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NEPA Program of Work Process Collaborative Activity

Lassen National Forest Partnership in Practice Symposium

October 17, 2023

During the Partnership in Practice Symposium in October 2023, Lassen National Forest (LNF) partners made recommendations for increased collaboration between LNF and its partners during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program of Work (POW) process, wherein a new NEPA project is added to the LNF's Program of Work. The recommendations are outlined here in text and pictures of the POW flow charts with partner notes are included below.

LNF's Forest Leadership Team and Integrated Program Management Team will review the recommendations and decide which elements will be incorporated into the NEPA POW Process based on feasibility and burden. A revised NEPA POW Process will be distributed to partners in early 2024.

Prior to deciding on a project

- Unit will seek feedback from relevant partners (e.g., the South Lassen Watersheds Group, Burney Hat Creek collaborative, Butte County RCD) as a means of informing priority projects that are put forward.
 - This is the critical step for partner engagement... Collaborative groups and partners want to feel like the Unit is advocating for projects that everyone wants to see move forward. There should be a step to define how the Unit is gathering partner input before they propose projects to be placed on the POW.
- Existence of collaborative or partnership on how a scope is set to even get to the first step on the process flowchart
- Feedback from LNF on how to make a project idea more attractive to LNF – how to get District Ranger to support the project?
- How to build off existing projects on the landscape
 - Working cross-boundary and cross-district. Working with partners across political boundaries
- Pre-project presentation to members of the Integrated Program of Work Team
 - Shark Tank style meeting, either in-person or submission period
 - Forest could be in a position to broker/pair up partners if multiple submissions for same land / actions



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- Identify LNF project lead early and clarify how that lead is identified
- Invite possible project partner to a spring meeting to gauge project feasibility prior to submitting the Project Proposal Form
 - Could be a quarterly meeting limited to smaller group of partners interested in a specific project
- Partners are kept apprised of region's project priorities
- Identify where funding opportunities exist to be able to capture "low-hanging fruit" funding
- LNF could create policy/practices for creating collaboratives (there are concerns that voices are left out of project development and Forest decisions)
- Create framework to highlight partner capabilities so they can take on work on the landscape
- LNF could be supportive of cross boundary/ cross district projects

After deciding on a project

- Public meeting facilitated by partners & FS to review project
- Subcommittee to review draft proposal ideas
 - Reporting back to subcommittees and communication / guidance
- DR to provide letter of support to ensure a project moves into PPF phase
- LNF project lead should be available and have plan for transition in case of lead leaving the LNF
- Communicate to partners what proposals are coming through
- More transparency as to why a project was developed or designed

Filling out the Project Proposal Form /Priority Project Rankings

- Rationale and justification from FS on where projects are ranking
- Provide partners an opportunity to go back and elaborate on the plan and possibly look for opportunities for re-ranking
- Final ranked project list is shared with partners and feedback solicited from partners
- Take into consideration the grant funding mechanisms and proximity of other projects
- Identify where partner can fill LNF capacity gaps
- Lean on partners to develop the PPF
- How are partners kept informed of the progress of the Project Proposal Form?
- Partners should be able to see IPOWT's rankings
- LNF provides transparency during IPOWT/FLT review cycle
- If partners know ranking process, they can better align to help LNF

Quarterly Reviews

- If there's a reassessment in the POW, advanced communications with partners.



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- Recognition that a reordering of FS POW is also a reordering of the partners POW.
- Provide early feedback to partners on quarterly adjustments
- Justify/ explain ranking/priority/timeline changes

General recommendations/considerations/feedback

LNF/Partner capacity

- Need to ensure District Ranger is available for communication
- Looking at the capabilities of the partners and what gaps they can fill
- IPOWT ranks FS capacities, but is also a checkpoint for partner capacity
 - Need to maintain a list that updates quarterly or annually from the partners
- Creating redundancy when working with staff turnover and new ID Team member causing a restart of a project
- Challenging when there are detailers or turnover and projects stall
- Ranger's priorities might change based on funding or change in staff. Or there could be events that change priorities.
 - Creates difficulties for even getting through step one
- Units are chronically understaffed, despite wonderful project ideas
 - Partners could help by filling in those gaps
 - Communicate and not get frustrated when things change, your individual priority may not be a priority of the rest of the Forest Service

Funding

- At what point does the Forest or Partner seek funding for a project?
 - Opportunity to look at the process and inform one another more efficiently
- Secured funding WITH Forest support/commitment to the project should guarantee agreed upon POW priority. In some cases, this may mean not providing a letter of support for a proposal if it would commit the partner and the Forest to work on a timeline that cannot be met based on the POW. However, if commitments are made and partners secure funding, any decisions about the reprioritization of work should be made collaboratively.
- At what point does seeking funding affect ranking and vice versa?

Miscellaneous

- Need to deal on a landscape scale; can be challenging for smaller organizations to adjust to changes when on a smaller project scale
- Streamlining fire qualifications for RX projects
- Do an After Action Report at the conclusion of the project to identify what went well, where we can improve the process



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- Commit implementation to partners in order to attract and maintain long-term relationships
- Desired conditions, linked to activity cards in more visually appealing format, due to NEPA documents not being read by the public.

1) Before Step 1: advocacy group + public mtg facilitated by partners + Forest Service
 \$\$\$ - where's the \$\$\$ @?
 low-hanging fruit \$

Lassen National Forest NEPA Program of Work Process

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the unit/partners have identified a project and the District Ranger supports it

subcommittee dvr '1 draft proposal ideas

District Ranger, LNF Project Lead, and Partners (Project Team) work together to complete the Project Proposal Form (PPF)

- report back to group + subcommittees
 - what diff. project proposals are coming thru + communicating what's coming

LNF Project Lead submits the PPF to the IPOWT



- report back to group/subcommittee + review: more forward or push back + ↑ communication + guidance

IPOWT ranks all submitted projects and assesses Forest capability

partner capacity + identify needs/gaps partners can fill

IPOWT submits ranked project list and recommendations to the FIT

USFS: - rationale + justification - project of project rank

FIT applies their own ranking considerations and produces final ranked project list

partners cont. involvement in the NEPA + POW

* requests from USFS: where your project ranks + NEPA status





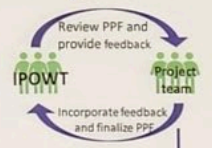
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Lassen National Forest NEPA Program of Work Process

The Unit/partners have identified a project and the District Ranger supports it

District Ranger, LNF Project Lead, and Partners (Project Team) work together to complete the Project Proposal Form (PPF)

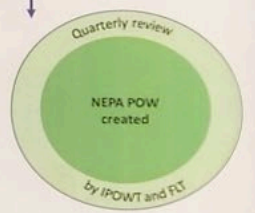
LNF Project Lead submits the PPF to the IPOWT



IPOWT ranks all submitted projects and assesses Forest capability

IPOWT submits ranked project list and recommendations to the FLT

FLT applies their own ranking considerations and produces final ranked project list



- USFS create policy/practices for creating collaboratives (concerns that voices are left out of project devo/Forest decisions) (step)h.
- create framework to highlight partner capabilities so they can take on work on landscape
- ~~create~~ determine how to integrate existing projects w/ new projects
- be supportive of cross boundary/cross district projects

clarify how LNF project lead is identified
 feel free to lean on partners to draft PPF

- partners see rankings

- Streamline Fire Qualifications for Implementation w/ State & Non-Profits, etc.

IPOWT=Integrated Program of Work Team; FLT=Forest Leadership Team

Lassen National Forest NEPA Program of Work Process

① DEVELOP PROJECT IDEA OR AREA OF NEED

② CONFIRM YOUR DISTRICT RANGER & OTHERS PROJECT IDEAS & FEASIBILITY

The Unit/partners have identified a project and the District Ranger supports it → How does the DR support a project? How is DR approval assistance to make forward?

DR PROVIDES LETTER OF SUPPORT TO ENSURE THAT PROJECT MOVES INTO PPF PHASE

District Ranger, LNF Project Lead, and Partners (Project Team) work **together** to complete the Project Proposal Form (PPF)

LNF Project Lead submits the PPF to the IPOWT

How to Receive

PARTNER IS KEPT INFORMED OF PROGRESS OF PPF



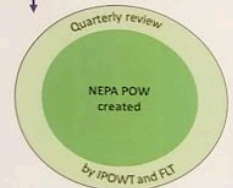
IPOWT ranks all submitted projects and assesses Forest capability

→ PARTNER IS OFFERED OPPORTUNITY TO ADVOCATE FOR / ADJUST PROJECT

IPOWT submits ranked project list and recommendations to the FLT

FLT applies their own ranking considerations and produces final ranked project list

Feed back from FLT on how to make a project more attractive.



OVERARCHING / ONGOING NEEDS:

- ★ INVITE POSSIBLE PROJECT PARTNERS TO SPRING MEETING TO GAIN PROJECT FEASIBILITY PRIOR TO SUBMITTING PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM
 - ★ PARTNER IS KEPT INFORMED OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES
 - ★ PARTNER IS AWARE TO THE REGION'S PROJECT PRIORITIES
- is spring an appropriate time for a pre-project partner meeting in terms of funding?

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Thought
- Consider having mtgs. w/ Partners/FS Quarterly. Limited to smaller group interested in specific Forest or District.

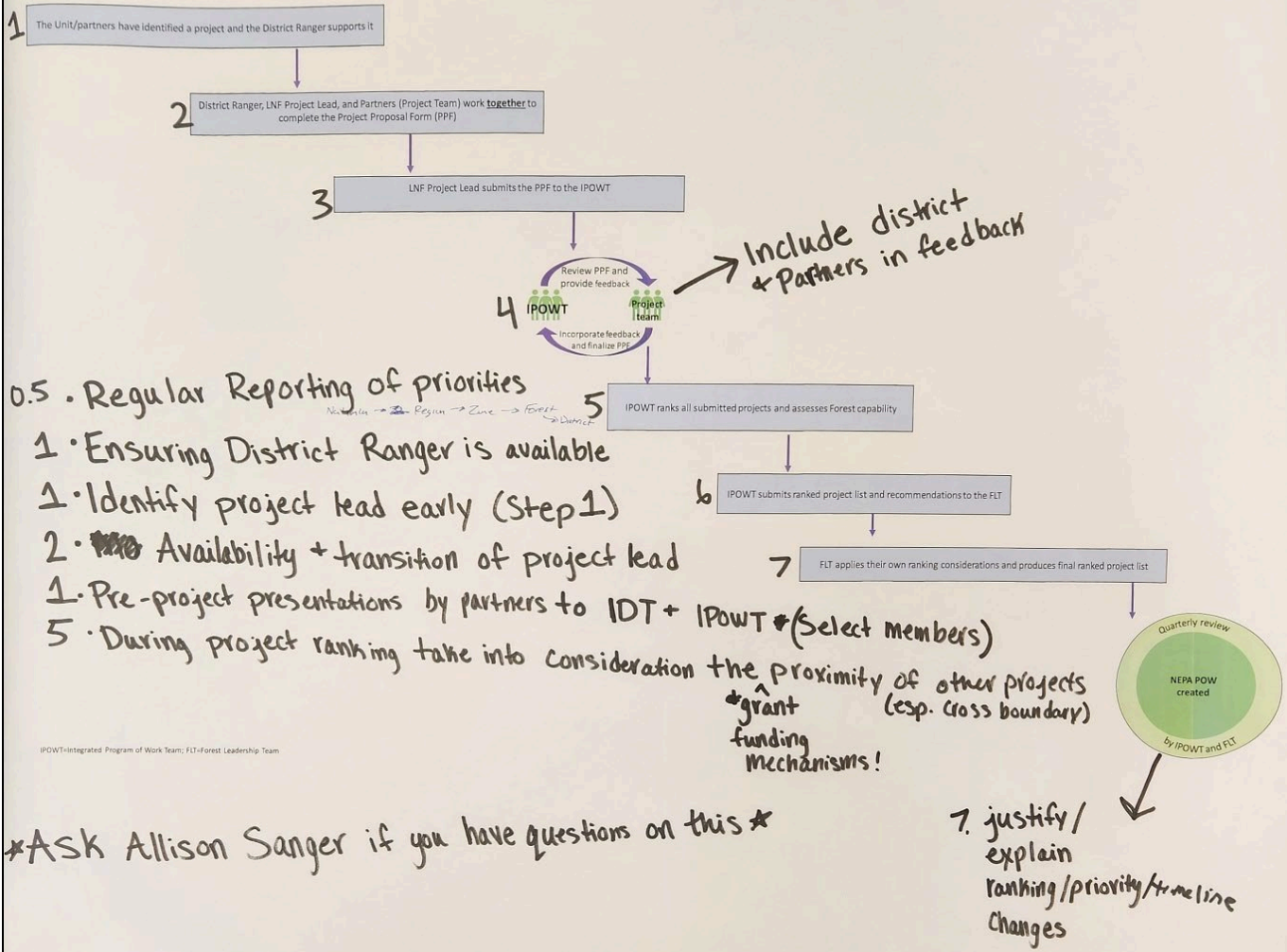
After Action Report
at the conclusion of project to identify what went well, where we can improve the process



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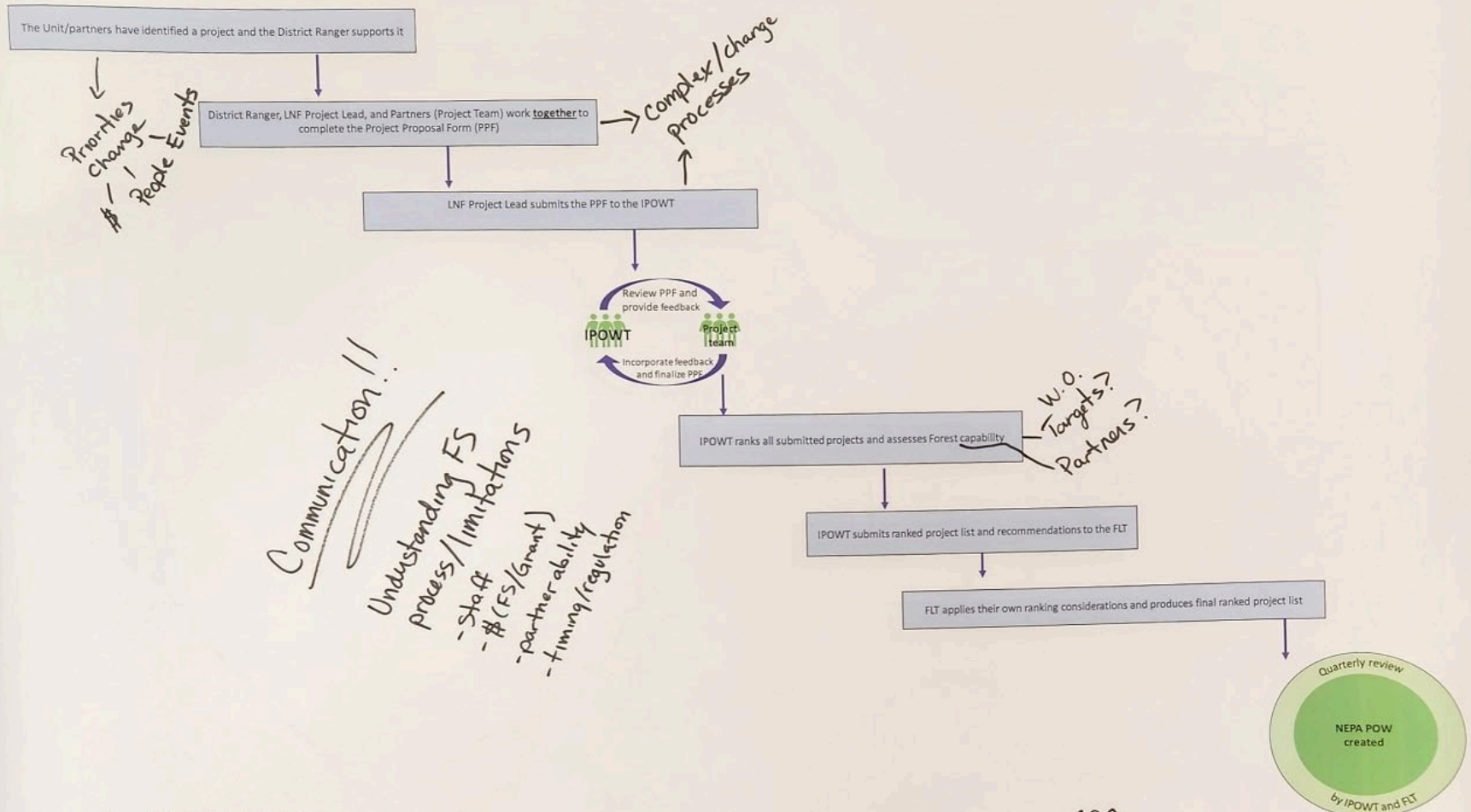
Ask Allison Sanger if you have questions on this

What happens if PPF is not moved forward, re-apply or into consideration next year?



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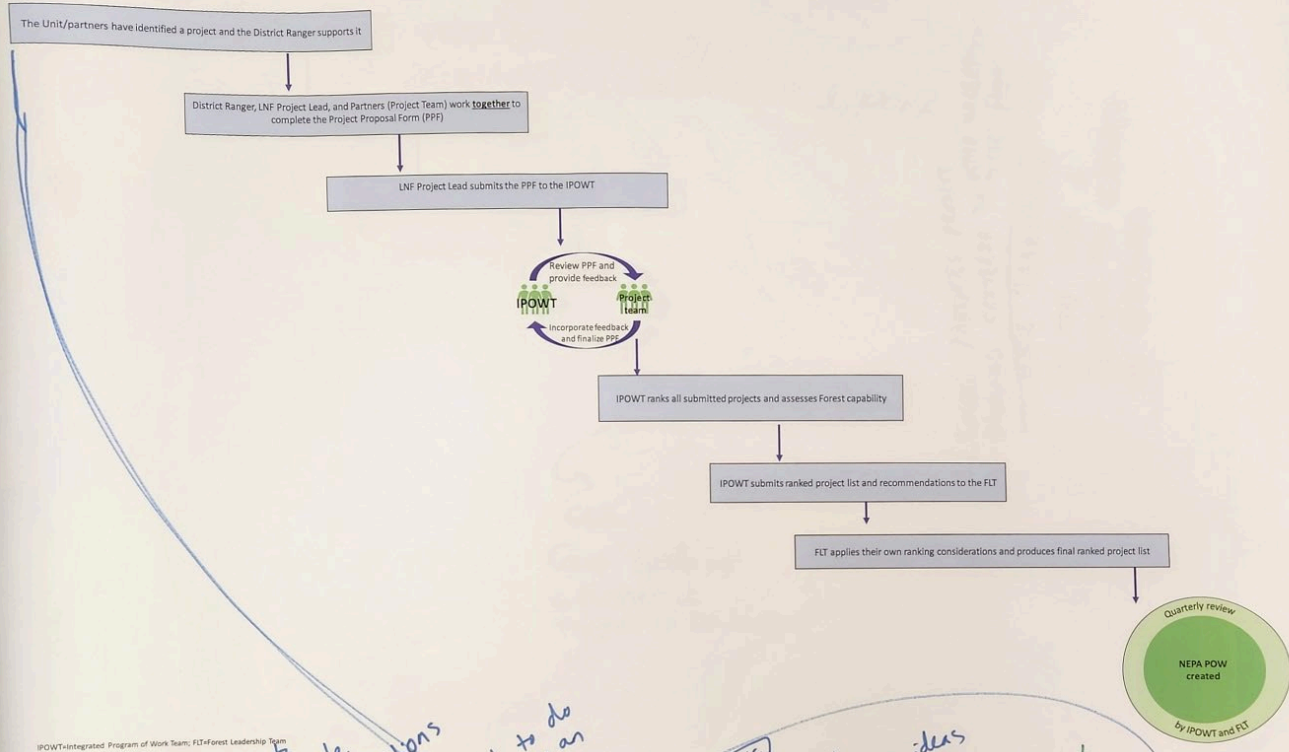
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Have NEPA documents contain publicly viewable visuals of desired conditions (veg, trails, streams, whatever)
 Each activity that you would need to do to get to a desired condition would have an activity card with:
 -ID's

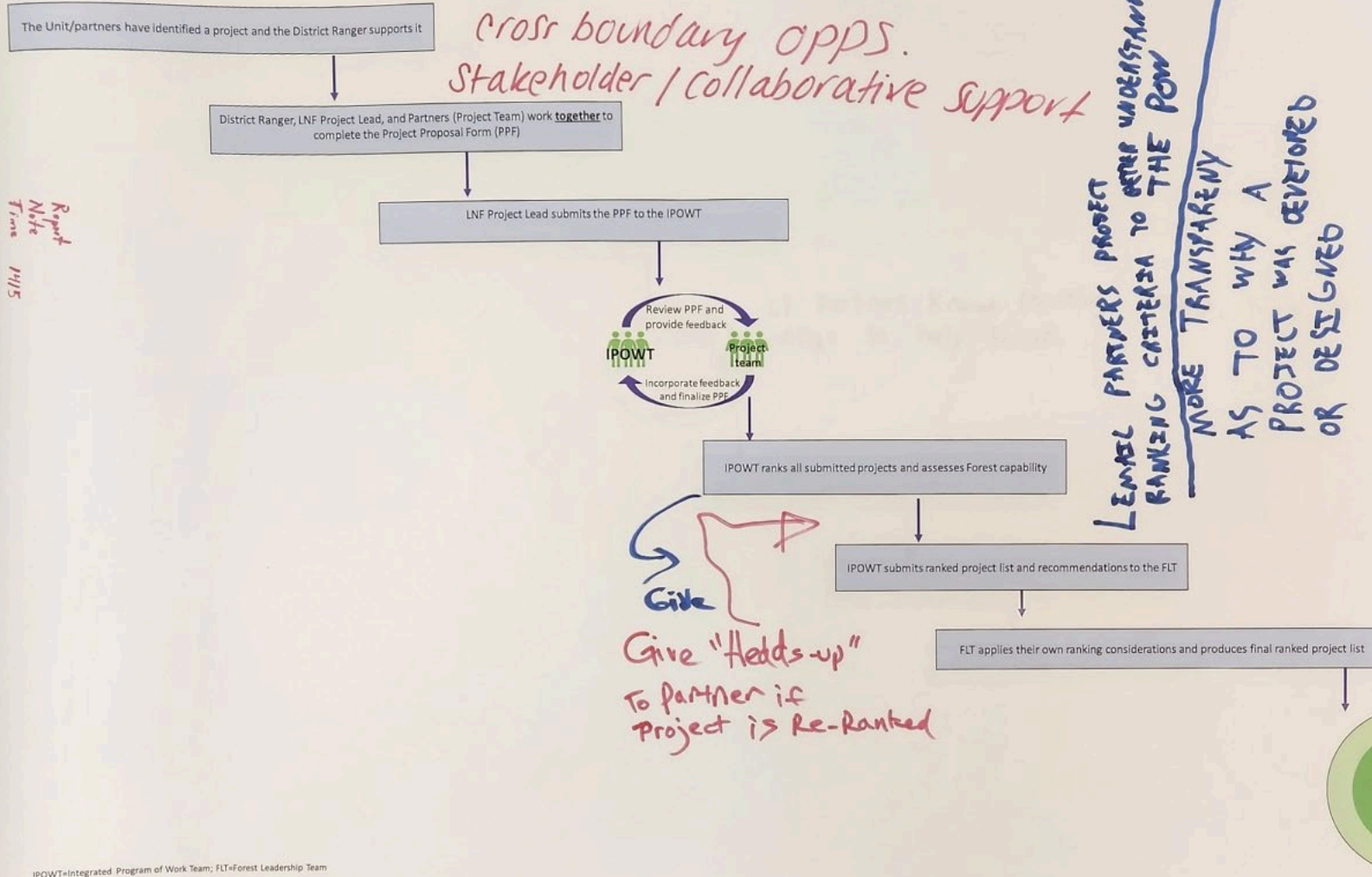
ONGOING
 Potential recurring meetings where partners bring their ideas & LNF brings their ideas
 IF projects overlap/are adjacent, LNF can broker alliances/coops

Transitioning into Implement'n pow:
 To attract & retain good partners, consider committing at least some of a projects implementation work to the partner(s) that planned the project. (if they want it)



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