

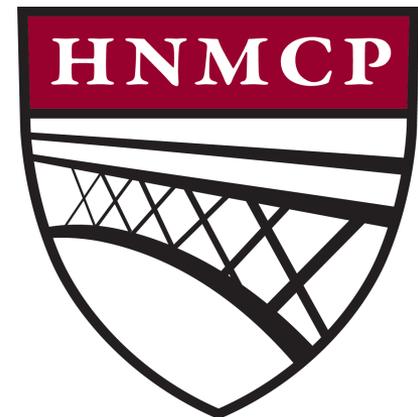
# UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING CRITIQUES OF COLLABORATION

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Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program



# Methodology

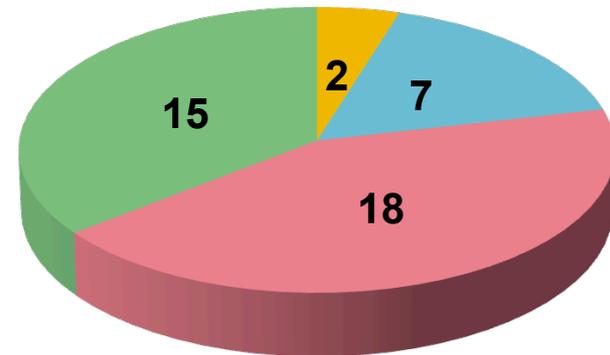
## Materials Studied

- Group Governance Documents
- Applicable Statutes
- Academic Articles
- Media Articles and Blog Posts

## Stakeholder Groups Interviewed

- Academics
- Facilitators
- Lawyers
- Conservationists
- Environmentalists
- Stewardship Group Representatives
- Recreation Group Representatives
- Timber Industry Representatives
- County Commissioners
- State Agency Staff
- Forest Service Officers

## Interviewees



- Has Never Participated
- No Longer Participates
- Participates, Has Concerns
- Participates, Generally Approves

- 42 Interviews
- 58% Response Rate
- 8 of 9 USFS Regions

# Process Flow



**Form Group**

**Establish  
Norms**

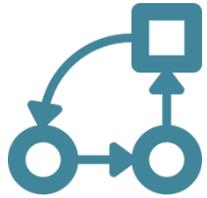
**Deliberate**

**Make  
Decisions**

**Review  
Progress**

Simplified steps in overall process for collaborative groups

# What We Heard



# #1: Group Procedure

There is an inconsistent employment of procedural best practices in and across collaborative groups

**Form Group**



**Establish Norms**



**Deliberate**



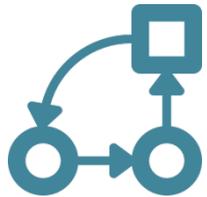
**Make Decisions**



**Review Progress**

# Group Procedure

Some interviewees found meetings are often inefficient and unproductive



- Unclear procedures and purpose leads to less efficient use of meeting time
- Groups spend too much time discussing issues not relevant to main objectives
- Meeting agenda is not effectively designed and managed

Form Group

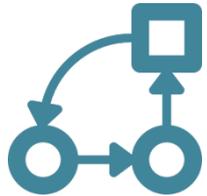
Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress

# Group Procedure



Some interviewees perceived facilitators as biased or ineffective

“Collaborative groups function best when the facilitator seeks out consensus like a hawk on the hunt.”

-Interviewee

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress



## #2: Group Learning

Disputes over substantive issues are a significant source of tension

Form Group



**Establish Norms**



**Deliberate**



Make Decisions



Review Progress

# Group Learning



Many groups do not have a fact finding process

“Things break down over disagreements about what science is telling people and which science is valid... Some participants believe that their values trump everything else and science or economics don’t matter.”  
-Interviewee

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress

# Group Learning



Some stakeholders believe scientific viewpoints are presented to promote certain interests over others

## Interviewees said:

Field trips make it easier to discuss actual issues in the forest

Would like to see more ecologists, biologists, and experts outside of the Forest Service brought to group discussions

Science is not always clear-cut because it is often as much about values as it is about facts

Science is “cherry-picked” to achieve a predetermined outcome, especially to promote timber sales

Form Group

Establish Norms

**Deliberate**

Make Decisions

Review Progress



# #3: Agency Communication

The Forest Service does not always effectively engage with collaborative groups

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress

# Agency Communication

The USFS sometimes does not strike the right balance of involvement to empower group progress



Concerns when agency is over-involved:	Concerns when agency is under-involved:
FACA violations can occur	Group cannot provide valued input
Group becomes a “rubber stamp”	Group becomes disengaged
Stakeholders get left out	Group’s work product not considered

- Form Group
- Establish Norms
- Deliberate
- Make Decisions
- Review Progress

# Agency Communication

The USFS sometimes does not effectively communicate helpful information to the group



Interviewees said many groups do not know:

How long the NEPA process can take

Where their proposal stands in the NEPA process

How to ensure that proposals comply with the law

When and how a proposal will be implemented

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress



# #4 Consensus

Groups often disagree over decision making procedures

Form Group



**Establish Norms**



**Deliberate**



**Make Decisions**



Review Progress

# Consensus



Stakeholders disagree over whether requiring consensus is positive or negative

Interviewee in favor of consensus:

*“Without a consensus rule, collaboration turns into the rule of the rural majority”*

Interviewee not in favor of consensus:

*“Seeking consensus with a wide audience does not necessarily achieve the level of specificity required to have a level of impact on forest management”*

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress

# Consensus

Many groups do not establish when consensus should be reached



- Most groups did not have procedures guiding which decisions require voting
- Groups did not distinguish between coming to consensus for each step and coming to consensus for the overall plan

Form Group



**Establish Norms**



**Deliberate**



**Make Decisions**



Review Progress

# Consensus



Some groups will change decision rules mid-way to exclude certain stakeholders

“Sometimes breakdown happens as collaboration goes on. Instead of being inclusive and building consensus, groups start getting more exclusive like “clubs” and they move to majority vote rather than consensus. Then people start feeling angry because they are left out.”

-Interviewee

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress



## #5: Stakeholder Input

The collaborative process can result in certain voices not being heard

**Form Group**



Establish Norms



Deliberate



**Make Decisions**



**Review Progress**

# Stakeholder Input

Some collaborative groups fail to represent a broad range of interests



## Interviewees' concerns about representation:

Meetings are usually time-intensive, distant, and held on during business hours, which makes it hard for unpaid stakeholders to attend

Certain stakeholder groups “fall out of the process altogether,” either on purpose or by accident

Stakeholder groups that have more to gain attend in higher numbers, which can create imbalance or isolate stakeholders with less intense interests

Form Group

Establish Norms

Deliberate

Make Decisions

Review Progress

# Stakeholder Input



Stakeholders disagree over the balance between local interests and national interests

Because local communities are most affected by stewardship of federal lands, they should have a stronger voice

Because national forests are public lands, all Americans should have an equal voice in their stewardship

**Form Group**

Establish Norms

Deliberate

**Make Decisions**

Review Progress

# Stakeholder Input



There is concern that collaboration circumvents or weakens the NEPA process, or may do so in the future

“I’m concerned that collaboration is taking on such an important role in the Forest Service and has such influence that it is keeping the Forest Service from meeting the intent of the public involvement requirements in NEPA”  
-Interviewee

Form Group



Establish Norms



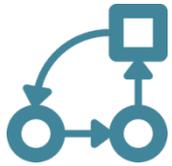
Deliberate



Make Decisions



Review Progress



# Generating Options



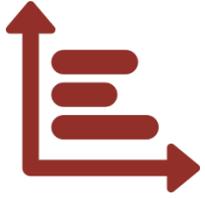
What are options that might address concerns about **meeting productivity** and **stakeholder inclusion**?

## Brainstorming Rules:

- Generate first – evaluate later!
- Be curious and ask questions
- Use active listening

Please see the webinar version of the presentation on the NFF website for HNMCP recommendations

# Priority Recommendations



# #1: Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and effective

**Group  
Procedure**

Group  
Learning

Agency  
Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder  
Input

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



This may include:

Clear Purpose

Well-Defined Scope

Prioritized Agenda

Group Evaluation

**Group  
Procedure**

Group  
Learning

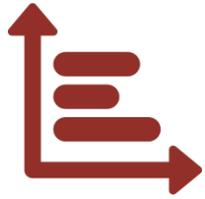
Agency  
Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder  
Input

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



Clear Purpose

Well-Defined Scope

Prioritized Agenda

Group Evaluation

Being clear about the purpose of meeting and keeping that purpose at the forefront of group discussion

Group Procedure

Group Learning

Agency Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder Input

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



Clear Purpose

Well-Defined Scope

Prioritized Agenda

Group Evaluation

Group Procedure

Group Learning

Agency Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder Input

Ensuring that the discussion is within the bounds of:

- the technical capacity of group members
- the needs of the Forest Service
- realistic time constraints
- the group's ability to find common ground

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



Clear Purpose

Well-Defined Scope

**Prioritized Agenda**

Group Evaluation

**Group Procedure**

Group Learning

Agency Communication

Consensus

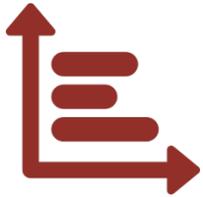
Stakeholder Input

**Creating an agenda that will:**

- appropriately prioritize issues
- produce the most discussion
- be enforced by a timekeeper

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



Clear Purpose

Well-Defined Scope

Prioritized Agenda

Group Evaluation

Group Procedure

Group Learning

Agency Communication

Consensus

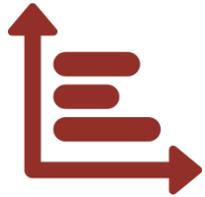
Stakeholder Input

Analyzing group output and progress to ensure that:

- the group still has a purpose
- input from all stakeholders is heard
- group norms still optimize productivity

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



Creating the container:<sup>1</sup>

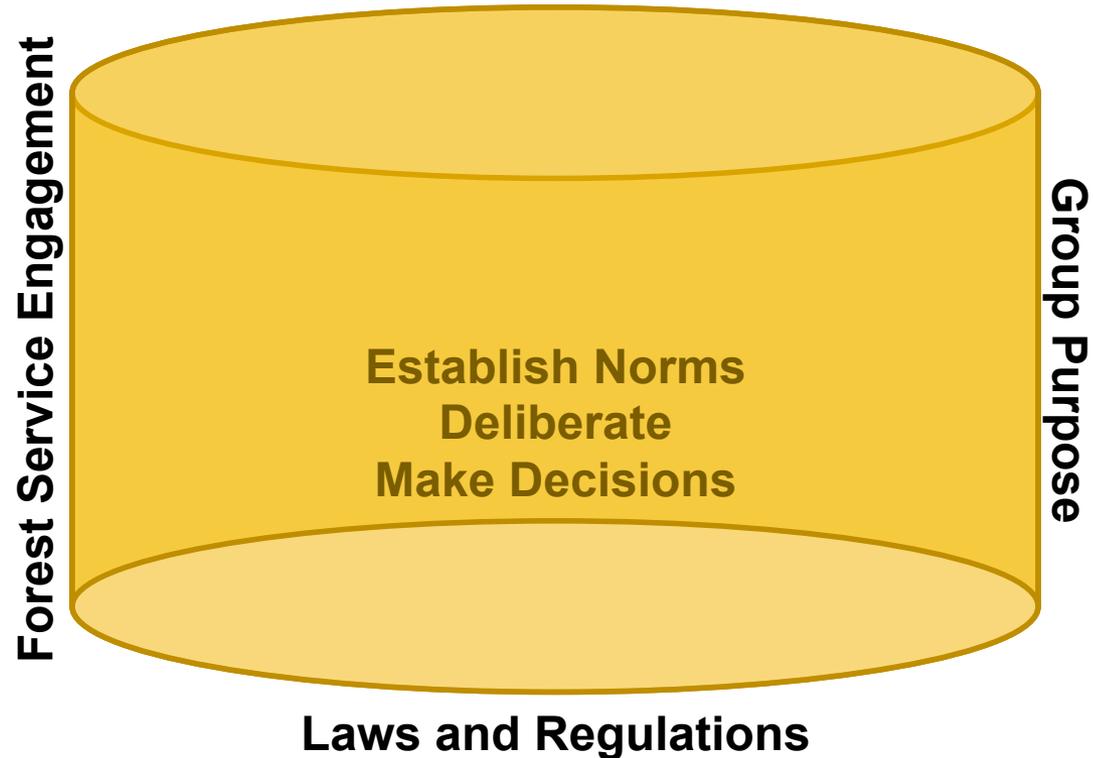
**Group Procedure**

Group Learning

Agency Communication

Consensus

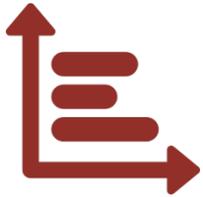
Stakeholder Input



1. Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program.

# Meeting Productivity

Collaborative groups should follow procedures that make meetings more productive and efficient



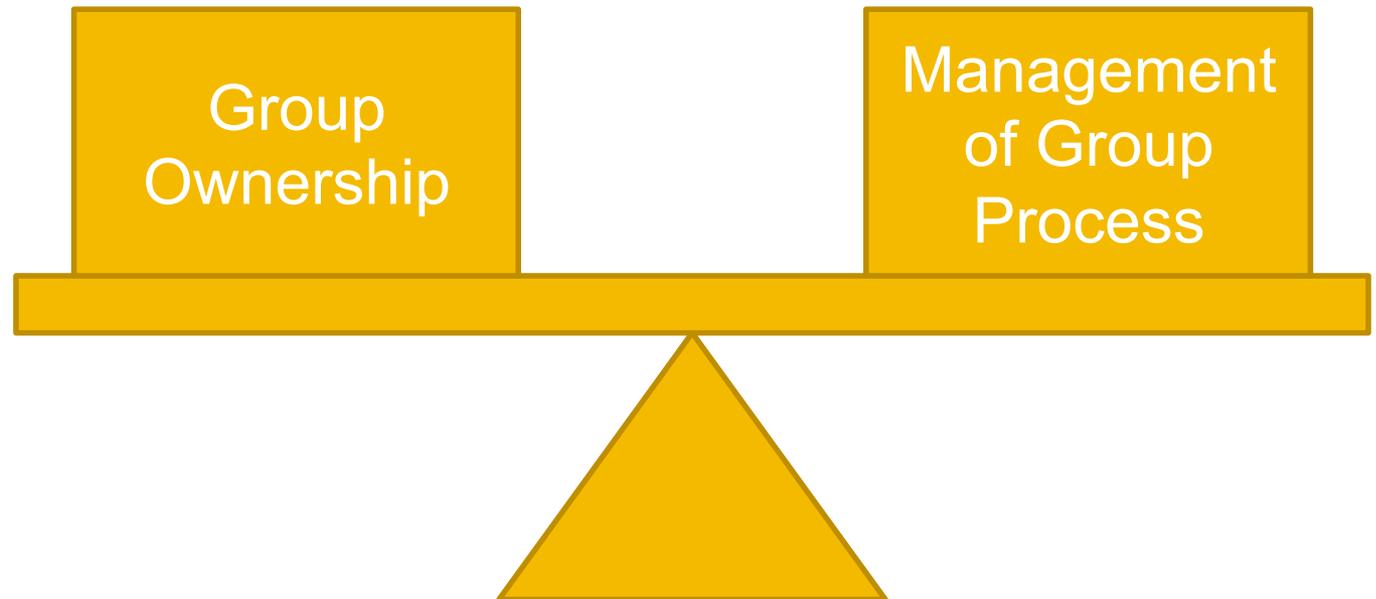
**Group Procedure**

Group Learning

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## #2: Stakeholder Inclusion

Collaborative groups should seek to increase inclusiveness and efficiency in group meetings

Group  
Procedure

Group  
Learning

Agency  
Communication

Consensus

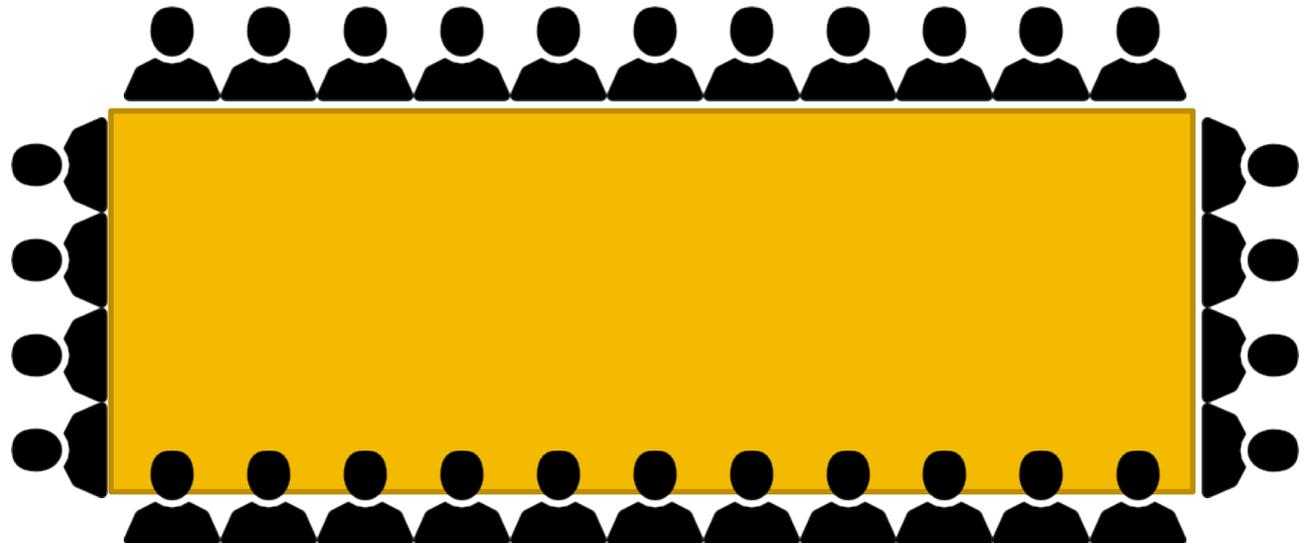
Stakeholder  
Input

# Stakeholder Inclusion

Collaborative groups should seek to increase inclusiveness and efficiency in group meetings



- Groups should seek to have a broad a range of stakeholder representation as possible, and seek to identify missing actors



**Group Procedure**

**Group Learning**

**Agency Communication**

**Consensus**

**Stakeholder Input**

# Stakeholder Inclusion

Collaborative groups should seek to increase inclusiveness and efficiency in group meetings



- Stakeholders not serving as representatives can participate in committees and working groups, or comment on their work products

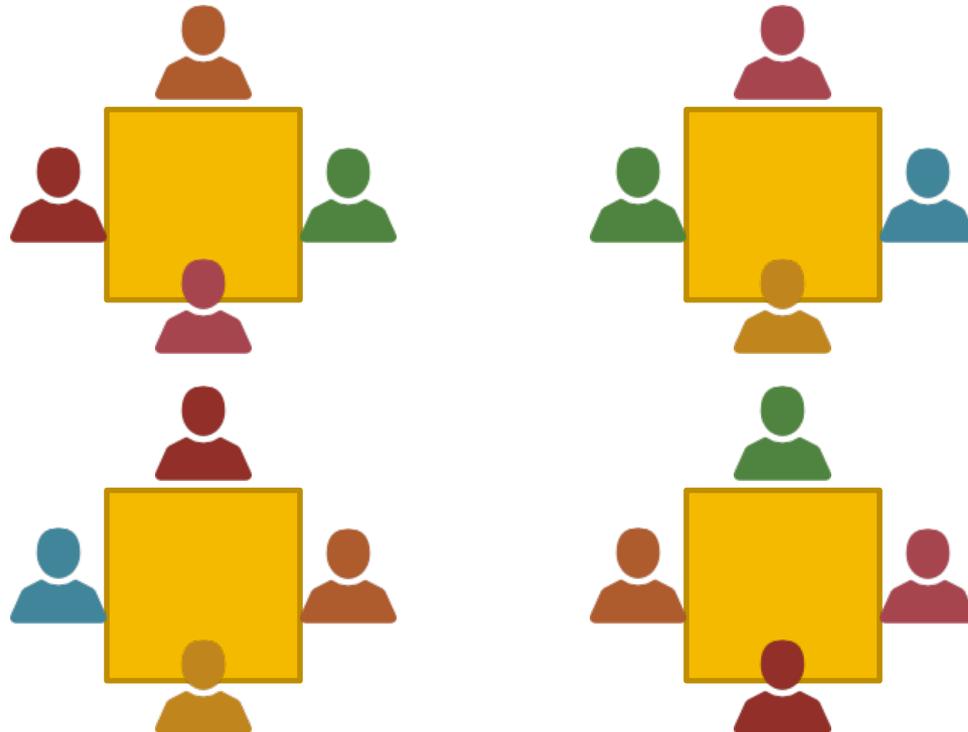
**Group Procedure**

**Group Learning**

Agency Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder Input



# Stakeholder Inclusion

Collaborative groups should seek to increase inclusiveness and efficiency in group meetings



This type of organization strategy:<sup>1</sup>

- enables meetings to be more productive
- reduces the number of hours required to be active in a collaborative group
- allows more participants to get involved
- enhances legitimacy of group
- mitigates against external objections

Group  
Procedure

Group  
Learning

Agency  
Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder  
Input

1. Carlson, Chris, "Convening," *The Consensus Building Handbook*, Sage Publications, Inc. (1999) at 185; Kate Connolly, "From City Hall to the Streets: A Community Plan Meets the Real World" at 972.

# Stakeholder Inclusion

Collaborative groups should seek to increase inclusiveness and efficiency in group meetings



**Group Procedure**

**Group Learning**

Agency Communication

Consensus

Stakeholder Input

