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# CFLRP 10 Year Results and Lessons Learned Summary Series

Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project, OR

The Collaborative Approach

*The purpose of this document is to summarize the results and lessons learned from the “Collaborative Approach” theme in the comprehensive* [*Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) 10 Years of Results and Lessons Learned*](https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/documents/cflrp/CFLRP_LessonsLearnedCompiled20201016.pdf) *report. Please review the report for details and resources.*

## **Overview**

The CFLRP’s requirement for collaboration creates opportunities for participants to influence decision-making and affect outcomes. Over 420 unique organizations and 560 individuals were represented across the 23 CFLRP collaboratives.Participants include businesses, non-profit organizations, local, State and Tribal governments, private landowners, and federal agencies. Fostering relationships through collaboration is an investment in communities that pays dividends within and beyond CFLRP.

## **Key Results and Lessons Learned**

## ***The Benefits of Collaboration:***

## *Collaboration creates opportunities to generate more and multiple benefits and increase the impact of our shared work for shared benefits.*

* ***Expanded innovation and outcomes****.* Relationships forged through collaboratives provide critical capacity in terms of acres treated, process efficiencies, scientific expertise, traditional knowledge, community engagement, and securing additional funding. A survey of Forest Service staff and partners found 77% agreed collaborative participation improves implementation and 81% said more restoration is happening due to collaboration.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* ***Enhanced trust.*** Trust,between partners and between partners and the Forest Service, enables shared ownership of risk, increases support for restoration activities, and enables innovation.Trust is difficult to earn and easy to lose. 70% of CFLRP projects cited relationship building as the most important community benefit.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* ***Decreased conflict over management decisions***. A survey of Forest Service staff and partners found that 60% reported decreased conflict.[[3]](#footnote-3) In a 2018 survey of Forest Service staff, 61% of respondents said they decreased litigation.[[4]](#footnote-4) Collaboration does not necessarily prevent litigation, especially suits brought by entities operating outside of the collaborative.
* ***Better decision-making****.* Respondent’s to the survey of Forest Service staff and partners showed that 82% agreed that collaboration improves Agency decision-making, including improved NEPA processes and outcomes, changes to contracting and prescription development, inclusion of more perspectives, and leveraging knowledge through multi-party monitoring.[[5]](#footnote-5) Some noted that “better” didn’t mean faster, but rather more effective long-term outcomes.

## ***What are some of the key best practices for dealing with common challenges?***

* Over 80% of survey respondents said a **history of collaboration** and an **effective communication strategy** with stakeholders were success factors.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* **Common challenges** included turnover in personnel, a history of distrust, lack of agreement around shared goals, receptivity of Forest Service line officers to collaborative input, time and capacity needed to collaborate, impacts of litigation, effective collaboration in project implementation, translating the collaboration vision into contacts and agreements, and “FACA-phobia.”

### Best Practice Summary *(for additional resources, see* [*full CFLRP results and lessons learned*](https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/documents/cflrp/CFLRP_LessonsLearnedCompiled20201016.pdf) *report)*

* **Invest in building trust and working relationships** with partners and community members, and recognize it takes time to do so.
* **Start with what you have in common**–the shared vision for desired objectives for the landscape.
* **Develop expectations with the group for how it will function** at the beginning, including ground rules, a charter, and organizational structure and revisit to adapt, as needed. Every group will be different, but proactively discussing the structure and processes of the group upfront can support success.
* Consider **establishing and documenting the “zones of agreement,”** or consensus, where partners and stakeholders agree on a shared vision for restoration outcomes.
* **Subcommittees** that focus on different projects or topics can help spread out the workload and engage more stakeholders in issues of interest to them.
* Use a **third-party, neutral facilitator** to start the group off on the right foot or navigate contentious issues.
* **Take good notes at meetings and field trips and share them**. Notes can serve as a valuable reference and establish accountability and transparency.
* **Go out into the field** to help resolve conflicts. It is nearly always the best way! Remember to have fun and spend time building social connections.
* Recognize that the Forest Service doesn’t need to run everything; **partners can take the lead**. **Recognize and leverage everyone’s skills and interests** to encourage shared ownership and increase capacity.
* **Start with smaller projects** to build trust, expectations, and capacity before tackling more difficult projects.
* Continue to ask, “Who’s not at the table?”
* **Explore creative ways to work together** in project planning, implementation, and monitoring. Can partners be involved in writing NEPA documents? Completing surveys? Marking trees?
* Use **best available science and site-specific monitoring** as your guide for working through controversy.
* **Seek strong line-officer support for collaboration**. It is critical for creating a shared vision and expectation.
* **Partnerships expand what the Forest can accomplish, and they require investment from the Forest**. There is a basic level of partnership capacity on the Forest that must be maintained to be effective.
* **Recognize the importance of continuity in building and maintaining effective working relationships and communication**. When a turnover in personnel must occur, consider ways to involve partners in bringing in key new staff, including devoted time to meet with partners and using the handover memo.

## ***What have we learned about who participates and how to structure collaboration?***

* The structure of collaboratives varies. Many collaboratives have a charter, memorandum of understanding, operating principles, or other guidelines for structuring work together. Many use working groups. By creating mutually agreed upon purposes and processes they establish clear communication and roles.
* Collaboratives may create recommendations for treatment proposals in specific areas, respond to Forest Service-developed proposals, or develop [zones of agreement](https://www.bluemountainsforestpartners.org/work/zones-of-agreement/). Consensus with a back-up option (such as unanimous minus one of two-thirds majority) when consensus can’t be reached is common.
* Some collaboratives are more informal partner networks, often in places with a strong shared vision and minimal contention. This approach may be riskier when unexpected change or contention arises.

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Participating organizations tend to be local and regional, with some national organizations participating in several CFLRP projects. Most survey respondents said organizations with a stake in the CFLRP are engaged.[[7]](#footnote-7)

## **Where to Learn More *(selected resources from*** [***CFLRP Results and Lessons Learned***](https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/documents/cflrp/CFLRP_LessonsLearnedCompiled20201016.pdf)***)***

* The [CFLR Resource Library](https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/CFLRP/resource-library.php) includes links to resources to support collaboration
* [National Forest Foundation Practice of Collaboration Website](https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/learning-topics/collaboration) with peer learning sessions like [FACAPhobia](https://nationalforestfoundation.adobeconnect.com/_a961852781/p7mrot5kdl5/?proto=true)
* Best practices on creating resilience through transition include the USFS [Handover Memo](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/prc/tools-techniques/collaboration/?cid=STELPRDB5155747&width=full)
* The [National Collaboration Cadre](https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/collaborative_processes/default.htm) is a network of people who work with National Forests and collaboratives to support effective collaboration. Resources include: [Building a Solid Foundation for Collaborative Efforts](https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/collaborative_processes/documents/BldgASolidFoundationForCollabEfforts-508.pdf) and [Maintaining the Foundation of Collaborative Groups](https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/collaborative_processes/documents/MaintainingTheFoundatnOfCollabGrps-508.pdf)
* [Collaboration at Arm's Length](http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A207228) (Butler, William 2013)
* “[Making and Breaking Trust in Forest Collaborative Groups](https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/57068)” (Davis et al 2018)

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## **Next Steps:**

CFLRP offers valuable insights into effective and meaningful collaboration over time. Important barriers remain to supporting collaboration across units and individuals. Program staff are assessing ongoing challenges, identifying opportunities, and carrying out next steps with colleagues and partners.

1. National Forest Foundation CFLRP 2020 Collaboration Indicator Survey Results - <https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Collaboration-Indicator-Survey-Results-2020-publish.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2019 Annual Reports - <https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/CFLRP/results.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. National Forest Foundation CFLRP 2020 Collaboration Indicator Survey Results [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Strategies for Success Under Forest Service Restoration Authorities” <https://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/WP_81.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. National Forest Foundation CFLRP 2020 Collaboration Indicator Survey Results [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Strategies for Success Under Forest Service Restoration Authorities” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. National Forest Foundation CFLRP 2020 Collaboration Indicator Survey Results [↑](#footnote-ref-7)