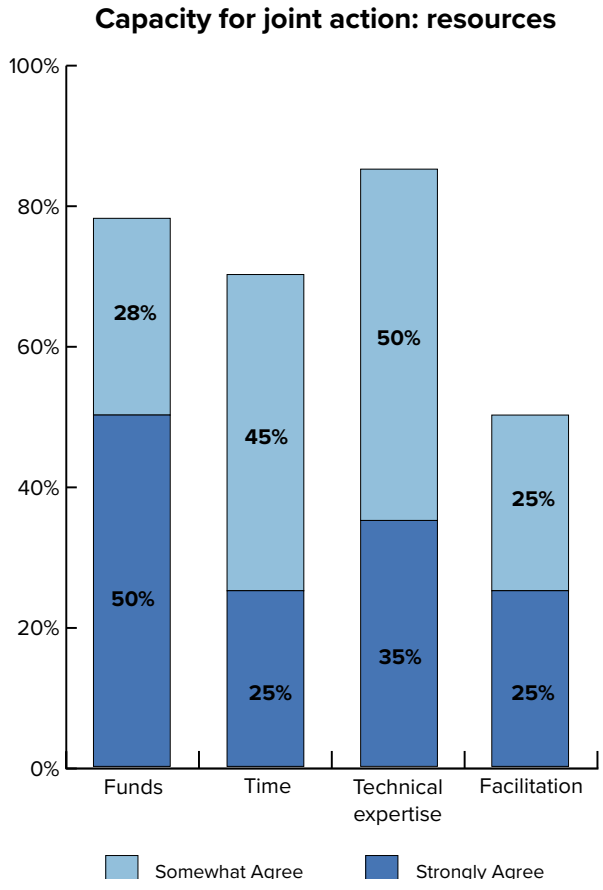

Figure 12: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative has adequate: funds, time, technical expertise, and facilitation skills to accomplish work.

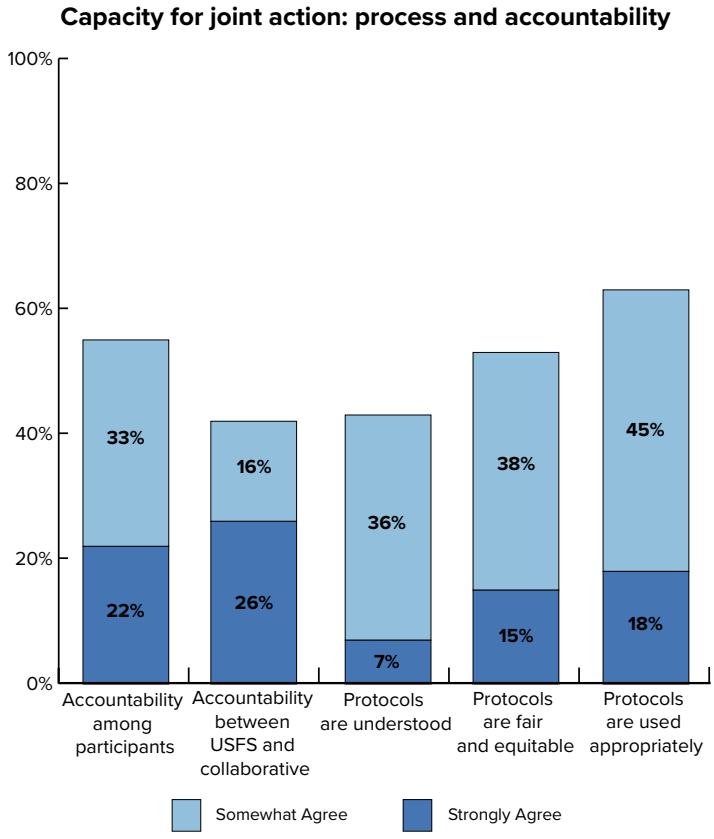

Figure 13: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that protocols promote accountability among participants, between USFS and the collaborative, and that protocols are understood, fair and equitable, and are used appropriately.

[6] CFLRP Collaboration survey administered by the National Forest Foundation — www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Collaboration-Indicator-Survey-Results-2020-publish.pdf

time of this survey were: moving from direction-setting to implementation (84% of respondents found this to be a moderate to significant challenge); frequent personnel turnover (83%); biophysical disruptions (e.g., wildfire, insects, or disease) (79%); conflict among participants (71%); limited local wood products industry capacity (71%); and limited agency capacity (58%).

Some comments reflected these issues on the challenge of moving toward implementation and limited capacity of the forest products industry. A respondent said, "I think we've all been a little surprised and disheartened by how long [restoration] can take, even with such a grandiose agenda and a lot of people pulling in the right direction." while another expressed that this had still been a challenge even with "a lot of funding in some cases." Other commenters noted:

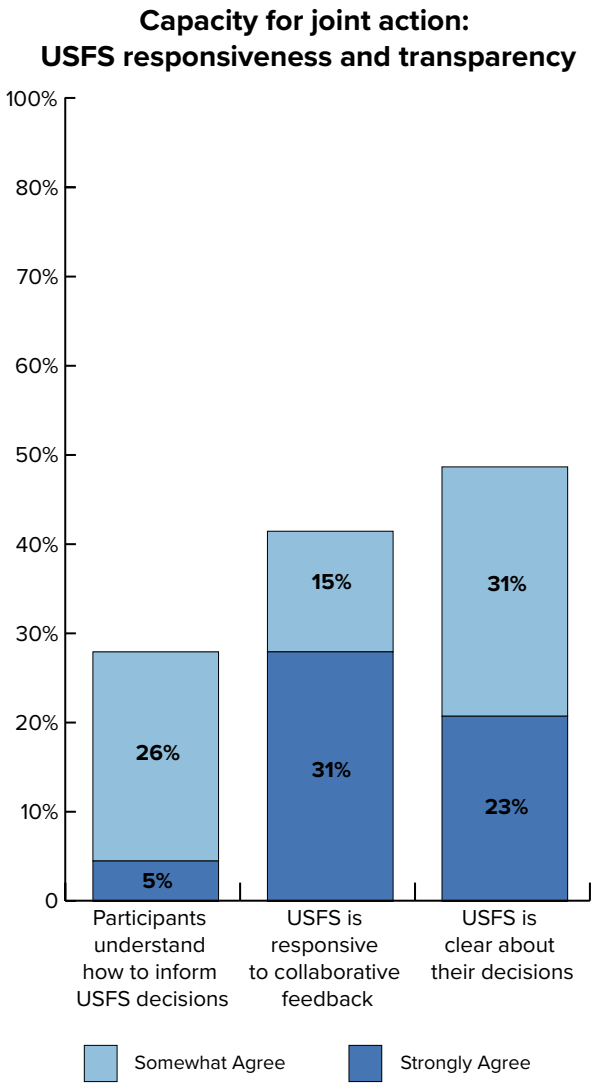

Figure 14: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that they understand how to inform USFS decisions, the USFS is responsive to feedback, and the USFS is clear about their decisions.

> *We spent so much of our history [as a Collaborative] working on how to get more landscapes engaged in implementing that when we finally got to implementation, we discovered some of the gaps in our planning, around how we actually do this together when we don't have consensus, for example, or discover we don't have consensus when we didn't realize it. So, we're definitely working through a lot of that now.*

> *And I'd highlight also that not having sawmills here in the infrastructure just really makes it a challenge economically. And a lot of industry folks and others give up because of the challenge of consultation, the Endangered Species Act, the Northwest Forest Plan. There are just so many things going against us to make this thing successful and the diversity that we have trying to find consensus, it's amazing we've come as far as we have. We're still together. We're still working together. Nobody's dropped off the collaborative.*

We also asked respondents what additional disruptions have impacted collaborative performance and durability. Respondents indicated challenges of Forest Service communication, implementation, and leadership (3 respondents), lengthy NEPA processes (2 respondents), a complex and ecologically diverse landscape (1 respondent), and non-cooperative Collaborative members (1 respondent) have disrupted the collaborative process.

Respondents finding challenges in working with the Forest Service noted that there has not been timely implementation of the Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project (UWPP), which they perceived as urgently needed to reduce fire risk to homes located in this Wildland Urban Interface. Other respondents were discouraged by inconsistent communication and priorities from within different levels of the Forest Service. One expressed frustration with national Forest Service leadership and a "lack of connection to local communities" and insufficient action on the issues that are most important to these communities. They argued that collaboration has not led to prioritizing what residents or collaborative partners want and there is not accountability within the Forest Service to do so. Another noted local leadership differences:

> *Very different communication dynamics from the Forest Service. Supervisor is good at working with CFLRP, some ranger districts are, but other ranger districts are not.*

Other respondents cited NEPA and "consultation and biological opinions from services on EA [Environmental Assessment] decisions" to be significant disruptions. Another respondent argued that this forest poses a particular challenge for management:

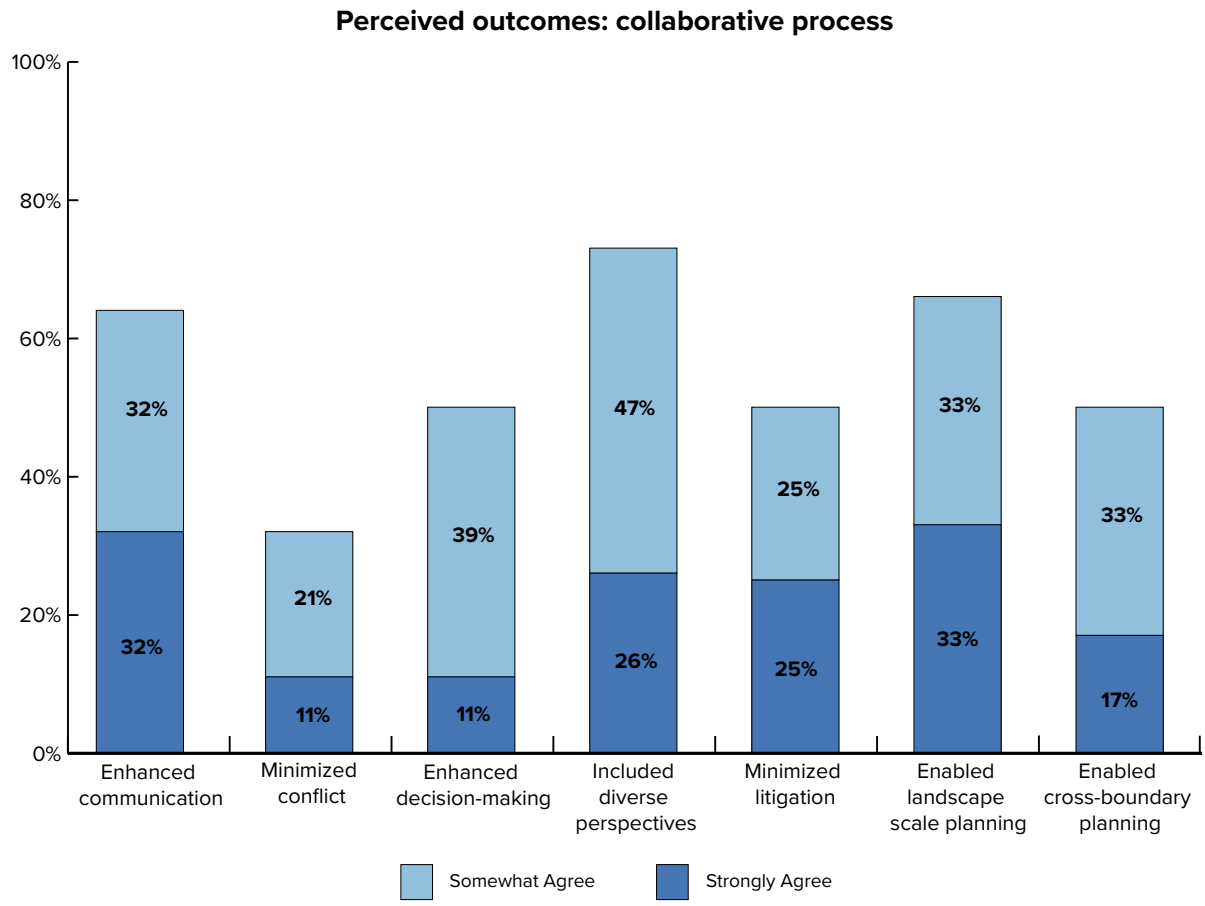

Figure 15: Percent of respondents who either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative.

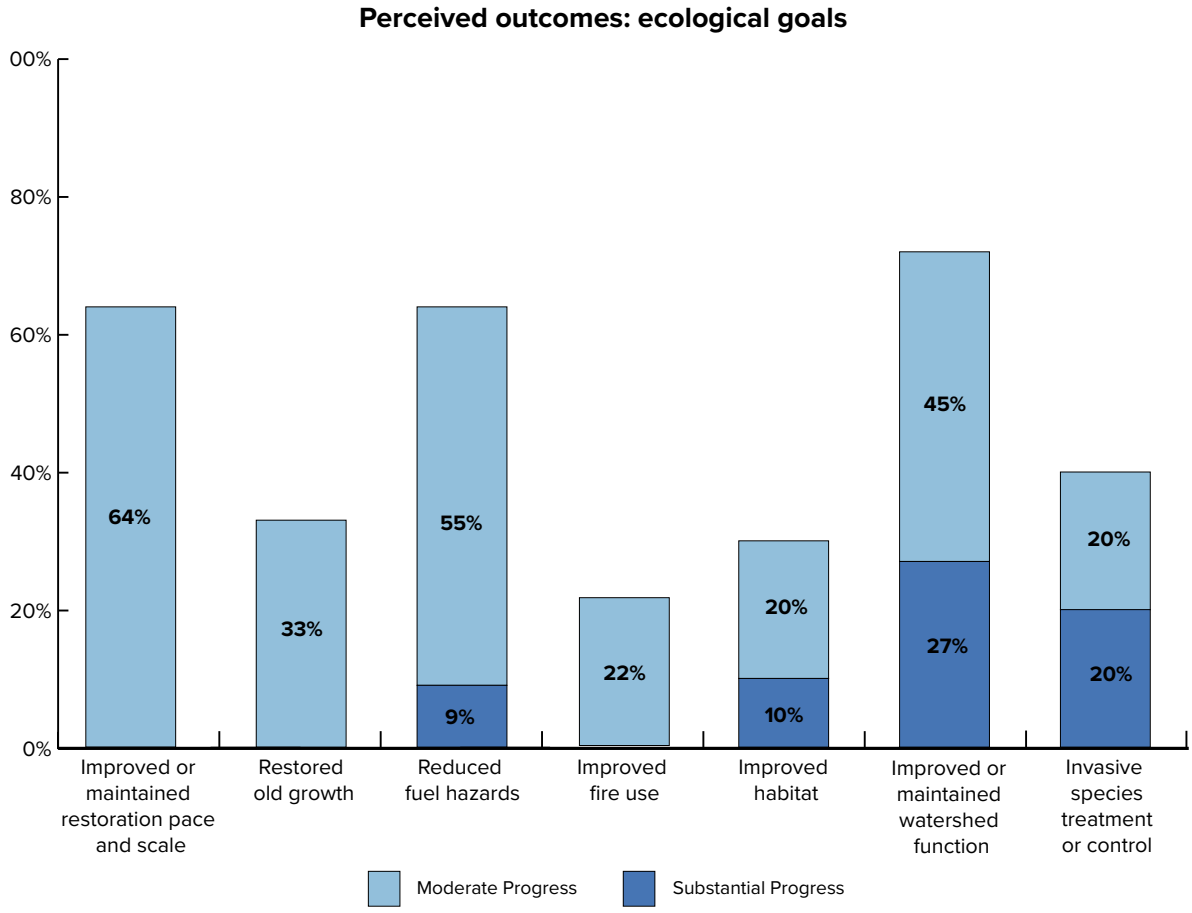

Figure 16: Percent of respondents who reported “Moderate progress” or “Substantial progress” towards ecological goals.

This is an extremely challenging landscape to manage – there are environments ranging from alpine tundra to shrub-steppe desert, and the complexity of understanding and managing the different forests in this zone is too much work for any new employee in the area to get full handle on. More workshops to understand the forests would be beneficial.

One respondent also commented that the personnel dynamics in the Collaborative have continued to pose challenges:

A small number of collaborative members continue to be disruptive to the collaborative process. Collaboration has not cut down on the number of objections, or on litigation, and one group has done their own monitoring rather than working to establish multi-party monitoring.

Another commenter noted that working with 22 member organizations with a large diversity of interests was challenging.

We also asked respondents what the CFLRP project has done to respond to these disruptions. Two respondents said that there has been a focus on developing multi-party monitoring plans. One noted that the Forest Service "has funded facilitators to try and help members with process and protocols." Three respondents argued that either nothing or not enough had been done. One worried about an effort to streamline decision-making to the exclusion of other Collaborative member input. Another noted:

The collaborative has made processes (work groups) to separate work out and tackle problems, but they do not seem to resolve any perception and values issues, they just come to a detail-lacking decision that will not challenge any perceptions or values. Lots of neutral language, similar to the USFS when they are litigation-proofing documents, so that the work can move forward and the questions can be answered at another time/in another venue.

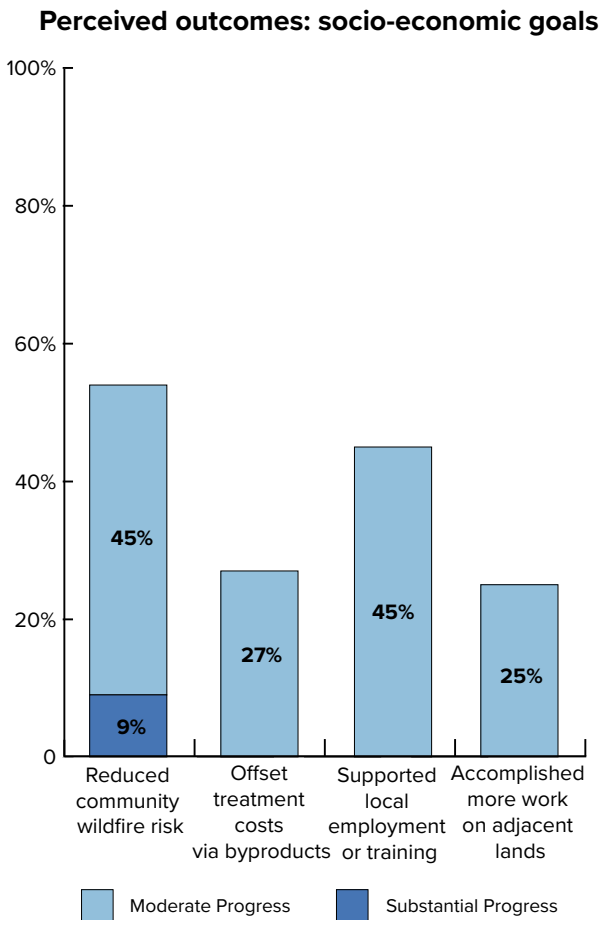

Figure 17: Percent of respondents who reported "Moderate progress" or "Substantial progress" towards socio-economic goals.

Recommendations to Improve the Collaborative Process

We asked participants to suggest recommendations to improve collaborative process, durability, and performance. On average, just over 27% of respondents included answers to open-ended questions throughout the survey (just 6–7 respondents per question). These qualitative opinions are collected from the few survey respondents who opted to include open-ended comments and thus likely represent those with the most passionate viewpoints. We identified three key themes for improvement based on both open-ended and quantitative survey responses (included appended questions responses detailed in Appendix 3), group interviews with key participants, and feedback during an initial results presentation. These recommendations included: 1) clarify protocols and enhance facilitation, 2) clarify and increase input in project prioritization, 3) move beyond planning toward collaborative adaptive management.

Clarify protocols and enhance facilitation

Both open-ended comments and quantitative results indicate that there could be more clarity on collaborative protocols and enhanced facilitation. A minority of respondents thought that protocols were clearly understood, and respondents were evenly split on their perception that the collaborative had enough facilitation resources. A majority also found conflict among participants to be disruptive, and commenters noted that new challenges around what to do in the case of a lack of consensus had emerged in the shift toward implementation. Interviewees noted that there was already a governance discussion taking place to revise and update protocols as the Collaborative moves toward increased implementation.

To address these challenges, respondents noted that there needs to be more attention to working within established

protocols, enhanced facilitation capacity, modifications of certain protocols to help move the efforts forward, clarification of how decisions are made with all member input, and consideration of uneven power dynamics within the Collaborative:

> *The collaborative needs to consider using modified consensus rather than consensus. The collaborative needs additional structure and needs to call out members who aren't working within established protocols. The collaborative needs additional help with facilitation.*

> *It should be more important to recognize the different roles that CFLRP members/representatives have with their organization as well as the power dynamics between smaller, community-led groups and industrial and government partners. A mill or state agency will have a well-paid specialist devoted to CFLRP work, with CFLRP training, facilitation, and coordination training. Smaller organizations may be devoting their executive director to the effort, and they will only have so much time/attention to devote to issues compared to an outfit that can hire a specialist for the work. The specialist can therefore bring more to the table and leads a lot of work instead of the smaller organizations that have a more intimate relationship with the communities and landscapes in the CFLRP footprint.*

Two respondents also argued for more efficient meetings with clear and distinct objectives that lead to gaining outcomes: "There have been too many collaborative meetings with overlap and no clear distinction between the meetings. FS staff have been asked to attend multiple meetings and give multiple updates on the same topics." Revisiting collaborative protocols and making sure they are understood, hiring facilitation to hold participants to protocols, and clarifying the distinctive purpose of meetings could all help move collaboration forward.

Clarify input processes and increase input in project prioritization

Several respondents expressed confusion over how the Forest Service selects which projects to implement first and wanted more opportunities to influence the prioritization. Similarly, only 31% of respondents understood how to inform Forest Service decisions, and 46% felt the Forest Service was responsive to Collaborative

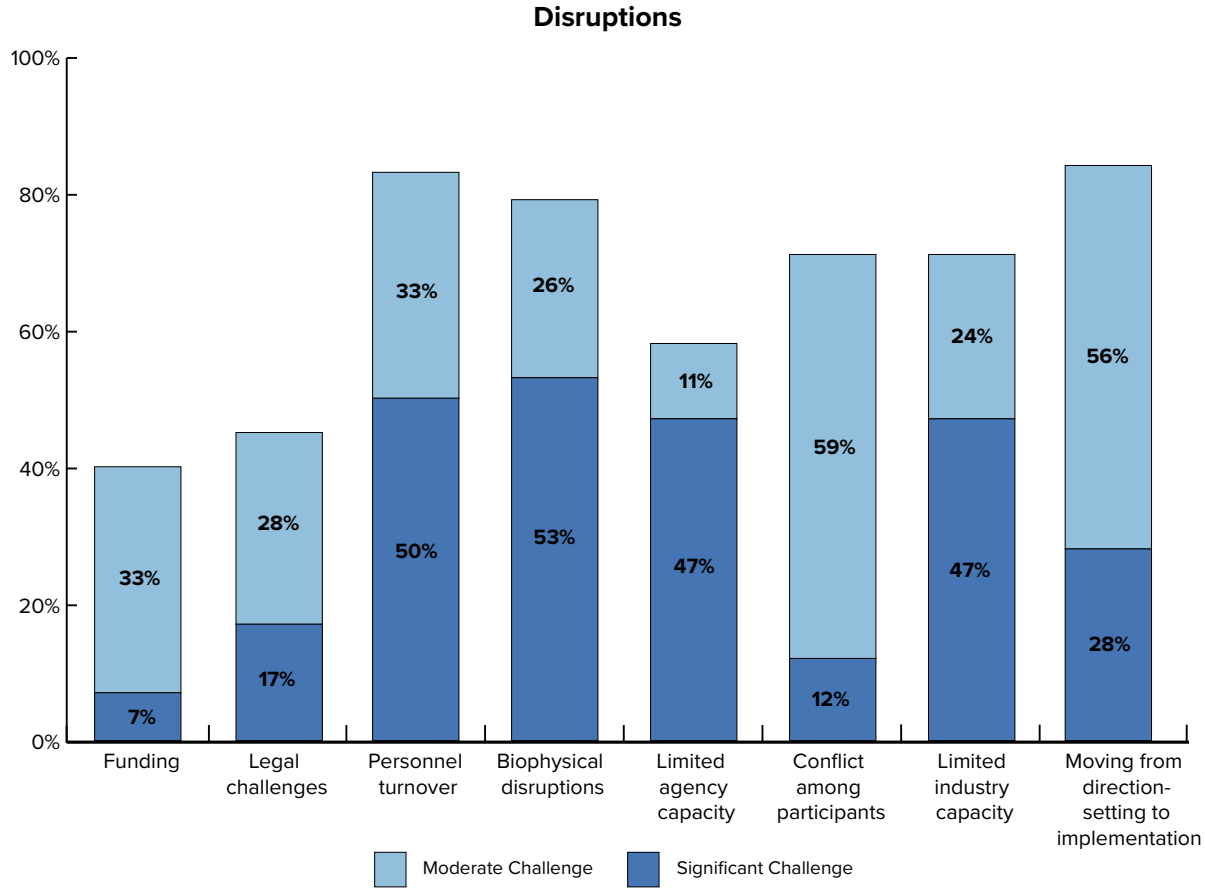

Figure 18: Percent of respondents who reported disruptions posed "Moderate challenges" or "Substantial challenges" to collaborative performance and durability.

feedback. Several quotes reflect confusion about project prioritization:

> *I am really not sure how the USFS selects projects based on collaborative input. There appears to be one group that dominates the aquatic restoration ideas and the USFS seems to drive the habitat and fire projects.*

> *There have been very few opportunities to engage on terrestrial projects, which is odd, since much of the fuels-reduction work that needs to be accomplished is extensively non-commercial. I would like more opportunities for wildlife, soils, and botany to engage proactively, like many partners do with aquatic projects in this region, but currently terrestrial projects are completely set up and proposed by the timber and silviculture shops for other resources to comments effects on, rather than a fully drummed up project with all FS resources coordinating together.*

> *Not sure how projects are selected. There appears to be a general group and then a working committee. How are we deciding what happens on the ground?*

There could be increased clarification on how and when input is given to the Forest Service, and how input could be given to terrestrial (rather than aquatic) restoration work.

Move beyond planning toward collaborative adaptive management

The last recommendation presented in open-ended comments was to increasingly work toward implementation through setting goals, increased accountability, and clearer input processes to promote adaptive management. Respondents expressed frustration with limited implementation of projects to date, resulting in high fire risk to communities, and a lack of accountability in tackling issues of importance to local communities and through collaborative processes (see "Disruptions" section above).

> *There is substantially more collaborative input and engagement surrounding proposed planning, EAs, and decisions while there is very little to none around implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management. The CFLRP process is set up like this, with [insufficient] required monitoring that isn't even completely funded for every year. This needs to be the most substantial component of the process, not the pre-planning. FS projects would move faster this way, too.*

One respondent attributed this lack of completion to a lack of adequate Forest Service staffing and funding. This CFLRP is in the very early stages of its participation within the program, and implementation may increase over time as the work progresses. This should include clear processes for collaborative input beyond the planning stages and goal setting. One interviewee noted with optimism that the restoration work is growing rapidly in the coming years:

> *We are right on the precipice of achieving 60 million board feet in 2023, on projects that are going to be sold and ultimately implemented. … 60 million board feet is triple what this forest has ever done in the last 20 years, and we're on the verge of the next 5 years of at least 40 million board feet annually. … So, we are increasing pace and scale.*

Other Recommendations

Other individuals expressed a few unique recommendations. One respondent was concerned that the CFLRP project has been absorbed into the new Central Washington Initiative, with the exception of monitoring, and that there should be clearer definition of what is included in the CFLRP landscape and what is expected of participants to maintain the intent of the CFLRP project. Another individual advocated for including "more public and business groups and interests." One respondent suggested a workshop on the diverse ecosystem types present in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to get new staff up to speed on the complex management (See "Disruptions" section above). One respondent ended the survey by writing:

> *To give up on this effort would be a mistake. The alternative is not acceptable. Failure to improve forest health would be the result but the longer we delay the implementation of WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) and UWPP (Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project) effort, the more likely a wildfire will consume our community.*

Discussion and Conclusions

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) deployed an online survey to the North Central Washington CFLRP, which includes the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (the Collaborative) and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, in spring 2023 to assess collaborative health, function, and resilience, as well as perceived outcomes of collaborative work. Specifically, we assessed: whether the CFLRP project 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 (question #12).

Overall, there was agreement on many indicators that the collaborative was working well and accomplishing goals, although some quantitative results and qualitative comments indicated some disagreement. Of note is that this survey was completed just one year after establishing the CFLRP project in this landscape, although the Collaborative has existed for over 10 years, and thus the results provide a baseline for better understanding the Collaborative as the CFLRP project progresses over time. A slight majority (57%) of respondents thought the CFLRP process was collaborative to very collaborative overall, and no respondents thought it was not collaborative at all. A strong majority (85%) also agreed that a representative cross-section of individuals who have a stake in the issues were involved. There were, however, no responses from tribes such as the Yakama Nation, and only two responses from the forest products industry despite their regular participation in collaborative governance. Including a broad swath of participants can help strengthen the Collaborative's adaptive capacity by encompassing a diversity of interests, perspectives, capacities, and proposed solutions from a variety of partners and creating redundancies, and can make collaborative function more resilient (Beeton et al. 2022; Folke et al. 2005; Gupta et al. 2010).

A majority of respondents agreed that there was shared understanding of the purpose of the CFLRP project, key problems affecting the landscape, and the strategies used to solve these problems, and that there is a neutral space to discuss controversial issues. A strong majority of respondents' expectations were met in collaborating with the Forest Service in planning, but not during implementation or monitoring. A strong majority of respondents agreed that the collaborative process helped build trust, relationships, and mutual respect. A strong majority of respondents also trusted the group to achieve desired outcomes and believed that they and other partners were committed to the collaborative process. Mutual commitment, especially among those with decision-making authority, is critical for collaborative durability. The Forest Service retains decision-making authority in treatment planning and implementation on Forest Service-managed land. The agency also gives substantial discretion in decision-making to local units; thus, it is often up to Forest Service unit-level line officers to make or not make collaboration a priority by providing staff, resources, etc. (Beeton et al. 2022).

There was largely agreement that most aspects of capacity for joint action were strong. The perception of leadership was largely positive, with a majority of respondents indicating that leaders worked well with others, maintained a common collaborative vision and direction, and motivated others to work together. A majority also agreed that there were opportunities to co-generate knowledge and be flexible when forest conditions change. A strong majority of respondents felt that the Collaborative had adequate funds, time, and technical expertise. There was also a majority in agreement that there were protocols in place to promote accountability among project participants, that protocols were fair, equitable, and used appropriately, and that the Forest Service was clear about the decisions they make and why.

Respondents' perceptions of the CFLRP collaborative process having made progress on collaborative, ecological, and socioeconomic goals varied, likely due to being in the very early stages of the CFLRP project. A majority thought the project had enhanced communication, included diverse perspectives, enabled landscape-scale planning, improved restoration pace and scale, reduced fuel hazards, improved watershed function, and reduced community wildfire risk. Respondents were split on agreeing that the project had enhanced decision-making, minimized litigation, and enabled cross-boundary planning. In contrast, only a minority perceived the CFLRP as making progress on minimizing conflict, restoring old growth, improving fire use, improving habitat, controlling invasive species, offsetting treatment costs, supporting local employment, and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands.

Respondents indicated some areas where there was room for improvement. Expectations for collaboration with the Forest Service have not been met for a large majority during implementation and monitoring, and open-ended questions included some critique at the pace of implementation and lack of clarity on how projects were prioritized. Both quantitative results and open-ended comments indicated that there could be clearer communication and more clearly established protocols on giving input to the Forest Service and implementing adaptive management. A minority of respondents thought that there were protocols established to promote accountability between the Forest Service and the Collaborative, that existing collaborative protocols were understood, that participants understood how to inform Forest Service decisions, and that the Forest Service was responsive to feedback from the Collaborative. Respondents were split in their perception that project participants were committed to adaptive management,

and only a minority thought there was flexibility to alter course when the Collaborative changes or that information was shared equally. Respondents perceived facilitation to be the most limiting resource, also reflected in the open-ended comments.

The Collaborative has dealt with several disruptions, with most respondents indicating that moving from direction-setting to implementation, personnel turnover, and biophysical disruptions were the most significant challenges. The majority also found that conflict among participants and limited industry and agency capacity were challenging. Turnover in particular 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 impact of high turnover can be alleviated through redundancies and overlapping job duties to create continuity (Beeton et al. 2022). Qualitative comments also indicated that additional disruptions included challenges of Forest Service inconsistent communication, slow implementation, and variable leadership direction and lengthy NEPA processes. A few respondents said that the Collaborative took action to respond to these disruptions, namely developing multi-party monitoring plans and funding facilitators, although others called for increased intervention.

Three key recommendations emerged from participant responses, although only 27% of respondents included open-ended comments in the survey. First, respondents suggested clarifying protocols, adjusting them as needed, and enhancing facilitation, including clarifying the efficiency of meetings with clear and distinct objectives and linked outcomes. The Collaborative is already working on modifying protocols related to a lack of consensus as they move toward a new era of implementation. Respondents also noted the challenges of power asymmetries within collaboration, as some participants are paid for their time to engage while others are not, a common challenge in collaborative spaces (Beeton et al. 2022). Secondly, respondents expressed confusion on how the Forest Service selects which projects to implement first and suggested enhancing opportunities to influence project prioritization, particularly for terrestrial rather than aquatic projects. Third, participants urged moving beyond planning toward collaborative adaptive management. This would include setting goals, holding participants accountable to those goals and the incorporation of collaborative input, and clarifying input processes for implementation and monitoring aspects of the projects.

This report provided a baseline assessment of collaborative health and performance among the Collaborative. 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 continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects. 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. CFLRP collaborative governance assessment: summary of findings

CFLRP Collaborative Governance Assessment: Summary of Findings for the North Central Washington CFLRP

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) developed a collaborative governance assessment as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) Common Monitoring Strategy.[1] The collaborative governance assessment was designed to evaluate collaborative health, function, resilience, and perceived outcomes of collaborative work. The SWERI administered an online questionnaire to members of the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, the official collaborative of the North Central Washington CFLRP that works with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, in spring 2023. We received 23 usable responses (44% 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 collaborative governance assessment; and
- Document participants' recommendations to improve collaborative performance and progress.

Findings

What has worked well for the North Central Washington CFLRP?

Overall, there was strong agreement on most indicators that the collaborative process was working well and accomplishing goals, although some responses indicated disagreement. There was strong agreement that a representative cross-section of individuals who had a stake in the issues were involved in the Collaborative, although tribal representatives were not present in the survey responses (Figure 1). Most respondents' expectations were met in collaborating with the Forest Service through planning, although not in implementation and monitoring (Figure 2). Respondents strongly agreed that the collaborative process has helped build trust and relationships. A majority of respondents perceived of leadership positively and thought there were opportunities to co-generate knowledge. Respondents felt that the Collaborative had adequate technical expertise, funds, and time, but were evenly split on their perception of having adequate facilitation. Respondents were also split in their perception that project participants were committed to adaptive management, and only a minority thought there was flexibility to alter course when the Collaborative changes or that information was shared equally. A majority of respondents thought that existing protocols were fair, were used appropriately, and promoted accountability among CFLRP participants. A minority of respondents thought that protocols promoted accountability between the Forest Service and the Collaborative, that protocols were understood, that participants understood how to inform Forest Service decisions, and that the Forest Service was responsive to feedback from the Collaborative. A majority thought, however, that the agency was clear in the decisions they make and why.

What disruptions and challenges have affected collaborative progress and performance?

The Collaborative has dealt with several disruptions, particularly moving from direction-setting to implementation, personnel turnover, biophysical disruptions, conflict among participants, and limited industry and agency capacity. Commenters also noted that additional disruptions included challenges of Forest Service inconsistent communication, slow implementation, and variable leadership direction and lengthy NEPA processes. A few respondents said that the Collaborative took action to respond to these disruptions, namely developing multi-party

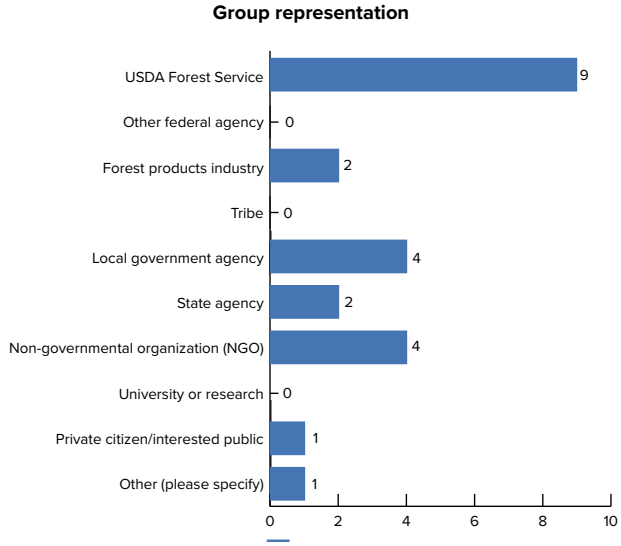

Figure 1: Respondents' self-identified representation with associated organizations.

monitoring plans and funding facilitators, although others called for increased intervention.

Progress toward desired process, socio-economic, and ecological outcomes

A strong majority of respondents indicated that the CFLRP project has moved toward achieving a variety of desired collaborative, ecological, and socio-economic goals, including but not limited to:

- Enhanced communication, included diverse perspectives, and enabled landscape-scale planning
- Improved restoration pace and scale, reduced fuel hazards, and improved watershed function

In contrast, only a minority perceived the CFLRP as making progress on minimizing conflict, restoring old growth, improving fire use, improving habitat, controlling invasive species, offsetting treatment costs, supporting local employment, and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands. The Collaborative was established in 2013 but only recently began CFLRP funding in 2022.

Recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance

Respondents provided a number of recommendations to improve the collaborative process and performance, including:

- Clarify protocols, adjust them as needed, and enhance facilitation, including setting clear and distinct meeting objectives with linked outcomes.
- Clarify input processes and increase opportunities for the Collaborative to influence project prioritization.
- Move beyond planning toward collaborative adaptive management through setting goals, holding participants accountable to those goals and the incorporation of Collaborative input, and clarify input processes during implementation and monitoring.

Next steps

Results from this questionnaire provided a baseline assessment of collaborative governance among the North Central Washington CFLRP. The SWERI will continue to engage in assessing collaborative health and performance of CFLRP projects, the goal of which is to identify where capacities lie and areas for improvement to target investments and activities that support resilient and durable collaboration.

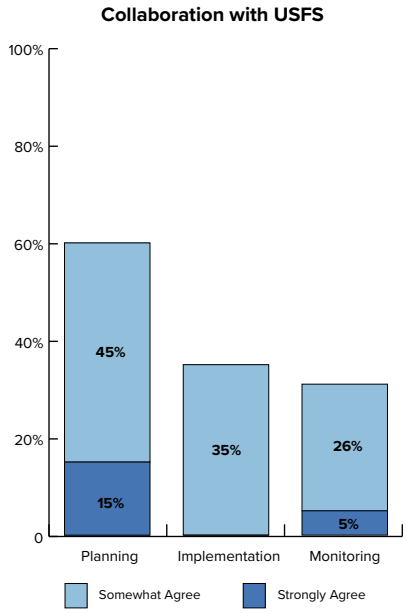

Figure 2: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that collaboration between members and the Forest Service has met their expectations during planning, implementation, and monitoring.

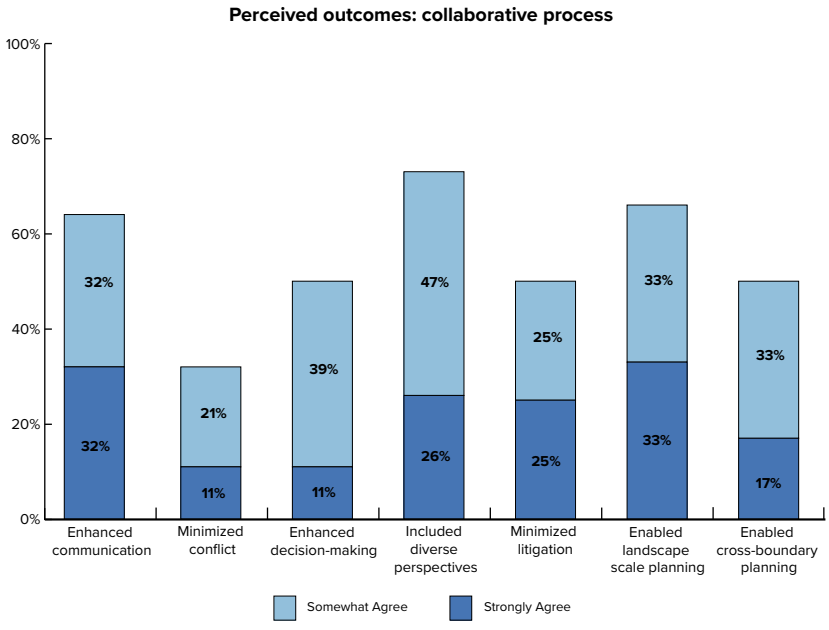

Figure 3: Percent of respondents who either "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the collaborative process has impacted the function and capacity of the collaborative.

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Colorado State University | New Mexico Highlands University | Northern Arizona University

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IRB approval – This work is approved by the Institutional Review Board at Colorado State University (#2679) and Northern Arizona University (#1809777-3).

Appendix 2. SWERI presentation to the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative

The document can be found online at: https://cfri.box.com/s/4jwsbak6enq8by5fipx60zo4gx6snxwz

SWERI Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes

Northern Arizona University | Colorado State University | New Mexico Highlands University

CFLRP collaborative governance survey: Summary of findings for the North Central Washington CFLRP

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North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative quarterly meeting
November 1, 2023

Objectives for Today

SWERI

- Background on the survey development and rollout
- Show survey results on a few key themes:
  1. Stakeholder engagement
  2. Collaboration with the Forest Service
  3. Resources available
  4. Collaborative protocols
  5. Collaborative process and ecological outcomes
  6. Recommendations
  7. Challenges faced
- Next steps and deliverables
- Discuss if/how results resonate with the collaborative and feedback on the survey

Background and Context
CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy

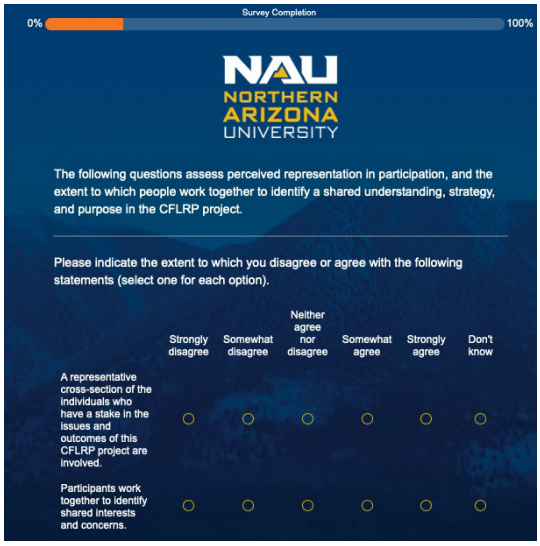
SWERI

- 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
  - Provide standardization across projects
- This survey addresses core monitoring indicator question 12: *How well is CFLRP encouraging an effective and meaningful collaborative approach?*

CFLRP Collaboration Assessment - Approach

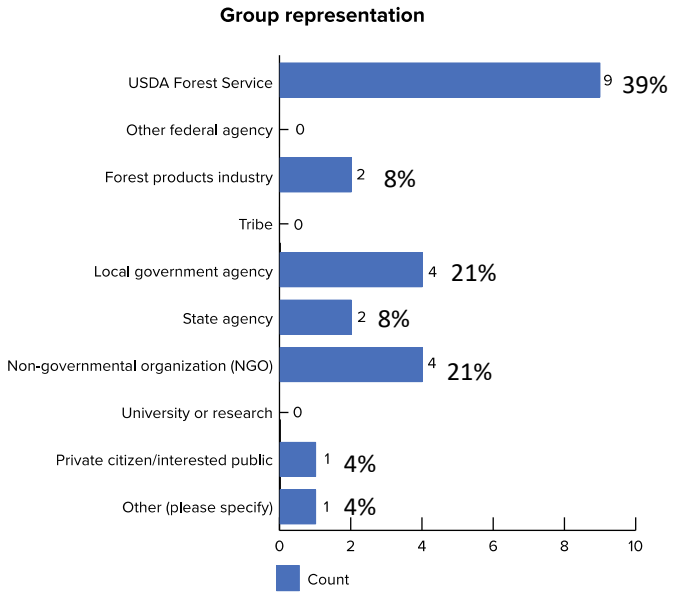
SWERI

- Survey: ~20 minutes to answer
- Distributed to all collaborative members March-May 2023
- Confidential, longitudinal, and standardized
- Will re-administer every ~3 years
- 23 responses, 44% response rate!
- Results inform:
  - Program-wide evaluation
  - Project-level progress and performance



Respondents

SWERI

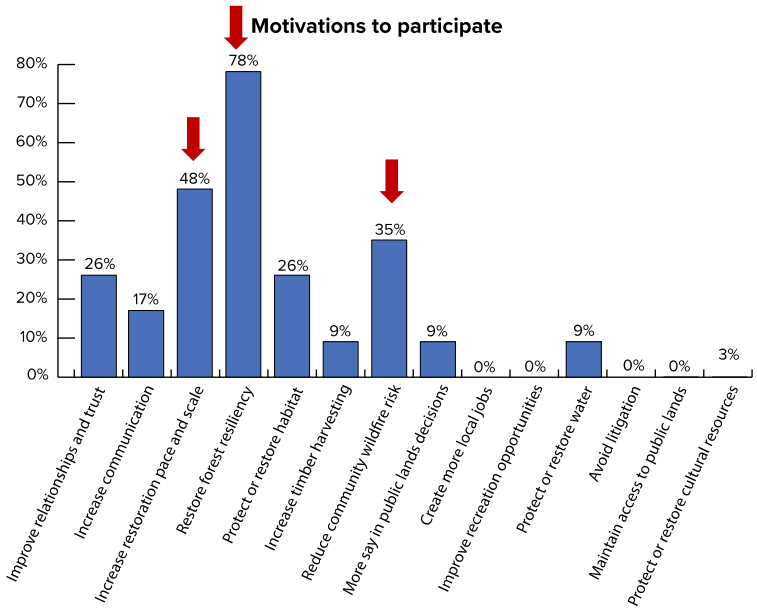


- Discussion:
  - Did most of the major players take the survey?

1. Motivations for involvement

SWERI

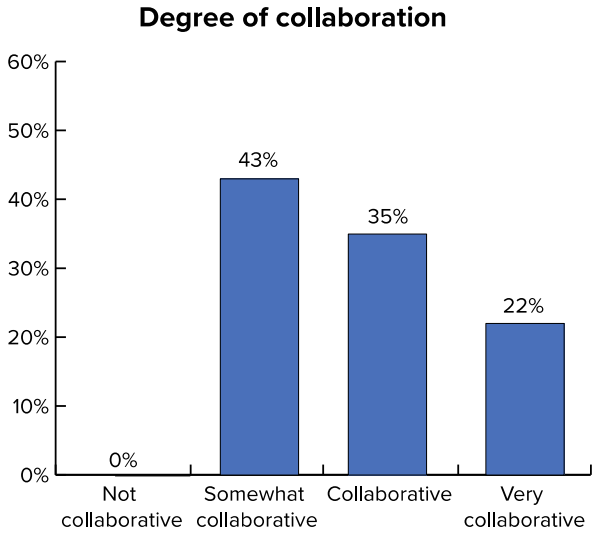
- Primary motivation: to restore forest resiliency
- Other common motivations:
  - To reduce community wildfire risk
  - To increase restoration pace and scale



Overall, how collaborative?

SWERI

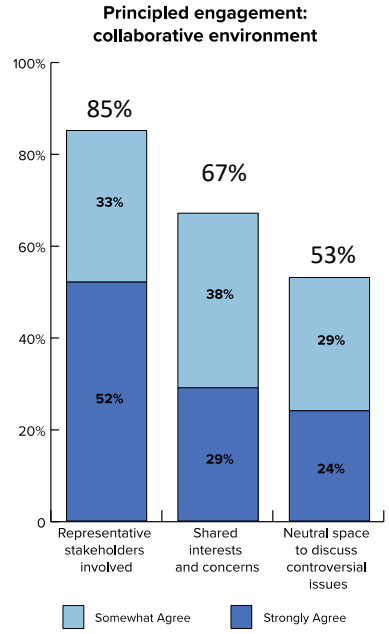
- 57% of respondents say this CFLRP is collaborative/very collaborative



Stakeholder Engagement

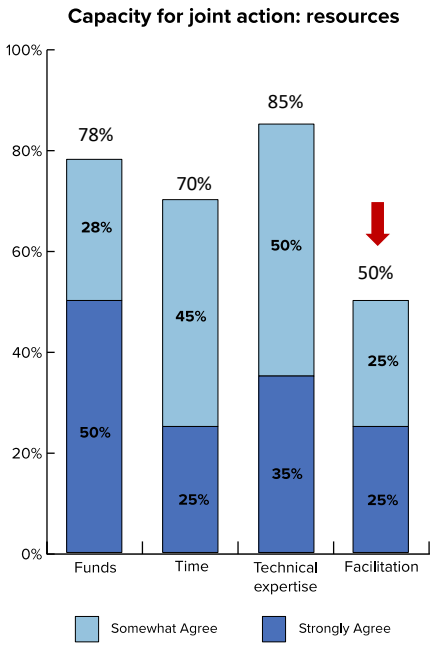
SWERI

- High agreement on engagement of a representative cross-section of stakeholders
- Moderate agreement that participants work to identify shared interests/concerns, and that the collaborative process creates a neutral space for discussion



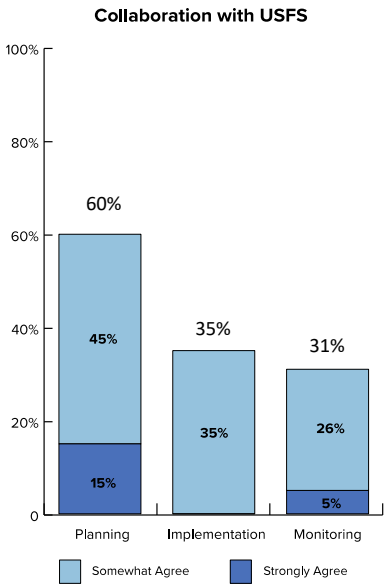
3. Capacity for Joint Action: Resources

- The CFLRP project has adequate…
- Skills to facilitate collaborative engagement activities: 50% agree
  - Most limiting resource
- High agreement that funds (78%), time (70%), and technical expertise (85%) are adequate



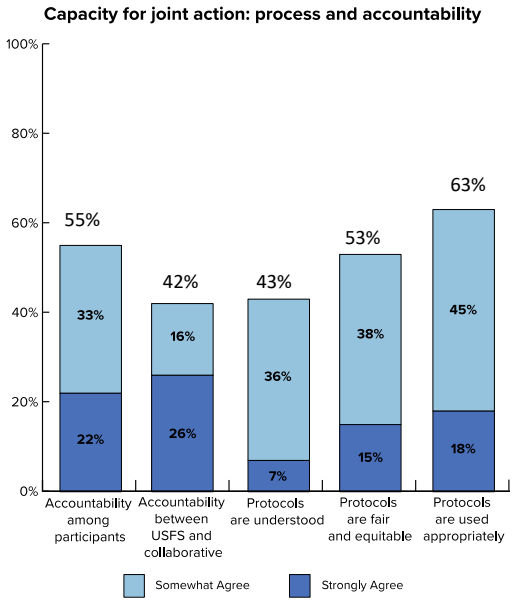
2. Aligning expectations: USFS collaboration

- Collaboration between CLFRP participants and the USFS has met expectations during:
  - Planning (e.g., environmental analysis, NEPA): 60% agreed
  - Implementation (e.g., post-NEPA, operations): 35% agreed
  - Monitoring: 31% agreed ← lowest
- Collaboration is required in all of these, yet not defined in CFLRP/FLRA
  - Expectations may differ



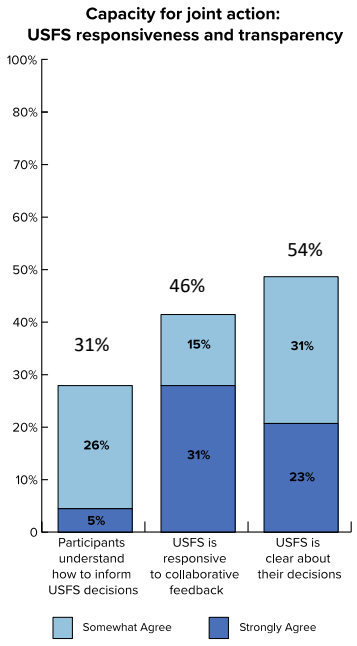
3. Capacity for Joint Action: Process and Accountability

- There are protocols in place that promote accountability (e.g., decision rules, charters, MOUs)
  - *Among* CFLRP project participants: 55% agree
  - *Between* CFRLP project participants and the USFS: 42% agree
- Collaborative protocols
  - Are clearly understood: 43% agree
  - Are fair and equitable: 53% agree
  - Are used appropriately: 63% agree
- → Moderate to low agreement that processes and accountability are sufficient



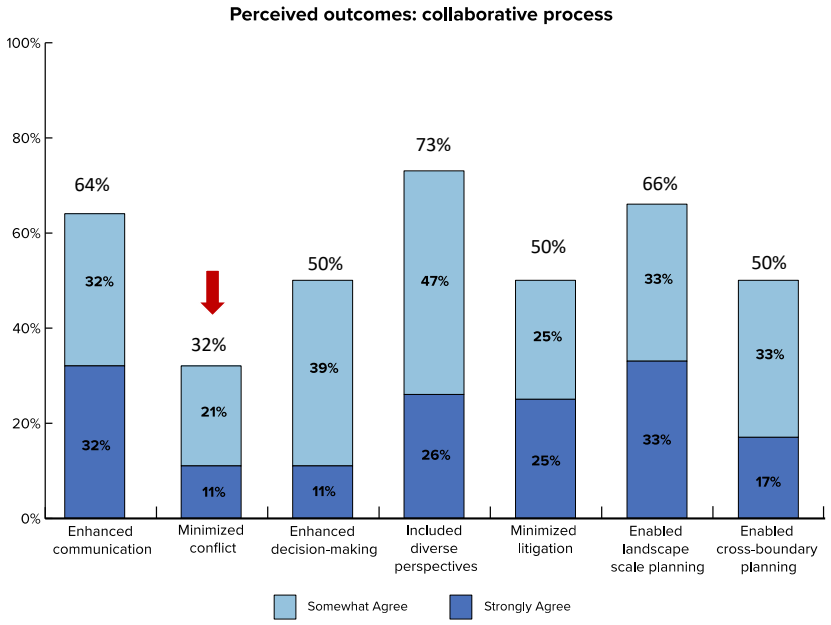
3. Capacity for Joint Action: USFS Process and Accountability

- Project participants clearly understand when and what collaborative input is useful to inform USFS decisions: only 31% agree
  - Could increase clarity here
- The USFS is responsive to CFLRP project participant feedback: 46% agree
- The USFS is clear with project participants about the decisions they make and why: 54% agree



4. Perceived Outcomes: Collaborative Process

- The CLFRP collaborative process has…
- Overall 50%+ agreement on most issues
- But only 32% agreed that CFLRP minimized conflict

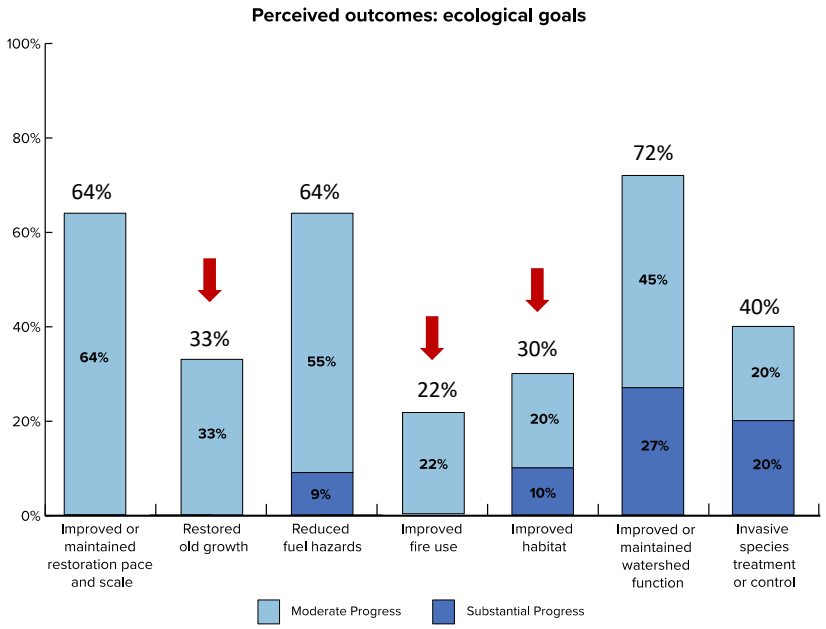


4. Perceived Outcomes: Recommendations to Improve or Maintain Collaborative Progress (n=7)

- Around 27% of survey respondents answered open-ended questions
- <u>USFS changes</u>
  - Increase staff capacity and funding
  - Increase transparency around project selection
- <u>Collaborative changes</u>
  - Recognize power dynamics (large vs. smaller entities and their funding/staffing)
  - Clearly define what the CFLRP landscape is and what it means to be a partner
  - Include more public and business interests
  - Regularly check in on set goals
  - More inclusive decision-making body
- <u>Collaborative structure and processes need reinforcing</u>
  - Develop additional collaborative structure
  - Reinforce protocols for all members (move to modified consensus)
  - Bring in facilitation assistance

Perceived Outcomes: Ecological Goals

- Moderate to low agreement that the CFLRP project has made progress on several ecological goals
- Lowest agreement that the CFLRP project has made progress on:
  - Restoring old growth stands (33%)
  - Improving habitat for focal species (30%)
  - Improved the use of fire (22%)



5. Challenges and Disruptions

- Did these disruptions pose challenges to the CFLRP's performance and durability?
- Most significant challenges:
  - Personnel turnover
  - Biophysical disruptions
  - Movement from direction-setting to implementation

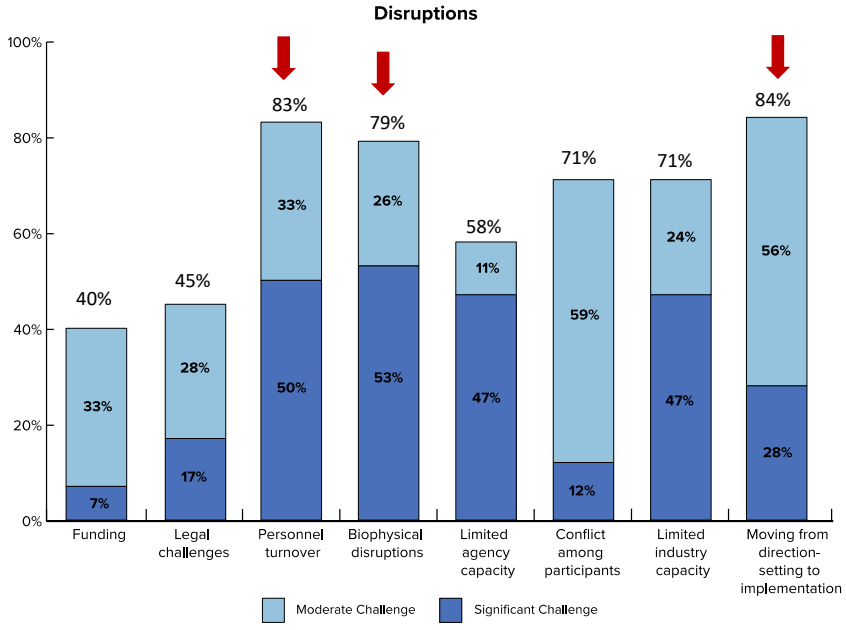


Figure 18: Percent of respondents who reported disruptions posed "Moderate challenges" or "Substantial challenges" to collaborative performance and durability.

Appended Questions

SWERI

- The remaining questions were developed with project leaders and are specific to this survey for the North Central Washington CFLRP

Appended Question: CFLRP Meeting Expectations?

SWERI

- Difficulty moving from planning to implementation (3 respondents)
  - Many meetings without clear outcomes
- Confusion over how project selection takes place (1 respondent)
- Forest Service perceived as lacking accountability (2 respondents)
  - More proactive input to FS on wildlife, soils, and botany (1 respondent)
- Forest Service need for more support in the areas of (1 respondent)
  - Expertise, staff capacity, timing, coordination and facilitation, communication
- Lack of distinction between the CFLRP project and the larger CWI project (1 respondent)

Conclusions

SWERI

- Conclusions:
  - High agreement that the CFLRP engages a representative cross-section of stakeholders
  - *Participants agree about the key problems and purpose of the project, but there is less agreement on strategies for achieving common goals*
  - Most respondents did not think the USFS met expectations on implementation or monitoring. Some suggested increased staff capacity, funding, and transparency
  - *High agreement that the collaborative helps build personal and working relationships*
  - *Disagreement on the capacity for joint action regarding knowledge, learning, and adaptive management*
  - Funding was seen as adequate, with skills to facilitate collaborative engagement being the most limiting resource
  - Disagreement around accountability and protocols - respondents emphasized a need to reinforce and monitor goals and protocols
  - Most respondents did not think there was clarity on how to inform USFS decisions and felt the USFS was not responsive to feedback
  - Most respondents do not think the CFLRP minimized conflict but do think the CFLRP has included diverse perspectives, enabled landscape planning
  - Common disruptions include personnel turnover, biophysical disruptions, lack of accountability, and movement from direction-setting to implementation

What to expect next

SWERI

- Short-term
  - Presentation slide deck
  - 2-page fact sheet of findings
  - Report on responses, which includes more results that were not presented today:
    - Building trust
    - Commitment among stakeholders
    - Leadership
    - Sharing knowledge
    - Socio-economic outcomes
- Longer-term
  - Larger report/publication on responses across CFLRPs
  - Peer-learning among CFLRP community of practice
- Happy to engage in follow-up conversations and/or provide support if/when needed!

Feedback on Survey

SWERI

- This assessment will be completed every ~3 years
  - Needs, capacities change – iterative process
- What worked well?
- What could we improve?
- Is there anything we did not ask that we should have?

Discussion on major themes

SWERI

1. Stakeholder engagement
2. Collaboration with the Forest Service
3. Resources available
4. Collaborative protocols
5. Collaborative process and ecological outcomes
6. Recommendations
7. Challenges faced

- Do these results resonate with you?
  What might we be missing?
- Do any recommendations mentioned seem feasible and desirable? What help is needed?

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Appendix 3. Appended questions

The results to the following questions reported here were developed in coordination with local CFLRP project staff, coordinators, and partners affiliated with the North Central Washington CFLRP. These questions were not part of the CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy.

The Collaborative was interested in better understanding participants' preferences on communication and engagement opportunities. A strong majority (67%) of respondents thought that current engagement opportunities were occurring at an appropriate frequency (Figure A1). When asked to select their preferred communication and engagement forms, most respondents preferred monthly virtual meetings with quarterly in-person meetings (13 respondents) and field trips (13 respondents) (Figure A2). The one respondent who selected "other," in contrast, noted "anything but virtual meetings — it is not the right format for this level of collaboration, in this region, with these stakeholders."

Collaborative leaders also asked if the CFLRP was meeting expectations or not. Only 6 respondents included comments and all indicated desired changes in this early-stage CFLRP project; these thoughts are also incorporated into the "Recommendations" section above. Two respondents expressed concern that implementation has largely not occurred and that there should be increased Forest Service accountability to incorporating collaborative feedback and taking action. Two respondents wanted to see more clarity on how projects are prioritized and how the Forest Service engages with the Collaborative for input, particularly on terrestrial projects and providing other support:

> *I was hoping to hear more about what the FS needed in the CFLRP process. I have not heard many needs since the money has been approved. While funding has always been an issue with the FS, I also know that expertise, manpower, timing, coordination and facilitation, and communication have all been components of work the FS could use help on.*

Two respondents critiqued frequent meetings without clear and unique objectives. Lastly, one respondent was concerned that lumping the CFLRP project into the newly approved CWI meant the CFLRP project was losing some of its original intent.

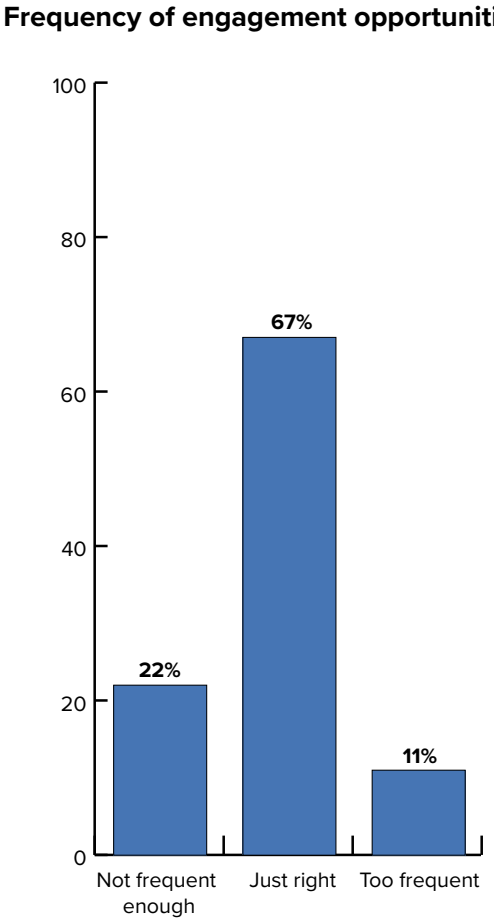

Figure A1: Percent of respondents who reported this project has "Not frequent enough," "Just right," or "Too frequent" engagement opportunities.

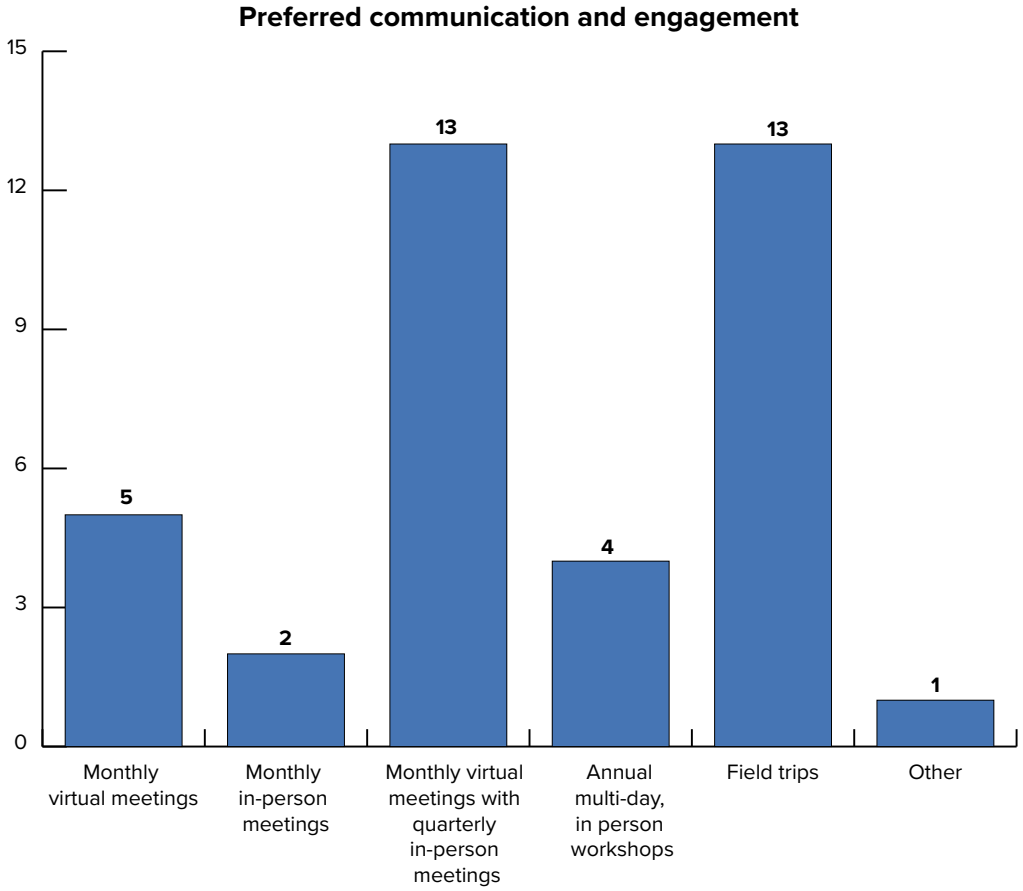

Figure A2: Number of respondents that indicated a preferred form of communication and/or engagement.

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