Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration

Best Practices Guidebook

Sustainable Northwest

Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration: Best Practices Guidebook

Sustainable Northwest

813 SW Alder, Suite 500

Portland, Oregon 97205

(503) 221-6911

www.sustainablenorthwest.org

Prepared by:

Alden Boetsch

This publication was prepared with funding from the U.S. Forest Service. Sustainable Northwest would like to thank the following people for reviewing this document. Any errors in the text are the responsibility of Sustainable Northwest.

Carol Daly, Flathead Economic Policy Center

Peggy Kain, USDA Forest Service

Marcus Kauffman, Resource Innovations

Marianne Klingler, USDA Forest Service

Margaret Petersen, USDA Forest Service

Sustainable Northwest

Contents

Introduction

Collaboration offers opportunities to find solutions to commonly identified problems that are often more durable than those made using less inclusive decision making methods. As an administratively required element of stewardship contracting projects, collaboration can help bring about comprehensive restoration solutions implemented with broad support.

This guide is intended to provide information to Forest Service and non-agency representatives anticipating involvement in, or already participating in, stewardship contracting collaborative groups. It includes information on opportunities for collaboration throughout the stewardship contracting process, offers suggestions of best practices for each step, and includes links to a wealth of additional resources.

Definitions

What Is Stewardship Contracting?

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are authorized by Congress to enter into stewardship contracting projects until 2013.[1] Stewardship contracting is a tool the agencies can use "to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests that meet local and rural community needs."[2] A number of authorities make stewardship contracting unique. The following definitions, unless otherwise noted, came from Forest Service Contracting: A Basic Guide for Restoration Practitioners.[3]

Best value contracting: Projects using stewardship contracting authorities must be awarded on a best value basis, which means that factors other than price must be considered. The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook explains that "these non-price criteria include, but are not limited to, the contractor's past performance, work quality, existing public or private agreements or contracts, on-time delivery, experience, technical approach, and benefits to the local community."[4]

Goods for services: The Forest Service and BLM may apply the value of timber or other forest products removed as an offset against any services received from the contractor.

Retention of receipts: Funds received from the sale of forest products or vegetation removed under a stewardship contract may be retained by the agencies and used for other appropriate work on the same or other stewardship project locations.

Multi-year contracting: Contracts used to implement stewardship projects may have terms of up to 10 years.

Designation by description: The agency can describe the trees that should be removed or retained by using verifiable characteristics; such as, the species and diameters of trees. This can be accomplished without marking individual trees.[5]

Designation by prescription: The agency can specify the end result expected to be achieved on the ground and then allow the contractor to propose the methods to be used to achieve that result, including which individual trees to cut. This authority enables land managers and contractors to more effectively deal with unique or changing forest conditions, and takes better advantage of qualified contractors' professional skills and knowledge.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is an approach frequently used by public land managers to inform decision-making and develop and implement land use projects. The term "collaboration" is often used in natural resource management contexts to describe the process of people with different perspectives working together to solve a problem.

Because collaboration includes multiple perspectives in the decision making process, the solutions developed through collaborative action are often more durable and more widely supported than if they had been made using less inclusive forms of decision making.

As it relates to stewardship contracting, the Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook defines collaboration as:

> "A process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond what any one group could envision alone."[6]

Collaboration also means working together with 'local interests' and 'key stakeholders' including "cooperating federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, non-government organizations, local communities, and any interested groups or individuals, as appropriate."[7] These groups or individuals can include, but are not limited to "resource advisory committees, fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, and watershed councils."[8]

Please refer to the *How to Collaborate* section of this document for more detailed information about collaboration.

Legal & Policy Requirements

Although the legislation (PL 105-277) authorizing stewardship contracting does not mandate that collaboration be a part of stewardship contracting, the Forest Service and the BLM have adopted policies requiring that field staff engage in collaboration when conducting stewardship contracting projects.

The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook states that "collaboration shall be a part of stewardship contracting project planning and continue throughout the life of the project."[9] The Handbook provides guidance on the stewardship contracting process and contains information on the policy requirements and suggested strategies for collaborating during the process.

Preparing To Collaborate

Getting Started

Collaboration is required throughout the stewardship contracting process. The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook states that collaboration should be used from the beginning "to guide the agency in determining specific lands to be treated and types of restoration work activities to be conducted", and then "throughout the life of the project, from project design through implementation and monitoring." [10]

The District Ranger is the primary person responsible for maintaining collaboration during the stewardship contracting process, although other Forest Service personnel involved in a project will almost certainly participate in collaborative activities as well.[11] However, Forest Service personnel may not serve as the chair of the collaborative group, or direct the group.[12]

Before beginning the stewardship contracting process the District Ranger should seek out a collaborative group with which to work.

In some cases a collaborative group may already exist. Groups like "resource advisory committees, fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, and watershed councils" are identified in the Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook as potential collaborative groups with which to work on a stewardship contracting project. [13] This is not an exclusive list however, and it's important not to overlook other collaborative groups that might already exist.

If a collaborative group does not already exist, a community member, a non-governmental organization or the District Ranger can create one.

Community members who could be helpful in initiating a collaborative group include those with strong community connections who could bring others together. For example, elected or informal community leaders, or those involved in civic activities.

Please refer to the "How to Collaborate" section for detailed information on initiating a collaborative group.

Creating an Internal Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Team

When preparing to collaborate on a stewardship contracting project, it's a good idea for the Forest Service to put together a team of agency employees who will work together and be involved throughout the process. The expertise of the members of this team should reflect the main elements of the project; silviculture, wildlife biology, and fuels management, for example.

The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook offers the following guidance on creating an internal stewardship contracting project team:

> "Line officers should involve a team made up of appropriate contract or agreement specialists, financial management specialists, and resource management specialists early in the development of stewardship contracting projects. This internal stewardship contracting project team can work in collaboration with the public, coordinate the needs and roles of various Forest Service staffs, and provide recommendations on decisions relative to a project. Such early involvement facilitates development of stewardship contracting projects that are feasible and can be implemented in accordance with appropriate authorities. Development of feasible projects helps maintain credibility with the local community."[14]

A Forest Service Collaborative Liaison should be identified at the outset of the collaborative process. The Collaborative Liaison is usually the District Ranger, but the responsibility can be delegated to another Forest Service employee who has the authority to act and speak for the District Ranger. The Liaison's role is to provide information to the collaborative group on the stewardship contracting process, as well as information about how Forest Service policy, direction and potential budgetary constraints relate to any activities proposed by the group.[15]

Opportunities For Collaboration

The following section provides information on opportunities for collaboration during the three major phases of a stewardship contracting project; completing the NEPA process, project implementation, and project monitoring.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies carry out an environmental review of the potential impacts of any significant action that could affect the environment.

Completing the NEPA process is an essential first step toward using stewardship contracting authorities to get work done on the ground. The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook describes stewardship contracting as "a tool to achieve restoration objectives that have been identified through the normal planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes."[16]

There are a number of opportunities for public involvement and collaboration during the NEPA process including during the pre-proposal, scoping and documentation stages. Ideally, the members of the collaborative group that are involved in the upfront collaboration during the pre-proposal stage will also be involved during the scoping and documentation stages. Having this overlap ensures the continuation of the process of sharing information, identifying potential challenges and opportunities, building trust, and developing working relationships between the Forest Service and members of the collaborative group.

The pre-proposal stage can be the richest and most valuable time during the NEPA process for a collaborative group to be involved in a transparent way, as it offers the most opportunity to influence the project before a formal NEPA proposal is made.[17] It is also a good time for the Forest Service to get input from outside partners on how to identify and resolve potential problems, or address potential controversy before the proposal is finalized.[18]

The Forest Service Partnership Guide includes helpful information on opportunities for the public to be involved during most of the stages of the NEPA process. For example:

- During the pre-proposal stage "groups can solve problems, refine proposals, and resolve possible controversies in the design of the proposal prior to formal public comment."[19]
- During the scoping stage "citizens can get involved by helping the agency identify issues, identifying persons who need to be contacted, and even helping collect public input."[20]

- In the documentation stage, under agency guidance "partners can help collect field information, provide alternatives to the proposal, or help analyze effects within their area of expertise."[21]

The Quick Guide to Collaboration and the NEPA Process[i] published by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, also provides a good summary of collaborative opportunities during the pre-proposal and documentation stages of the NEPA process.

Project design

During the NEPA process there are a number of opportunities for a collaborative group to get involved in conceptual project design. These include helping determine generally what kinds of restoration work should occur, and the area in which projects should occur.

Types of work

Input from the collaborative group on what type of work should occur can be gathered in a number of ways including meetings to share ideas and concerns and field trips to prospective project sites.

Meetings are an opportunity to share information and expertise among group members, as well as a chance to identify and work through any concerns or conflicts.

Field trips are good opportunities for learning and for connecting some of the ideas discussed during group meetings to an 'on the ground' example. Visiting potential project sites and discussing the logistics of, concerns about, and support for different treatments is a good way to help the group develop recommendations for the Forest Service.

One technique for getting the conversation started is to pick a sample area and let group members with similar perspectives divide up and decide what types of work they would recommend be completed. Discussing the rational behind these decisions can be a productive way of finding common ground as well as identifying areas of disagreement that the group can continue to work through.

If the collaborative group is large, consider breaking up into project subgroups that then report back to the full group. Creating smaller subgroups whose membership reflects that of the larger group can be an efficient way to engage collaborative group members and allow the group to assess a greater number of projects.

Project location and community benefit

The range of expertise represented in the collaborative group can be a helpful resource for getting a sense of where the community thinks priority areas for restoration are. The different perspectives represented can also be helpful in determining how projects would benefit the local workforce.

Identifying project areas during group meetings can be accomplished through discussions of the overall goals of the project, the desired outcome once the project has been implemented, and the community's ecological and economic priorities. Once these broader goals are established, looking at maps of potential areas together, gathering and reviewing scientific and economic data, and going on field trips to visit potential sites are all good ways to identify project locations.

[i] The Quick Guide to Collaboration and the NEPA process can be found at http://www.pinchot.org/pubs/?startnum=21

Project Implementation

Once the NEPA process has been completed, and the Regional Forester has approved the stewardship contracting proposal,[ii] project implementation can begin.

At this point, it's a good idea to hold a meeting with the collaborative group and other stakeholders to review and familiarize everyone with the stewardship contract process again. Discussing topics like opportunities for collaboration throughout the process and what factors are considered in making decisions will help orient group members.

Please refer to the *How to Collaborate* section of this document for more information and resources on structuring and participating in a collaborative effort.

Types of work and project location

The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook states that input from the collaborative group "should be used to guide the agency in determining specific lands to be treated and types of restoration work activities to be conducted" and that "the project location and size should be determined through the collaborative process considering the objective of local workforce benefits and other benefits tied to the scale of rural community economics."[22]

The development of stewardship projects rarely happens in isolation; existing Forest Service work plans and approved NEPA projects often influence the process of deciding where stewardship projects occur. Therefore, the collaborative group often helps prioritize a list of projects for which the Forest Service has already completed NEPA documentation. Even if this is the case, there is still room for innovation using best value criteria, goods for services, retained receipts and multiparty monitoring to achieve the collaborative group's goals for the project.

Using retained receipts

One of the unique aspects of using stewardship contracting authorities is that funds generated from the sale of material removed under a stewardship contract do not have to be deposited in the U.S. Treasury. Instead, they can be retained by the Forest Service and applied to other stewardship projects.

When developing stewardship contracting projects, it's a good idea to discuss how any retained receipts generated from the project will be used. The collaborative group should be involved in deciding if the funds will be used to support another stewardship contracting project in the same area, a project in a different area, project level multi-party process monitoring or even to help defray some of the costs of the collaborative process like facilitation fees or travel expenses.[23] Involving the collaborative group in this decision can help build momentum and support for ongoing projects, as well as keep the group engaged in future stewardship contracting efforts.

[ii] To see a copy of a Forest Service Region 6 Stewardship Contracting Proposal visit: http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fp/Stewardship/Stewardship_Contracting_Proposal_7-23-07.doc

Pre-Project Implementation Monitoring

It might seem a little early to discuss project monitoring before work on the ground has even begun, but the information obtained through monitoring is an integral part of the adaptive management process. Being able to track the results of the work and see what is working and what could be improved along the way leads to a stronger overall outcome. Project monitoring also gives the collaborative group a good way to track its progress, which can help keep group members engaged.

Developing a monitoring team that includes members of the collaborative group early has its advantages. The team can develop the monitoring methods that will be used once the project is implemented so that little time is lost once work begins. The monitoring team can also help collect baseline data about the existing conditions in the project area before the project is implemented and identify any gaps in current data.

Addressing monitoring early in the process will build trust among members of the collaborative group and between the group and the Forest Service. Also, having a post project implementation monitoring plan that collaborative group members have confidence in can help the group progress when addressing more controversial issues.

Retained receipts from stewardship contracting projects can help pay for project level monitoring. According to the Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook, "Items to be monitored and monitoring protocols, as agreed upon within the collaborative group and recommended to the line officer, may be funded with retained receipts, appropriate funds, grants, volunteers, contribution from organizations, and so forth. Forest Supervisors shall approve monitoring activities and determine the appropriate levels of use of retained receipts and appropriated funds in support of project level multi-party monitoring. Regional Foresters shall approve the use of retained receipts for project level monitoring."[24]

Contract development

Once a stewardship contracting project has been designed, a decision has been made about what to do with any retained receipts, and a monitoring team has been created, it's time to develop a stewardship contract.

There are a number of ways a collaborative group can be involved during this stage of the process including helping determine what kind of work the contract will accomplish and which factors should be considered when proposals are evaluated. Involving the collaborative group in developing the contract can help ensure that a broad range of community needs is addressed.

Since collaborative group members often have a good understanding of the ecological and economic needs of the community, their input can be very helpful when developing the best value criteria for the contract. Collaborative group participation in developing the technical proposal requirements and the proposal evaluation ranking and weighting factors can be very valuable. The Best Value and Stewardship Contracting Guidebook[iii] contains a number of examples of technical approach, capability and past performance criteria used in projects throughout the Northwest.

One of the benefits of using stewardship contracting is that it allows for the bundling of different kinds of work into the same contract. For example, wildlife habitat restoration could be combined with non-native

[iii] The Best Value and Stewardship Contracting Guidebook can be found at http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/Best%20value%20guidebook.pdf

invasive species removal, or watershed restoration could be combined with road removal. Creating contracts for a variety of types of work helps build and broaden community capacity to complete it, which can increase economic opportunity.

Another way the collaborative group can be involved in developing the contract is by helping define what constitutes 'local community'; a necessary element in evaluating a proposal's ability to create community benefit.[25]

Contractor Involvement

Including contractors in the contract development stage can help the Forest Service create contracts for work that contractors are interested in and able to accomplish; an essential step toward project implementation. However, contractors who wish to compete for the contract should not be involved in a way that would give them an unfair advantage over others competing for the contract. This means either recusing themselves from this stage of the process, or making sure that all potential offerors have access to the same information as contractors who are involved in the collaborative process.

The Forest Service is also allowed to conduct market research that includes "conducting interchange meetings or holding pre-solicitation conferences to involve potential offerors early in the acquisition process."[26]

Some examples of stewardship contracts can be found on the Forest Service's stewardship contracting website[iv], the Forest Service's Region 6 stewardship contracting website[v], and in the Best Value and Stewardship Contracting Guidebook[vi].

Confirming Contract Reflects NEPA Document

Once the contract has been developed, involving the collaborative group in confirming that it reflects what was intended by the NEPA document is a good way of ensuring that everything the group has worked on translated through the multiple process steps.

One way to do this is to have the collaborative group help compare the NEPA document and the contract. Another way is to include the collaborative group in a field trip with the NEPA team to field check the contents of the contract.

Contract Solicitation

Once the stewardship contract is developed, it's time to put it out for solicitation. The collaborative group can help generate interest among contractors in applying for stewardship contracts, as well as help foster a greater understanding of the process. Developing orientation sessions about the projects or putting on general workshops about stewardship contracting are two ways to do this.

The Forest Service has developed a presentation called "Everything You Wanted to Know About

---

iv http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/contracts/index.shtml
v http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fp/FPWebPage/FP70104A/Stewardship.htm
vi http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/Best%20value%20guidebook.pdf

Stewardship End Result Contracting"[vii] that could be a helpful resource in developing a stewardship contracting workshop.

Contractor Selection

Collaborative group members' expertise can be a good resource to use when evaluating the technical proposals submitted during the stewardship contracting process. Including at least one member of the collaborative group on the technical evaluation team is one way to benefit from the collective knowledge and expertise of the group. Care must be taken to ensure that collaborative group members serving on evaluation teams have no potential conflicts of interest.

Implementation

One of the benefits of collaboration is that it can help identify potential areas of controversy as well as aid in the resolution of controversy before a project is implemented. Ideally, the communication between collaborative group members and their constituency groups during the process will build support for projects along the way. However, if controversy does arise during implementation, the knowledge and perspective collaborative group members have gained during the project development process can be helpful in resolving any issues.

Collaborative group members often have a wealth of technical expertise that can be used as a resource during the project implementation stage as the need arises. For example, contractors may have information they could share with the Forest Service on innovative equipment or techniques.

In addition, collaborative groups can sometimes help raise money to fund project implementation. For example, groups might be able to raise money to help support monitoring efforts, the collaborative process itself, or other aspects of the project that the Forest Service may not have the funds to support.

Project Implementation Monitoring

Involving the collaborative group in project implementation monitoring is a good way to ensure that the project is meeting its objectives. Ideally, a monitoring team consisting of members of the collaborative group and others has been involved in collecting baseline data before the project is implemented. Once implementation begins, this same team can continue to participate by gathering data, evaluating the results, and presenting their findings and recommendations to the Forest Service and the larger collaborative group.

The Forest Service Partnership Resource Center website[viii] contains a wealth of information on monitoring including guide and handbooks on how to develop and implement a monitoring program.

To get a visual sense of the general steps in the stewardship contracting process refer to "Steps Toward Stewardship".[ix]

[vii] A copy of this presentation can be found at http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/documents/Every-thingYouWantedtoKnowAboutSC.pdf

[viii] http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/

[ix] http://www.uoregon.edu/~cwch/publicationspress/Other%20Info/process%20proposal%20summary.pdf

How To Collaborate

There is a wealth of web-based information on how to engage in a collaborative effort including:

- The Forest Service Partnership Resource Center[x] offers a number of training modules[xi] with information on how to collaborate;
- The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative[xii] has developed step-by-step guidance[xiii] on how to collaborate;
- The Collaboration Handbook[xiv], published by the Red Lodge Clearinghouse[xv] is another good resource for information on how to develop a successful collaborative effort; and
- The Western Collaborative Assistance Network (WestCAN)[xvi] provides technical assistance and links to peer coaches for participants in a collaborative group, as well as a web-based resource library[xvii] of information about collaboration.

Another way to get ideas about what works and what challenges a collaborative group might encounter is to a visit other successful collaborative groups in the area or invite some of the leaders from those efforts to speak to a newly formed group.

---

x http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/index.shtml
xi http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/training/collaborative-training/
xii http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/
xiii http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/index.htm
xiv http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf
xv http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/home.html?CFID=1160689&CFTOKEN=fe54a9db5eb10bd7-C7B6E8A4-15-C5-E1E2-3ED348AF16125E26
xvi http://westcanhelp.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=15
xvii http://westcanhelp.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=13

Creating a Collaborative Group

One of the first steps in a collaborative effort is developing the collaborative group. In order to be able to find mutually beneficial, durable solutions, it's important to include a broad representation of people whose interests will be affected by the outcomes of the decisions made.

The Collaboration Handbook offers these five questions to consider when initiating a collaborative effort: [27]

- Who are the existing players, the people who are already actively involved in the public debate on the problem(s) you plan to address?
- Who has broad credibility and respect in the community and/or with key stakeholder groups?
- Who are the people or organizations who stand to win or lose the most if current problems are not resolved?
- Who has special skills or knowledge that might be needed in crafting and carrying out good proposed solutions?
- Who has the power to make decisions and take actions that may be needed to implement proposed solutions?

The Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook identifies "Federal, state, and local government agencies; tribal governments; non-governmental organizations; local communities; and interested groups or individuals" as well as "contractors representing a cross-section of businesses, including timber industry representatives" as potential sources for collaborative group members.[28]

Involving contractors in the collaborative group can be helpful in terms of getting feedback on what the best technologies are to get work done, what they could do with material that would be generated from the stewardship contract, and what could be the potential local benefit.

The Forest Service is allowed to conduct market research through meetings with contractors early on in the acquisition process to get a sense of what type of work could be completed.[29] However, if a contractor plans to compete for the project, they shouldn't be involved in a way that would give them an unfair advantage over others competing for the contract. It's important that contractors either recuse themselves from certain stages of the process, or that all potential offerors have access to the same information as contractors who are involved in the collaborative process.

Participant Recruitment

Once you've begun to determine who should participate in a collaborative effort, how do you get them to join? The Collaboration Handbook includes guidance on how to recruit participants to a collaborative group including how to ask people, and who should do the asking: [30]

> "*Who should do it?* Ideally, one of your group's founders who knows and has a good relationship with a candidate should make the first approach. If no one knows the person being recruited, then someone will have to "cold call" him, explaining how you got his name, giving some basic information about the collaborative, and answering any immediate questions.
>
> *How should it be done?* Extend the invitation in person whenever possible, and at a time and place the candidate will be able to give the matter her full attention. Usually a telephone call is made to arrange an appointment. Some people may want to meet in their home or office. Others will be more comfortable having lunch or coffee at another location, so they will be less likely to be distracted. Obviously this technique won't work with out of area individuals or groups. In that case, one or more telephone calls may be necessary, generally followed by a letter confirming the matters discussed.
>
> *What should the recruitment meeting or call cover?*
>
> - Introductions (if necessary)
> - Background information – What problems does the collaborative propose to tackle? Why is a collaborative approach being used? How does a collaborative group function? What are the group's goals? (Provide a copy of your initial mission/goal statement) Why is this person being recruited (because of some particular skills, a demonstrated interest in the issues, a recommendation from another member, etc.)?
> - Commitment being requested – What's the proposed meeting schedule? Will joining require a long-term commitment, or is the effort expected to be of short duration? How much time will be required? What other requirements are there? Will the candidate be expected to "represent" a particular stakeholder group or organization?
> - General discussion – Answer any other questions the candidate may have and solicit her ideas/opinions about the issues or the collaborative process itself.
> - Closing – Ask for an answer. "Are you willing to participate? Do you need some time to think about it? When should we call again to get your response? We really hope you'll join. We think your participation will make a big difference."

Holding Effective Meetings

Once the collaborative group is convened and its time to start holding meetings, there are a few things to keep in mind to make sure the meetings are as effective as possible. The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative has prepared some helpful guidelines on structuring effective meetings that include suggestions on how to properly prepare for meetings, the important components of a meeting, and how to effectively conduct a meeting. Below is an outline of the suggested steps. For more detailed information and explanations of these categories, please refer directly to "Structuring Effective Meetings."[31xviii]

Preparation

- Choosing the right time
- Choosing the right location
- Developing and circulating an agenda
- Arranging the meeting room

Important Components of the Meeting:

- Build in time for information sharing
- Build in time at the end to summarize and discuss next steps
- Build in social time

Conducting the Meeting:

- Respect people's time
- Designate a facilitator responsible for ensuring the meeting stays on track
- Establish a common understanding of the problem, issue, or question to be addressed
- Establish and follow joint ground rules and develop a common understanding of the process\Promote shared decision making
- Follow the agenda
- Take minutes
- Promote a positive climate

[xviii] A copy of this document can be downloaded from http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/Structuring%20Effective%20Meetings.pdf

Mission Statement

Developing a mission or vision statement will help the collaborative group determine what it would like to accomplish. A good mission statement concisely conveys the group's purpose and goals. For examples of mission statements from existing collaborative groups, refer to:

- The Red Lodge Clearing House's Collaboration Handbook[xix]; and
- The compilation of mission statements put together by the University of Michigan's Ecosystem Management Initiative. [xx]

Participant Roles and Responsibilities

Defining the roles and responsibilities of collaborative group participants provides structure to the group and will help it function more efficiently and effectively. Some key roles to consider include:

- Collaborative group coordinator(s) who serve as the main contact for the group. The coordinator(s) are responsible for preparing meeting agendas, scheduling meetings, and distributing information among group members.
- Note taker(s) who record the proceeding of the meeting, synthesize them into minutes, and distribute them to the group.
- Meeting facilitator(s) who help move the group through decisions, dispute resolution, and generally keep everyone on track during meetings. Facilitators can be members of the group, or an outside party.

Ground Rules and Group Protocols

Developing ground rules and group protocols will help establish a constructive tone for group interactions. Ground rules don't have to be elaborate. For example, the Collaboration Handbook lists the following six things as example ground rules:[32]

- Be civil. It's okay to criticize ideas, but not the people who offer them.
- Listen actively. Think about what the current speaker is saying, not what you want to say next.
- Keep an open mind.
- Focus on finding solutions, not fixing blame.
- Keep cell phones turned off (or on vibrate).
- Enjoy.

xix http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf
xx http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/updated%20mission,vision.pdf

Making Decisions

It's important to establish how the collaborative group will make decisions early on in the collaborative process. This will help assure participants that the group will consider everyone's concerns before any decisions are made. There are a number of ways for a collaborative group to make decisions including consensus, informed consent, and voting.

Making decisions by consensus means that action can be taken only if all the group members are in agreement. Informed consent is a form of decision making where it's okay for the group to move forward on a decision even if not all the group members can endorse it without reservation, as long as those members are willing to let the action be taken. Voting is less common among collaborative groups, and usually requires at least two thirds of the group to be in agreement to move forward.[33]

From time to time collaborative groups have trouble making decisions. The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative has an online tool for diagnosing decision-making issues[xxi] that could help get to the root of the problem so the group can move forward.

---

xxi http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/make_decisions/diagnosing.htm

Facilitation

Some collaborative groups designate a participant or participants to help facilitate the group, while others decide to hire a facilitator, or recruit a volunteer facilitator from outside the group. Facilitators can help the group establish ground rules, guide discussion, resolve disputes, make decisions, and generally keep everyone on track.

In determining what kind of facilitator to involve it's important to think through the group's facilitation needs. Identifying which responsibilities should be covered by a facilitator and which can be assumed by group members or hired staff will help the group function more efficiently. Please see the "Participant Roles and Responsibilities" section for more detailed information on what kinds of tasks the group may need to address.

If a collaborative group decides they do have a need for a facilitator, there are a few questions the group should consider in selecting one, including:

- Should the facilitator be familiar with the issue(s) being discussed by the collaborative group (natural resource, community, economic, or other), or is it okay if they are unfamiliar with the topic(s)?
- What style of facilitation would the group benefit from? Does the group need structure, room to be creative, or both?
- Does the facilitator need to be completely neutral, or is it okay if they have a vested interest in the final outcome of the group's work together?
- Should the group distribute facilitation responsibilities among group participants? What are the advantages or disadvantages of this model?
- What type of financial resources does the group have to pay for facilitation services?
- If the group decides to hire a facilitator, there are many resources for finding one.

The Red Lodge Clearinghouse and the University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative have both compiled lists of facilitators around the country.[xxii] Contacting other collaborative groups in the area who have used facilitators is also a good way to get recommendations.

[xxii] To see these lists please visit http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/facilitation.html and http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/resources.htm#nr_services

Learning about Issues

Making decisions about natural resource management issues requires a certain amount of scientific, economic, and social information. It is important for a collaborative group to be able to acquire and share knowledge relative to the projects they are working on so they can make sound recommendations. Going through this process together can build trust among group members and begins to create a common vocabulary and knowledge base from which to work. The University of Michigan's Ecosystem Management Initiative suggests the following three questions as a way to begin the process of group issue exploration: [34]

- What do we need to know before we will feel comfortable making decisions or recommendations on this issue?
- How will we go about trying to fill these information gaps in a way that all of us will view as credible and will accept?
- What are the different perspectives or sources of information about this issue which might provide useful insights to our discussions?

Collaborative groups can increase their collective knowledge by taking field trips with scientific experts, reading research papers relevant to the subject they're exploring, and holding workshops or forums where experts are invited to share their knowledge with the group.

For a helpful summary of some of the more common challenges collaborative groups face when trying to create common scientific understanding among group members, as well as some strategies that different groups have used to surmount these challenges, refer to "Dealing with the Scientific Dimensions of Issues" on the University of Michigan's Ecosystem Management Initiative website.[xxiii]

Changes in Group Membership

Occasionally the composition of a collaborative group changes when existing members leave or new members join. It's important to have a transition strategy in place to anticipate these changes so that prior commitments are honored, institutional knowledge isn't lost, and new members have a sense of the history of the group's work.

One example of how to do this comes from the Forest Service. The agency has recently developed a "Handover Memo" template for Forest Service employees involved with collaborative groups to complete before transitioning out of their positions.[xxiv]

The purpose of the memo is to help inform the Forest Service employee who will be taking over the role of participating with the collaborative group about the group's work. The memo includes sections on describing the group's efforts currently underway, any commitments made to the group, information on communication procedures, and suggestions on how the incoming Forest Service employee can foster and maintain relationships with other group members.

Sharing a complete record of meeting minutes with a new collaborative group participant can also be a way to bring them up to date on the group's activities.

xxiii http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/pubs/crmp/dimensions.PDF
xxiv A copy of the "Handover Memo" can be downloaded from http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/tools/documents/transition-management-of-agency-personnel.pdf

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) is the law that governs how federal agencies interact with citizen-based advisory groups. For the most part, collaborative groups involved in the stewardship contracting process are not subject to FACA, but it's important to know when FACA does and does not apply.

The Partnership Guide[xxv] published by the Forest Service National Partnership Office and the National Forest Foundation includes a helpful chapter on FACA that includes general information about the Act, as well as an interactive tool[xxvi] that helps you determine whether or not a collaborative effort is subject to FACA by asking the following questions: [35]

- Does the group include non-governmental personnel?
- Is the group a "committee" with an organized structure, fixed membership and specific purpose?
- Is a federal agency responsible for creating and organizing the group?
- Is the group subject to strict agency management or control?
- Is the group's primary purpose to provide specific advice or recommendations to the agency?

For the most part, collaborative groups *may* be subject to FACA if they were created by a federal agency, strictly managed by a federal agency, and are primarily responsible for providing specific advice to a federal agency. Collaborative groups *may not* be subject to FACA if they are not created by or strictly managed by a federal agency.

The Partnership Guide also includes links to a number of other resources for additional information on FACA including the websites of the General Services Administration[xxvii], the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of General Council[xxviii], as well as information on Forest Service FACA coordinators.

xxv http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/
xxvi http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/chap8-3b.html
xxvii http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/home.do?tabId=0
xxviii http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=OGC_Index.xml

Communications

Media Relations

The media can offer opportunities for a collaborative group to share information about the work they are doing, but can also present challenges. It's important for a group to determine how they will interact with the media in order to make the most of the opportunities and prepare for the challenges.

The media can be a good vehicle for collaborative groups to spread information to a broad audience. This can be helpful for education purposes, in garnering public support, and in informing and influencing policy decision makers.

One potential challenge of working with the media is overcoming the focus on conflict. News is often fueled by conflict, and since collaborative groups work to find common solutions to shared problems, it's sometimes hard to fit the kind of work being done into the typical news format.

It's also a good idea for the group to discuss if and when they'd be comfortable allowing reporters to attend group meetings.

For groups that are interested in interacting with the media, the University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative website contains helpful information about and suggested strategies for working with the media[xxix] including information on understanding how the media works, how to proactively engage the media, and how to get your message out.

There are four main tools collaborative groups can use when reaching out to the media; press releases, media advisories, op-eds, and white papers. Press releases are used to announce a decision or some sort of finding, media advisories are used to announce an upcoming event, op-eds are commentaries about timely issues and are published on the editorial page of the newspaper, and white papers provide more detailed information on an issue than can be captured using a press release or media advisory.

The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative website contains information on how to write each of these documents as well as samples of each.[xxx]

---

xxix http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/media/Working%20with%20the%20Media.pdf
xxx http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/media/index.htm

Political Relations

Knowing how to strategically interact in the political realm is an important skill for collaborative groups to have. Knowing who can influence the issues the group is working on, how to interpret political connections, and how to reach out to key political players can help the group accomplishing its goals.

The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative website has a wealth of information about how to work in a political context[xxxi] including how to do a political analysis, how to map a political situation, and how to reach out to political actors. The site also includes information on how and when to work with elected officials, the congressional staff structure, and how to write a fact sheet, a one-page summary often used to inform busy elected officials and their staff about the issues your group is working on.

xxxi http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/political/index.htm

Funding for Collaboration

Although collaboration is often a volunteer activity, it can still require funds for things like materials, meeting space, outside facilitation, and collaborative group staff compensation (if such staff exists). There are a number of funding sources available to collaborative groups; however funding can sometimes be difficult to secure. A sample of funding sources is listed below; the majority of these sources contain links to multiple funding sources.

- The Forest Service Partnership Resource Center website[xxxii] contains links to many funding databases including sources for all federal grant programs, Forest Service-specific grant programs, as well as issue-based funding sources. The Forest Service Partnership Resource Center also has links with information on how to write grant proposals.
- The National Forest Foundation provides grants to support local involvement in forest stewardship. More information about the grants and a link to an electronic application can be found on their website.[xxxiii]
- The Red Lodge Clearinghouse website contains a searchable funding database.[xxxiv] The site also includes grant writing tips with some questions to consider when applying for grants, as well as information on different kinds of grants to help you focus your search.[xxxv]
- The Collaboration Handbook contains information on a range of fundraising ideas as well as links to more information on foundation and government grant opportunities.[xxxvi]
- The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative website contains links to a number of funding sources for collaborative efforts.[xxxvii]

xxxii http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/funding/index.php
xxxiii http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/funding/nff_grant_programs.php
xxxiv http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/search.cfm
xxxv http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/grantwriting.html
xxxvi http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/handbook8.html
xxxvii http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/resources.htm#funding

Lessons Learned

Countless stewardship contracting projects have been developed collaboratively and implemented since 1999 when stewardship contracting was first authorized. Likewise, collaboration has been used as a component of land management strategies for years. There are a number of resources available on the experiences of and lessons learned from the collaborative aspect of stewardship contracting, stewardship contracting in general and collaboration in general.

Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration

The Forest Service has compiled on its website summaries of five stewardship contracting projects that focus on the lessons learned from the collaborative process in each.[xxxviii] These summaries highlight what about the process went well, as well as things to be done differently next time. The website for the Community Capacity and the Environment Program[xxxix] at Resource Innovations, University of Oregon Institute for a Sustainable Environment also hosts a number of case studies[xl] about stewardship contracting projects and the collaborative efforts involved.

Stewardship Contracting

There are a number of online resources with information on lessons learned from stewardship contracting experiences including:

- Stewardship Contracting: A Summary of Lessons Learned from the Pilot Experience published by the Pinchot Institute[xli];
- An analysis of information generated during the 2005 Stewardship Contracting Roundtable for the Forest Service Region 6[xlii] published by Sustainable Northwest and the National Forest Foundation); and
- A case Study of a Community Stewardship Success: The White Mountain Stewardship Contract[xliii] published by the Ecological Restoration Institute at the University of Northern Arizona.

xxxviii http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/collaboration/index.shtml
xxxix http://www.uoregon.edu/~cwch/programs/CCE.html
xl http://www.uoregon.edu/~cwch/programs/CCE/stewardshipcontracting.html
xli http://www.pinchot.org/pubs/
xlii http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/pdf/policy/contract/2006scrrfinal.pdf
xliii http://www.eri.nau.edu/joomla/files/NewsEvents/ERI_Bklet_WhiteMtns_S-1.pdf

Collaboration

There are also a number of sources of information on and analysis of collaboration in a natural resource management context. Below is a list of a few resources that have good compilations of information:

- The Forest Service Partnership Resource Center website includes a link to a long list of publications on collaboration.[xliv]
- The University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative website includes many case studies describing and analyzing collaborative natural resource management experiences.[xlv]
- The Red Lodge Clearinghouse website has a searchable database of stories from across the West about collaborative experiences.[xlvi]
- The Western Collaborative Assistance Network website includes a searchable database of case studies and profiles[xlvii] of collaborative natural resource efforts as well as publications on collaborative best practices.[xlviii]

xliv http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/publications/index.php
xlv http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/cases/entry.htm
xlvi http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/stories/index.cfm
xlvii http://westcanhelp.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=4&func=select&id=99
xlviii http://westcanhelp.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=4&func=select&id=100

Resources

The following is a compilation of links to the resources referenced throughout this document as well as some additional sources:

Federal Agencies

Forest Service

Forest Service Renewable Resources Handbook (http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsh/2409.19/2409.19_60.doc)

Forest Service Partnership Resource Center (http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/index.shtml)

Forest Service Partnership Guide (http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/)

Forest Service Stewardship Contracting website (http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/contracts/index.shtml)

Region 6 Stewardship Contracting website (http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fp/FPWebPage/FP70104A/Stewardship.htm)

Bureau of Land Management

Collaboration Desk Guide (http://www.blm.gov/partnerships/Collaboration_Desk_Guide.pdf)

National Park Service

Community Tool Box (http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/index_comtoolbox.htm)

Non-Profits

Red Lodge Clearinghouse

Red Lodge Clearinghouse homepage (http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/home.html?CFID=1160689&CFTOKEN=fe54a9db5eb10bd7-C7B6E8A4-15C5-E1E2-3ED348AF16125E26)

The Collaboration Handbook (http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf)

Sustainable Northwest

Best Value and Stewardship Contracting Guidebook (http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/Best%20value%20guidebook.pdf)

2005 Stewardship Contracting Roundtable Report, USDA Forest Service Region 6 (http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/pdf/policy/contract/2006scrrfinal.pdf)

Forest Service Contracting: A Basic Guide for Restoration Practitioners (http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/fscontractingguide.pdf)

Stewardship Contracting Resources (http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/programs/psc.php)

Flathead Economic Policy Center

Best Value and Stewardship Contracting Guidebook (http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/Best%20value%20guidebook.pdf)

Resource Innovations, University of Oregon Institute for a Sustainable Environment

Community Capacity and the Environment Program: collaborative stewardship contracting groups (http://www.uoregon.edu/~cwch/programs/CCE/stewardshipcontracting.html)

Pinchot Institute

Quick Guide to Collaboration and the NEPA Process (http://www.pinchot.org/pubs/?startnum=21)

Western Collaborative Assistance Network

Western Collaborative Assistance Network homepage (http://www.westcanhelp.org/)

Resource library (http://westcanhelp.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=13)

Universities

University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment

Ecosystem Management Initiative (http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/)

Step-by-step guidance on collaboration (http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/index.htm)

University of Northern Arizona

Ecological Restoration Institute (http://www.eri.nau.edu/joomla/)

Citations

1. Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Appropriations Act, 1999, (P. L. 105-277), Section 347, and Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 (P. L. 108-7), Section 323.

2. Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Appropriations Act, 1999, (P. L. 105-277).

3. Daly, Carol, Cassandra Moseley, Ann Moote, Maia Enzer. Forest Service Contracting: A Basic Guide for Restoration Practitioners. 2006. http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/publications/fscontractingguide.pdf

4. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 63.1, page 39. 2005.

5. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 60.5, page 14. 2005.

6. Ibid.

7. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61, part 1a, page 19. 2005.

8. Ibid.

9. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 60.3, parts 4, page 7. 2005.

10. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook,, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61, part 1c and Section 61.12, page 19, 21. 2005.

11. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 60.42c, page 13. 2005.

12. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61.12a, part 1 page 21. 2005.

13. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61, part 1a, page 19. 2005.

14. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61.14, page 23. 2005.

15. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Proposal, page 6. 2007. http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fp/Stewardship/Stewardship_Contracting_Proposal_7-23-07.doc

16. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61, page 19. 2005.

17. Pinchot Institute for Conservation, Understanding the Relationship Between Collaboration and NEPA. 2006, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and National Forest Foundation, Partnership Guide. 2005.

18. Ibid.

19. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and National Forest Foundation, Partnership Guide, Section VIII. 2005.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61 part 1c, 61.16, pages 19, 23. 2005.

23. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook,, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 67.2, part 1, a and c, page 53. 2005.

24. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 67.2, part 1, page 52. 2005.

25. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section, Section 61.13, page 23. 2005.

26. Federal Acquisition Regulation, Part 10.002 (b) 2(viii).

27. Carol Daly, The Collaboration Handbook, page 7. Red Lodge Clearinghouse. http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf.

28. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook, Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting, Section 61.12a, page 21. 2005.

29. Federal Acquisition Regulation 10.002(b)2(viii)

30. Carol Daly, The Collaboration Handbook, pages 9-10. Red Lodge Clearinghouse. http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf.

31. Steve Lippman, Steve Yaffee, and Julia Wondolleck, Julia, "Structuring Effective Meetings", Ecosystem Management Initiative, School of Natural Resources & Environment, University of Michigan. 1997. http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/organizing_the_process/Structuring%20Effective%20Meetings.pdf

32. Carol Daly, The Collaboration Handbook, page 12. Red Lodge Clearinghouse http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf.

33. Carol Daly, The Collaboration Handbook, page 12. Red Lodge Clearinghouse. http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf.

34. Ecosystem Management Initiative, School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan. Website, "Collaboration and Negotiation", "Learning about the issues" http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/lessons/stages/learn_collaboratively/index.htm

35. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and National Forest Foundation, Partnership Guide, Section VIII, "Common Challenges for Partnerships", page 8-3b. 2005. http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/chap8-3b.html#q2

Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration

Best Practices Guidebook

Sustainable Northwest
813 SW Alder, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97205
(503) 221-6911
www.sustainablenorthwest.org

Sustainable Northwest