A Roadmap For Collaboration Before, During and After the NEPA Process

NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

"Ultimately, of course, it is not better documents but better decisions that count. NEPA's purpose is not to generate paperwork—even excellent paperwork—but to foster excellent action."
~40 CFR 1500.1 (c)

"Does having a collaborative process guarantee success? No. But… putting your heads together will feel better than knocking them together."
~The Collaboration Handbook

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During the early conceptual stages of this document, a small working group envisioned that this tool would:

- Use bold language and set bold expectations,
- Recognize and make use of opportunities,
- Be collaboratively built,
- Be concrete,
- Be short and usable, and
- Build trust through clarification.

The length of the tool evolved, but the vision did not. The process of collaboration can be done better. The National Environmental Policy Act process can be done better. We can do better. Together.

Design by Marci Mansfield Graphic Design. Victor, MT

A Note to Line Officers: Your support is critical. Wondolleck and Yaffee (1997) identify agency commitment as one of the key factors to sustaining collaboration.

Consider including your expectations of the Interdisciplinary Team with respect to collaboration in the Project Initiation Letter. See Project Initiation Letter in the Toolbox for some examples. Empower your Interdisciplinary Team Leader and your staff to collaborate.

Outline (early!) how you will use collaborative input in your decision-making process. When asked, stakeholders voiced a desire to know "where their ideas would matter and what decisions would emerge." (Walker, Senecah and Daniels, 2006). One member of a collaborative group interviewed for this project stated that their Coalition was looking for the "sweet spot" where they could influence the process positively and legally.

This document is designed to provide a roadmap for the involvement of collaborative groups before, during and after the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. These pages do not contain a specific set of directions to get from wherever you are to an ideal collaborative relationship. Rather, this tool is designed to help you and your partners create your own roadmap with your own destination. This tool is not policy; it has been designed to provide options and resources to those involved in collaboration.

Working together in a collaborative environment is more important than ever to both the U.S. Forest Service and the public. However, there is often a knowledge gap between the lead agency and stakeholders; each use their own vernacular and have their own set of expectations. This document is intended to bridge the gap in a clear, concise and usable way by identifying opportunities and presenting techniques for collaboration.

For more information, to provide feedback, or to report a broken link:
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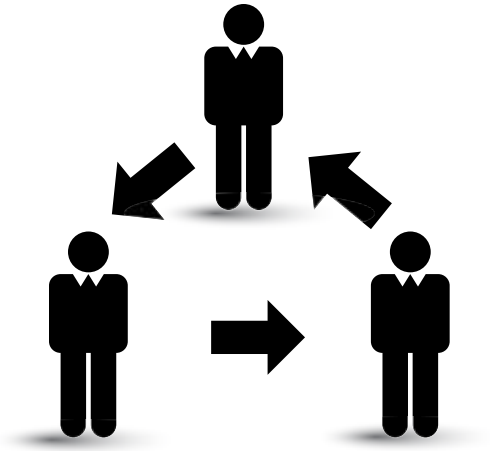
When To Use This Tool

This tool is for you if:

- ☐ You are working at the project-level. While elements of this tool may provide information for programmatic environmental analysis and collaboration, the Roadmap has been tailored to site-specific projects.
- ☐ You understand the concept of Collaboration and are committed to working with partners with diverse views and issues. You can familiarize every participant in the process (agency or partner) with the basic tenants of collaboration.
- ☐ You understand the concept of collaboration and are Committed to spend the time, effort, funds and social capital necessary for an ongoing collaborative relationship. This commitment may take the form of a written agreement.
- ☐ You have already assessed your options and determined that you have the capacity to collaborate and that collaboration is appropriate. (See Collaborative Assessment).
- ☐ You have a basic understanding of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rocess.

Before you begin, go over this document with those involved in the collaborative process as early as possible. If you begin your collaboration partially through the NEPA process or a new partner enters, see Collaborating Mid-Stream in the Toolbox for tips and techniques.



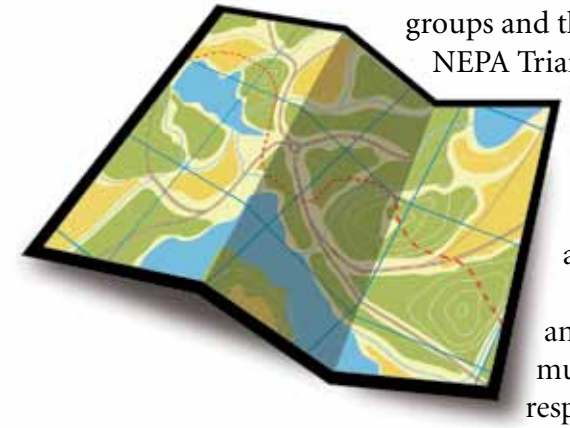
What Collaboration in NEPA Can and Cannot Do

Collaborating can lead to increased trust among stakeholders as well as better decisions. It can leverage resources for implementation and bring knowledge and experience to the table which may have been lacking. However, collaboration cannot alter the NEPA process. NEPA is a federal law with associated regulations and policies. Six pointers are intended to clarify the process and help manage the expectations of all participants:

- Collaboration is not a one-way street, and cannot be turned on and off like a faucet. Effective collaboration relies on establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with, and understanding the interests of, those who are willing to get involved. Collaboration means committing to work with others to understand and expand zones of agreement between participants.
- Collaboration does not mean shared (or transferred) decision authority for land management decisions. On National Forest System land, the line officer (the District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, Regional Forester or Chief) has the responsibility to make the final decision under NEPA. Throughout this document the decision maker is referred to as the Responsible Official.
- Collaboration does not replace the Council on Environmental Quality requirement to inform and involve potentially interested and affected members of the public. Collaboration does not remove the responsibility of the Forest Service to consider all public input on a project.
- Actions taken on federal land must comply with all applicable laws and regulations. This includes NEPA, administrative procedures, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Federal Advisory Committee Act and others. The unit Environmental Coordinator can help.
- The Forest Plan and other relevant planning documents help determine the actions which can occur on National Forest System land. Collaborators will also have laws, statutes, regulations or other sideboards that are relevant to the collaborative effort. It is critical that everyone's sideboards or conditions of agreement are understood, and that zones of agreement explored by a collaborative considers these conditions. Communicating the sideboards of a Forest Plan, for example, does not put the agency in control of the collaborative group nor does it direct the agency's work.
- The Responsible Official has the responsibility to approve the Purpose and Need statement, the Proposed Action, and the range of Alternatives. Collaboration can inform those decisions and may be used in different ways at each step.

Few units and few collaborative groups will have the capacity or interest to collaborate during each and every step of the NEPA process. Identify areas where collaboration will benefit multiple interests to help prioritize. Also identify the stages that hold the most interest and opportunity to add value for your collaborative group (use the Roadmap Worksheet). Clarify the expectations of each other (e.g. sharing information, mutual learning) as early in the process as possible.

How To Use The Roadmap



This tool is designed on the premise that the NEPA process is a road that both collaborative groups and the agency travel. This road is displayed on the NEPA Roadmap (based on the NEPA Triangle used in the U.S. Forest Service "Introduction to NEPA" course). For each step in the process, there is a corresponding page with tools and perspectives. From the NEPA Roadmap, simply click on the step you wish to visit. Wherever possible, hyperlinks have been used that will take you to the Toolbox at the end of the document. There, you will find more in-depth information as well as links to additional resources.

The Roadmap Worksheet is provided as a tool to allow the collaborative group and agency to work together and design a project-specific roadmap based on their mutual expectations. The Worksheet is designed to clarify objectives, scope and responsibilities. The Roadmap Worksheet facilitates an early, open discussion of each project and those points at which the agency and the collaborative group intend to interact.

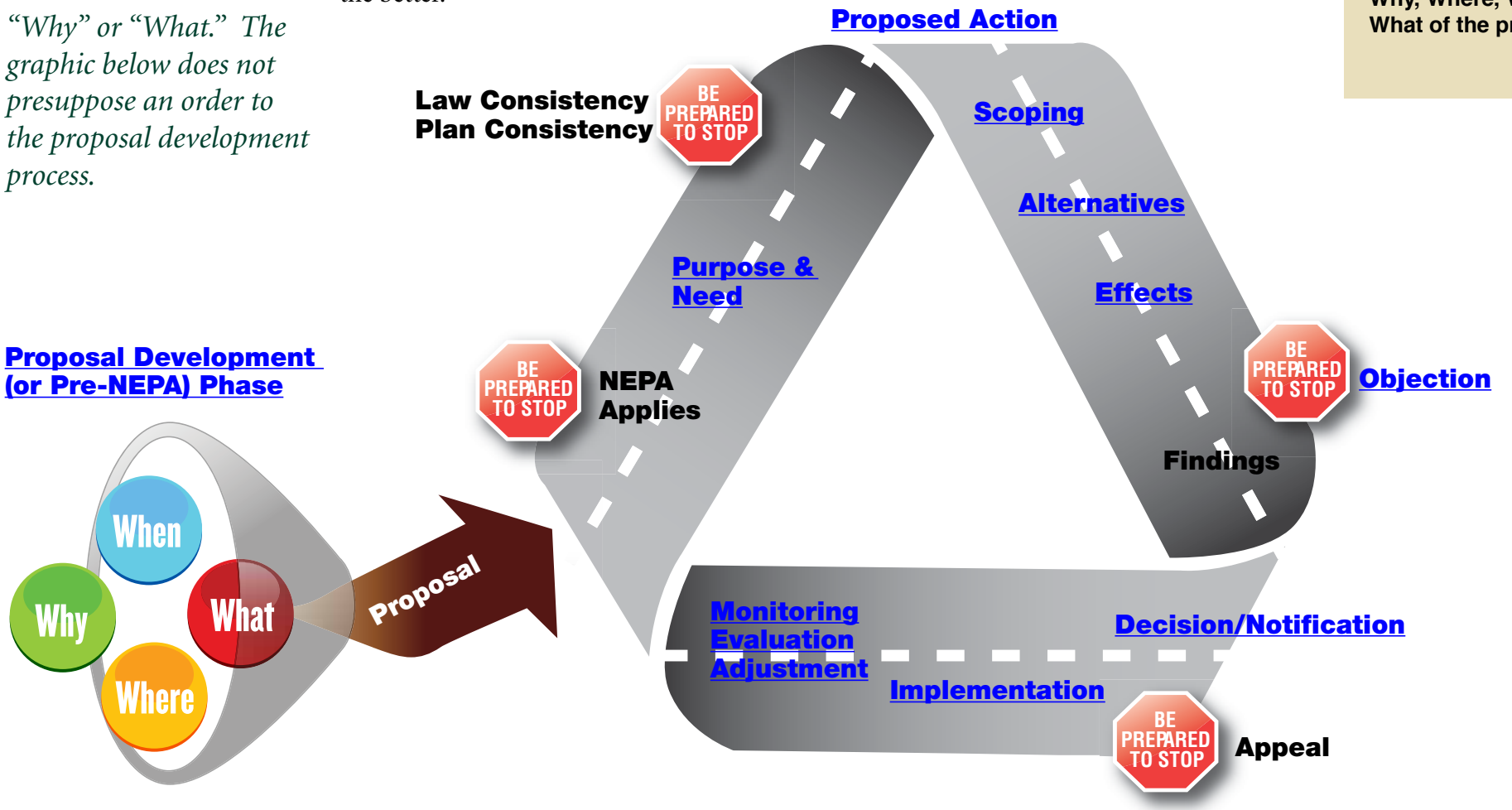
Collaboration is a term often used broadly to define a working relationship between multiple stakeholders. For the purposes of this project, a Collaboration Continuum was adopted that, while based upon the Council on Environmental Quality's "Spectrum of Engagement in NEPA Decision-Making" (CEQ, 2007b), emphasizes multi-directional exchanges of information and learning (i.e. an emphasis on communication vs. informing). The key message is that at different places in the process, interactions will vary. The Collaboration Continuum includes four phases: Communicate, Consult, Involve and Collaborate. For definitions see the Collaboration Continuum the Toolbox. Not all phases in the NEPA process will be entirely collaborative. As an example, the interaction between the collaborative group and the agency during proposal development will likely fall closer to the collaboration end of the continuum than the interaction during the Effects stage).

Collaboration is not static. Partners come and go, needs change and activities in the Roadmap Worksheet can (and should be) revised. Collaboration does not mean that the collaborative group and the agency will be in "lock-step" throughout the entire process. Collaborative groups and their individual members have responsibilities, needs, and interests that differ from the agency's, but are just as legitimate. Effective collaboration recognizes those differences, encourages mutual learning, builds relationships and improves the conditions on the ground.

The project proposal is comprised of Where, When, Why and What. Note that not all proposals will be generated the same way. Some projects may begin with the "Where" and others with the "Why" or "What." The graphic below does not presuppose an order to the proposal development process.

NEPA Roadmap

This graphic is a modified version of the NEPA triangle used in the U.S. Forest Service "Introduction to NEPA" course (USDA Forest Service, 2010). Objections and Appeals have been pulled out of the main portion of the triangle to reflect the fact that not every project will go through those stages. Each underlined stage is linked to a page filled with tools, tip and techniques. The "Be Prepared to Stop" icon indicates stages in the process where either the NEPA process or the project itself may need to be halted or substantially revised (i.e. because it is not subject to NEPA, does not comply with relevant laws, or was subject to an objection or appeal). The earlier in the NEPA process you can begin collaborating, the better.



Some of the most effective collaboration occurs during the Proposal Development phase (i.e. determining the Why, Where, When and What of the proposal).

Roadmap Worksheet

Use this worksheet to plan your collaborative roadmap. Not all collaborative groups or agency units will have the capacity or comfort-level to collaborate at every stage. The table below lists each stage and some of the benefits of collaboration. The collaboration continuum column should be used as a discussion point to identify roughly where on the continuum you would like to interact. The last two columns are for you to fill in to indicate where you are committed to work together and what that commitment may look like. Use the notes column to record preliminary information about timelines, who will be involved, etc. An example has been provided. Note that some of the tools listed in the example were pulled from pages other than the "Where" page of this document; adapt this tool to your needs.

Stage Name	**Benefits of Collaboration**[1]	**Commitment** (yes or no)	**Collaboration Continuum**[2] Communication.....Collaboration	**Tools**	**Notes**
Where (Location)	• Creates early ownership in the project. • Incorporates local knowledge into the project. •	☑	←- - - - - - - - - - - - X - - →	• Stakeholder analysis • Brainstorming • Mylar overlays • Field trip	Complete stakeholder analysis prior to beginning process.
Where (Location)	• Creates early ownership in the project. • Incorporates local knowledge into the project. • Emphasizes mutual learning. • Can bring partners together based on shared sense of place.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
When (Timing)	• Creates early ownership in the project. • Can incorporate socio-economic and political factors in the prioritization process. • Emphasizes mutual learning and understanding. • Enables use of stewardship contracting authority.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Why (Desired/ Existing Condition	• Increases understanding of the rationale for action. • Helpful when science is in dispute. • Facilitates the sharing of knowledge (technical and experiential) and data. • Can bring partners together based on shared problems or shared vision.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
What (Possible Activities)	• Generates range of activities likely to have broad support. • May encourage creative solutions early on in the process.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		

1. Bryan, 2004; CEQ, 2007b; Charnley et al., 2013; Cheng and Sturtevant, 2012; Interviews with collaborative groups and agency partners; Sturtevant et al., 2005. The benefits of collaboration listed here are by no means exhaustive. For a summary of the general benefits of collaboration, see the pull-out box on p.???

2. For a thorough discussion of the Collaboration Coninuum, see the Collaboration Continuum entry in the toolbox.

Stage Name	Benefits of Collaboration[1]	Commitment (yes or no)	Collaboration Continuum Comm. to Collab.	Tools	Notes
Purpose and Need	• Lays the foundation for a project that can be widely supported. • Ensures the needs of both the public and the project proponent are taken into account (when project proposal originates outside the agency).	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Proposed Action	• Generates proposed action that most parties are able to live with. • Promotes the creation of the best possible proposed action. • Can potentially expedite the NEPA process.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Scoping	• Facilitates identification of most substantial issues. • Helps to define project boundaries. • Can help determine realistic timelines for analysis. • Can illustrate gaps in resources and opportunities for collaboration.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Alternatives	• Alternatives more likely to withstand external challenges. • Can reduce future conflicts. • Can potentially expedite the NEPA process. • Can generate an alternative that minimizes negative effects and improves the existing conditions. • Can incorporate collaborative monitoring into the project design.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Effects	• Increases mutual understanding of project's impacts. • Helpful when science is in dispute. • Maintains momentum and communication. • Improves credibility and legitimacy of analysis.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Objection					

Stage Name	Benefits of Collaboration[1]	Commitment (yes or no)	Collaboration Continuum Comm. to Collab.	Tools	Notes
Decision/Notification	• Increased trust through clear communication of rationale and decision. • Tracks collaborative involvement through the process. • Opportunity to share successes and results with the community. • Increased legitimacy and acceptability of the decision.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Appeal					
Implementation	• Builds trust. • Beneficial for projects on units with previous implementation issues or litigation. • Can generate additional funding. • Reinforces relationships made during planning.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Monitoring	• Builds trust. • Helpful when science is in dispute. • Can generate additional funding. • Increased efficiency through the sharing of personnel and equipment. • Increased efficiency through the sharing of data. • Important when adaptive management is utilized.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Evaluation	• Builds shared knowledge base. • Smooths future interaction between the collaborative group and agency. • Emphasizes mutual learning.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		
Adjustment	• Better decisions, better collaborative process. • Promotes a culture of learning and adaptation. • Increases individual, community, collaborative group and agency capacity.	☐	←- - - - - - - - - - - - - - →		

Tips for Your Trip:

Plan your trip before hitting the road. Work together early to adapt and complete this worksheet for your specific project.

Share the map. Make the Roadmap Worksheet available to those involved in the process.

Use waypoints. Consider adding a column to the Roadmap Worksheet to identify milestones, timelines and outputs. This information (particularly with respect to outputs of collaboration) can be used by the Interdisciplinary Team to track collaborative input through the project.

Identify the destination. Stakeholders want to know how their input will be utilized in the decision process. Both collaborative groups and the agency should give thought to their expectations and work to explore a mutual understanding of how the products of collaboration will be used. A column could be added to the Roadmap Worksheet for this purpose.

Don't be afraid to take the scenic route. The Roadmap Worksheet should be considered a starting point. It is not the only way to shape collaboration during the NEPA process. Be creative and innovative while communicating the process and expectations to those involved.

Ask for directions if you need them. There are a number of resources available to help. See Collaboration in the Toolbox for more information.

Check-in along the way. Just because you planned to use a specific tool before you started your collaborative process doesn't mean that tool will be appropriate when you finally reach that point in the journey. Check-in with participants and don't be afraid to revise the Roadmap as your process and needs evolve.

For agencies, collaboration can improve:

1. Relationships, understanding, and support among agencies and between agencies and the public
2. Decisions and the ability to get work done
3. The planning, assessment, and conducting of project across boundaries and resources
4. Project effectiveness and efficiency
5. Job satisfaction of employees
6. Opportunities for leveraging funding and enhancing institutional capacity

For communities, collaboration can:

1. Reinforce democratic values and civic culture
2. Build capacity, networks, and relationships
3. Enhance an ethic of stewardship and collective responsibility
4. Connect natural resources to community needs

For individuals, collaboration can:

1. Advance self-interests
2. Make one's surrounding neighborhood healthier and safer
3. Increase one's ability to define problems and craft solutions
4. Provide access to resources (money, equipment and technology) for fuel reduction
5. Facilitate learning about fire risk and mitigation possibilities

For a society interested in sustainable natural resource management and use, collaboration can:

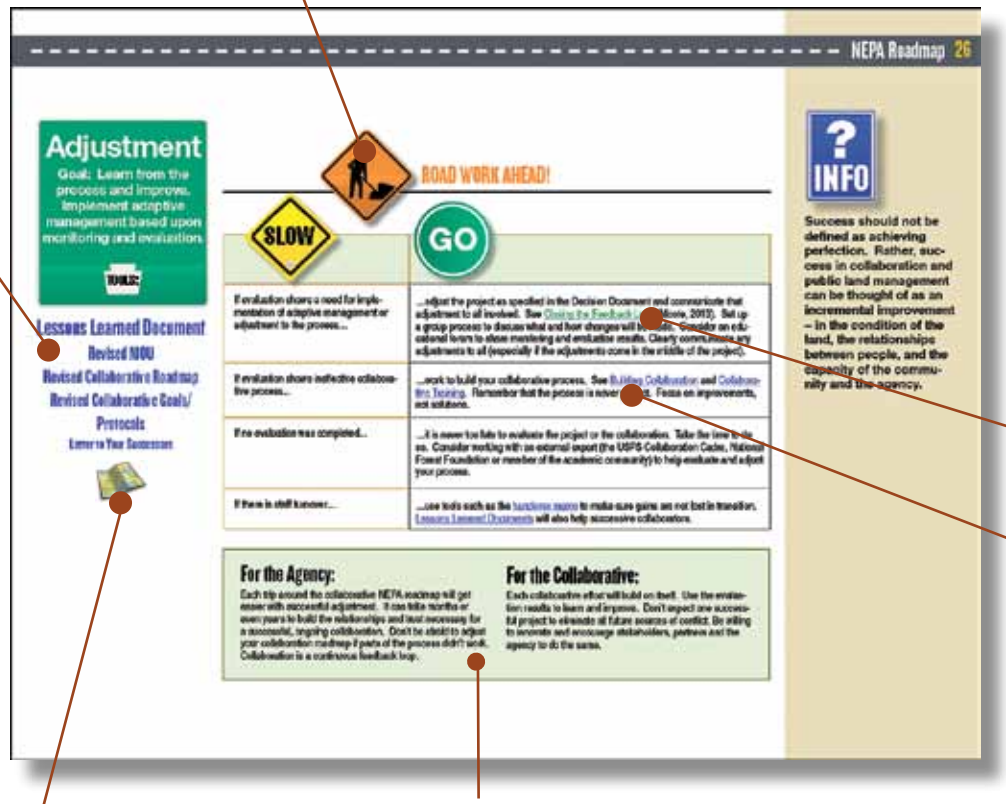
1. Produce more environmentally sound and ecologically integrated decisions
2. Bring innovative and longer term solutions
3. Create environmental gains beyond the minimum standards required by laws or policies

Sturlevant et al., 2005

Key to using the NEPA stage pages

Road Work: The "slow" column shares potential stumbling blocks in the collaborative process. The "go" column provides quick tips to help navigate through them. These are not the only potential stumbling blocks or solutions; they are offered as a resource.

Tools: The type size indicates how useful each tool is likely to be at the listed stage. Tool usefulness was evaluated based upon interviews with collaborators and agency personnel as well as a review of lessons learned documents and literature. Each tool is hyperlinked to the Toolbox with resources and additional information. The tools listed are not the only tools available and a tool displayed in small font may end up being the best choice for you (based upon cost, capacity, timeframe and project specifics). These tools are intended to provide a starting point. Be flexible, innovative and creative.



Green hyperlinks will open an external resource.

Blue hyperlinks will take you to another section of this document.

Hyperlink back to the NEPA Roadmap (p. 6 of this document).

Perspectives are given from both the collaborative group and agency in order to demystify the process and lay the foundation for greater understanding and trust.

Where

Goal: Select an area in which to work.

TOOLS:

[Brainstorming Sessions]
[Field Trips & Site Visits]
[Open Houses]
[Mylar (or GIS) Overlays]
[Participate in Forest Plan Revision, Watershed Assessment, 5 Year Vegetation or Restoration Action Plan Revision/Watershed Assessment]

ROAD WORK AHEAD!

SLOW	GO
If the collaborative group is newly formed...	...see Building Collaborative Groups in the Toolbox.
If the agency unit has never collaborated before…	…work to set clear and realistic expectations. Collaboration requires investment of time and energy. Lay out the collaborative roadmap before beginning. Consider Collaborative Training, perhaps held jointly with the agency and collaborative. Consider evaluating perceptions of collaboration now for baseline conditions (see Evaluation). Familiarize yourself with Collaboration Watchouts (Williams, 2010).
If the agency and/or collaborative group is having trouble moving past previous appeals/litigation…	…collaborate and communicate early on and use quality Facilitation. Early parts of the planning process are great places to begin repairing relationships.
If the agency and/or collaborative group wish to proceed with project development in a collaborative manner…	…complete a Stakeholder Analysis The more interests represented in collaboration from the beginning of the process, the less likely you are to face backlash.

For the Agency:

Communities want to be involved as early in the process as possible (as opposed to simply being informed where the next project will be). Stakeholders are passionate about place and they have valuable local knowledge. Work to understand their issues and concerns. Early involvement helps to create common ground as well as generates the momentum necessary to sustain project collaboration.

For the Collaborative:

The agency's process for selecting a planning location may be informal or detailed. Ask questions early on about how project locations are identified and prioritized. Share your goals and values so you can identify locations where your interests, concerns or goals overlap. Share your local and technical knowledge. Remember, you can also take a proposal to the agency for consideration.

INFO

Location, location, location: Many successful collaborative efforts have been built on a strong sense of place and/or a sense of a shared community (Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000). Field trips and site visits are great tools for tapping into this sense of place.

Stakeholders have identified the need to know how and where their input is being utilized by the agency (Burns and Cheng, 2005; Daniels and Walker, 2001; Senecah, 2004; Walker et al., 2006; Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000). Put simply, collaborators, stakeholders and individuals want to know that their contributions matter.

When

Goal: Determine when the project will take place.

TOOLS:

[Collaborative Project ID Process]

[Participate in Forest Plan Revision, Watershed Assessment, 5 Year Vegetation or Restoration Action Plan]

[Stakeholder Analysis]

ROAD WORK AHEAD!

SLOW	GO
If the agency and/or collaborative group lack(s) relevant data to identify and prioritize locations (e.g. environmental, economic, social, political, indicators)…	...consider working together to fill in the knowledge gaps (e.g. secure funds for study/ research). Leverage existing studies. Ask if the collaborative can help collect data.
If the prioritization process is unclear…	…communicate how projects have been prioritized or identified in the past. Collaborative groups want to understand how locations are selected for management, and the timing, plans, and objectives for treatment of adjacent areas.
If stewardship contracting may be an option…	…collaborate early in the project design process. Collaboration is required throughout the life of the stewardship project. Some stewardship contracting projects may have already been through the National Environmental Policy Act process. Collaborative groups can then work to prioritize among "NEPA ready" projects as well as Leverage Resources for implementation.

For the Agency:

Be clear about your prioritization process and identify opportunities to work together. Collaborative groups want to know your priorities but they also want to know why they are your priorities and to have a voice in shaping those priorities. Collaborative groups interviewed for this project wanted to see more social and economic factors incorporated into the prioritization process. Often, this is an area where collaborative groups are able to provide detailed input and leverage resources.

For the Collaborative:

The unit's process for selecting a planning location and timing of work may be informal or detailed. One Line Officer interviewed identified funding, alignment with forest plan and forest management direction, public support and local political climate, timing (relationship to other priority projects both in terms of planning and implementation), effort and availability of expertise as factors that influence their prioritization of projects. Ask questions early on about how project locations are identified and prioritized.

Why

Goal: Understand the existing condition of the project area & determine its desired condition. The difference is the need for action.

TOOLS:

- Project Workshops
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Educational Forums
- Shared Maps and GIS Data
- Joint Research and Fact-Finding
- Reading List
- Technical Task Force
- Topic-Specific Subcommittee

SLOW	GO
If there is an inability to look beyond past management actions or decisions…	…try not to assign blame for the differences between the desired and existing conditions. Focus on acquiring a good understanding of the social and environmental issues. Field Trips & Site Visits allow for education as well as social interaction.
If the group becomes fixated on individual solutions to the problem…	…focus on the difference between the Desired Condition vs. Existing Condition and the need for change – this will keep your options open for innovative solutions. Don't get bogged down in positions; look for areas where your values and interests overlap. (See Positions Vs. Interests).
If the group becomes mired in the science…	…clarify the question. Work together to identify specific research questions that needto be addressed. Your understanding of the issues will never be complete or 100% certain. Do the best you can and move forward.
When there are varying degrees of scientific, technical or experiential knowledge…	…share in group education such as field trips or forums. Respect and listen to the knowledge shared (scientific, experiential, or otherwise). If there are no subject-matter experts in the collaborative, establish an outside network you can draw on for assistance.

For the Agency:

Collaborative groups (and their individual members) will have varying degrees of fluency in scientific and technical details. They will also have experience and on-the-ground knowledge to share. Different stakeholders will likely see different needs on the ground, depending on their background, their constituencies, and their worldview. Time spent on joint education at this stage will increase everyone's understanding of the project and lay the foundation for effective collaboration.

For the Collaborative:

Agency personnel know the ground on their unit well and are passionate about resources. Early conversations about what you see in the field are tremendous opportunities to learn together and begin identifying common ground. Document your restoration goals and work toward measurable objectives to gauge progress toward the desired condition. These goals and objectives can be used later to evaluate alternatives. Be bold about both the resource concerns you have and the opportunities for collaborative, creative solutions.

"Does having a collaborative process guarantee success? No. But… putting your heads together will feel better than knocking them together." —Daly, 2010

"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."

—Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration: Best Practices Guidebook (Boetsch, 2008)

What

Goal: Identify action (or inaction) that will move the project area toward the desired condition.

TOOLS:

Facilitated Discussion (See Facilitation)

Mylar (or GIS) Overlays

Field Trips & Site Visits

Meeting of the Collaborative

Pick Your Own Prescription

Maps, Sticky Notes, and the Hood of a Truck

When setting timelines…	…work to set clear and realistic expectations.
When working relationships are new...	…rely on open communication and facilitated discussion.
If you are unfamiliar with NEPA…	…become educated about the National Environmental Policy Act process.
Instead of focusing on specific actions…	…work to generate options that are consistent with the Forest Plan and other applicable laws.
If you have difficulty making decisions…	…diagnose the possible causes and work toward a solution (Ecosystem Management Initiative, n.d.).

For the Agency:

Collaborative groups often have expertise in economics, industry and contracting and they continue to emphasize the importance of economic factors in analysis.

Collaborative groups want to be involved – and that desire doesn't end with the development of a proposal. Don't let concerns about Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) become a barrier or an excuse not to collaborate. Use the FACA Easy Button and don't be afraid to call your District or Forest Environmental Coordinator to talk about the process moving forward.

For the Collaborative:

This is a good time to begin learning about the formal NEPA process. Familiarize yourself with the Federal Advisory Committee Act if you haven't done so already. As the proposal is developed, review the Roadmap Worksheet and clarify the analysis process, timeline and plans for collaboration.

Purpose & Need

Goal: Clearly state the underlying purpose & need to which the agency is responding in proposing the management action. Answer the question of "why" the agency is acting.

TOOLS:

Project Workshops

Desired Condition vs. Existing Condition

Research Data Previously Gathered

SLOW	GO
When there are unrealistic expectations of what the project can accomplish…	…work to clarify the project sideboards (e.g. Forest Plan guidelines) and then communicate them to all involved.
If the Purpose and Need is limited to the need for a specific action…	…focus on the problem you wish to solve, not on a pre-determined outcome. The Purpose and Need for action is designed to revolve around a need for change – not a need to do any one specific thing.
If the belief exists that the Purpose and Need is not an area for collaboration…	…remember that the CEQ Collaboration in NEPA handbook allows for collaboration at this stage. However, even if collaboratively developed, the authority to approve, or make changes to the Purpose and Need remains the responsibility of the Responsible Official (usually the District Ranger or Forest Supervisor).

For the Agency:

The definition of the problem (in this case the discrepancy between the conditions that exist and the conditions you envision) can be one of the most difficult parts of collaboration. As all potential improvements to the landscape flow from this point, the investment of time in mutual learning at this stage is absolutely critical.

For the Collaborative:

Developing the Purpose and Need statement relies heavily on information gathered during the comparison of the existing condition to the desired condition. Any time the collaborative and the agency spent previously on education and scientific understanding will make this part of the process substantially easier and increases the likelihood that the Purpose and Need will reflect collaborative input.

The CEQ regulations for a Purpose and Need statement are surprisingly short: "The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action." (40 C.F.R. 1502.13) Yet, the content of the NEPA document and the subsequent actions taken on the ground will be pinned to this statement. A few examples: Alternatives that do not meet the stated Purpose and Need do not need to be analyzed in detail. The degree to which an alternative meets the Purpose and Need can help the Responsible Official make their decision. Ultimately, the need for action is what brings together all those invested in the landscape.

Freeman et al. (2011) note that high stakeholder interest often leads to interdisciplinary teams whose members work together more collaboratively. While the reasons for this can be attributed to a variety of factors, one of the outcomes noted by Freeman et al. was interdisciplinary team members who were more satisfied with their job and who felt the outcome of the project itself was better.

Proposed Action

Goal: Create a proposal to authorize, recommend or implement an action in response to the identified need for change. Incorporates the Where, When, What from the proposal development process.

TOOLS:

- Project Workshops
- Brainstorming Sessions
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Mylar (or GIS) Overlays
- Orientation to NEPA Session

When the perception exists that drafting the Proposed Action must happen internally….	…remember that collaboration on the Proposed Action can lead to development of a proposal less likely to generate unresolved conflicts and the resulting multiple alternatives.
If you get bogged down trying to create the "perfect" Proposed Action…	…the NEPA process accounts for the fact that no Proposed Action is perfect. There will be multiple opportunities to raise issues with the Proposed Action and suggest iterative improvement to it, as well as to suggest other alternatives during both the collaborative and the NEPA processes.
When the perception exists that collaboration must end with the development of the Proposed Action…	…remember that the Council on Environmental Quality has explicitly stated there is room for collaboration in NEPA. It is possible to collaborate without violating the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Keep meetings and workshops public and familiarize yourself with the FACA Easy Button. (USDA FS, 2011).

For the Agency:

Be realistic about what you can implement. Proposed Actions and any alternatives should have a reasonable expectation of implementation. Many of your stakeholders will collaborate as unpaid volunteers because they are passionate about the project. They need you to both recognize their investment and invest in the process.

For the Collaborative:

For the Collaborative: Timelines, funding, and the agency's ability to implement will all guide and shape the Proposed Action. Remember that the Proposed Action is not the final decision— it is a starting point.

Start thinking about monitoring now (feel free to skip ahead to Monitoring). Monitoring should be planned for at the front-end of the process.

Scoping

Goal: Identify points of disagreement, debate or dispute with the Proposed Action. Identify possible effects caused by the Proposed Action, other actions needed and potential alternatives.

TOOLS:

- Project Workshops
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Public Meetings
- Maps, Maps for Comments
- Individual Interviews and Telephone Interviews
- Scoping Letter
- Open Houses

SLOW	GO
When issue identification by outside parties consists only of those raised in response to a scoping letter or an announcement in the paper… and/or issue identification is seen as routine….	…use the tools listed to complete active scoping and help identify unrepresented stakeholders, unforeseen issues, and provide excellent project information.
If there are concerns about the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)…	…use the FACA Easy Button. (USDA FS 2011). Discuss the concerns and seek guidance if necessary.
If the collaborative group is unfamiliar with NEPA...	…become educated about the formal NEPA process and how to comment in a way that will be constructive, meaningful and substantive.

For the Agency:

Scoping is still required even if collaboration has already occurred. Active and meaningful scoping provides stakeholders the opportunity to communicate, facilitates the agency's respectful consideration of their input, and enhances the legitimate ability of the participant to be a part of the decision making process. While the decision making authority under NEPA rests with the agency, stakeholders can participate in the matter to be decided. This can be done without abdicating the decision-making authority.

For the Collaborative:

Issue identification is done by the agency both internally and externally. This process is called "scoping". Make sure that you understand the timelines as well as the format for comments (make your comments substantive and display a cause-effect relationship to the proposed action). Be as constructive as possible by identifying issues likely to result from the proposed action and/or alternatives. Formal comments made during scoping may confer legal "standing", which is necessary for the objection process.

"Quite often, traditional public involvement tries to 'inform and educate,' presuming that the expert decision-maker simply needs to 'impart knowledge' to a passive, receptive public (Wondolleck 1988). At worst, it is not particularly concerned about the degree to which the public understands the decisions and policies made. Yet to be effective, public deliberation needs more than public information; it requires forums that encourage social learning."
—Daniels and Walker, 1996

A collaborator's perspective: "…we are trying to help not hinder… we are as concerned about the forest as they are…"

Alternatives

Goal: Modify the Proposed Action or develop alternatives to the Proposed Action that fulfill the stated Purpose and Need and address unresolved conflicts related to the Proposed Action.

TOOLS:

- Project Workshops
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Meeting of the Collaborative
- Brainstorming Sessions
- Topic-Specific Subcommittee

If there is resistance to working with collaborative groups on alternative development due to the amount of work involved in analyzing alternatives…	…emphasize that working with the collaborative group at this stage is more likely to result in widely-supported alternatives in which most concerns are addressed in a way that participants are willing to accept. It also increases stakeholder "buy-in" in the analysis process and may ease the selection of the preferred alternative.
If a specific set of actions desired by one or more members of the collaborative is not analyzed in detail…	…remember that NEPA requires a range of reasonable alternatives – not an exhaustive list. Focus on developing alternatives that react to unresolved conflicts stemming from the Proposed Action and then clearly communicate to the collaborative how those issues are addressed by either modifying the proposed action or developing other alternatives that are analyzed in detail.
When multi-party monitoring, adaptive management, or mitigation meaures are planned...	…make sure you have protocols in place. See Monitoring, Adaptive Management, and Mitigation measures. Adaptive management and Mitigation measuresare part of the alternatives and must be described in the NEPA document and Decision.

For the Agency:

Comment letters have historically been reviewed for alternatives (either suggested or implied). Open dialogue centered on alternative development is simply a more effective extension of that process as it allows you to engage directly with the stakeholder(s). Collaborative groups interviewed for this project identified a strong desire to have a voice in alternative generation.

For the Collaborative:

You have the ability to propose alternatives to the Proposed Action during scoping but not all alternatives will be analyzed in detail. It is the responsibility of the Responsible Official to approve the range of alternatives. Alternatives that fail to meet the Purpose and Need or are not consistent with the Forest Plan or applicable laws, regulations, or policies do not need to be analyzed. Alternatives are required in an Environmental Impact Statement but they are only required in an Environmental Assessment if there are unresolved conflicts.

Effects

Goal: Understand and quantitatively and qualitatively describe the direct, indirect and cumulative effects that may result from the Proposed Action and Alternatives.

TOOLS:

Regular Updates to Collaborative

Science Summits

Maps, Maps for Comments

Open Planning Meetings

Q&A Panels

ROAD WORK AHEAD!

SLOW	GO
When there is Interdisciplinary Team turnover…	…bring the new ID Team member up to speed on the project as well as the collaborative effort.
If there are long delays in the analysis timeline…	…clearly communicate these delays and the updated timeframe to the collaborative group. Not communicating can damage the relationship.
If there is substantial new resource information discovered....	…share that information with stakeholders as well as any implications for the project design and/or timeline. Consider a new "state of science" workshop.
If there are new members of the Collaborative or Collaborative representative turnover…	…clearly communicate the work done to date on the project. The Diablo Trust put a packet together for new collaborative members (NFF, 2011).
If there are mid-project changes in the project "sideboards" (Forest Plan, laws, regulations or court decisions)…	…clearly communicate those changes to the stakeholders. Share what the changes mean for the project, the timeline, and the collaborative process.

For the Agency:

Communication with collaborators does not stop with the beginning of analysis. Continue to provide regular updates to the collaborative group so there are fewer surprises (particularly with respect to timeline). Members of the collaborative group likely have constituents they need to report back to as well. Openly share information to help meet the needs of your partners.

For the Collaborative:

Maintaining momentum during this stage of NEPA is challenging. Appropriate, accurate analysis takes time. Remain in communication with the agency about timelines and expectations.

? INFO

The Socioeconomic Opportunity: Ceveny et al. (2011) surveyed Interdisciplinary Team leaders about expertise missing from their teams. The top two responses were social scientists and economists. Burns and Cheng (2005) note stakeholders involved in forest planning processes were as concerned about socioeconomic effects as ecological ones, if not more so. Consider working together to fill the socio-economic gap (e.g. having stakeholders identify likely outcomes from their perspective, funding research and analysis).

“While the Department encourages a collaborative approach to project planning, the administrative review process, by its very nature, does not lend itself to being fully collaborative. That being said, the very fact that the objection review process occurs before a final decision has been made increases the opportunities for a more collaborative approach to problem solving. Nothing in the rule prevents interested parties from (1) participating in project planning in such a way that they are eligible to object and therefore are notified directly when an objection filing period begins; (2) requesting copies of objections from the reviewing officer; (3) asking about a schedule of any objection resolution meetings and participating at the discretion of the reviewing officer; and (4) obtaining a copy of objection responses.” —(Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process, 2013, p. 18489)

Objection

Goal: Provide an opportunity for pre-decisional administrative review of proposed projects in Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements.

TOOLS:

Objection Resolution Meetings

If there is an objection…	…. all is not lost and objections do not equate to failure. Collaboration during the NEPA process can increase the likelihood that any objections will be substantive, more focused and less adversarial. See the discussion of objections in the NEPA section of the toolbox.
If there has been new information since the last opportunity to comment and prior to the beginning of the objection period (as in 36 CFR 218.8(c))…	… objections may be made on the basis of the new information (without having been raised previously in writing). The Federal Register (Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process, 2013, p. 18487) provides the following example “... if a draft EA is not circulated for public review and comment prior to the objection filing period, and an interested party identifies an issue with information in the final EA that was not previously available, the exception in this rule allows that issue to be raised in objection”. Consider using as this an opportunity to engage in a conversation on the relevancy of the new information and how it may affect the decision.

For the Agency:

The objection process is designed to “encourage early and active involvement by the public in planning and analysis (Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process, 2013, p. 18487).” Consider involving the collaborative group in the objection resolution meeting. Collaborative groups have successfully helped resolve objections in objection resolution meetings and can provide valuable input to the process. Consider how the objection resolution meeting should occur. Options include field visits as well as typical in-office meetings. Objection resolution meetings are opportunities to engage in mutual learning.

For the Collaborative:

Objection resolution meetings are public and you can attend. You can participate in the objection resolution meeting at the discretion of the reviewing officer. Remember that collaborative success or failure is not defined by the presence of an objection.

Decision/ Notification

Goal: The Responsible Official will select an alternative and issue a Decision based upon the effects disclosed in the analysis and how well the alternative meets the Purpose and Need. Notify all parties of record.

TOOLS:

- Decision Document
- Meeting of the Collaborative
- Communication Plan
- Q&A Panels
- Support Matrix
- Joint Press Release
- Maps, Maps for Comments

ROAD WORK AHEAD!

SLOW	GO
If the attitude exists that collaboration will narrow the ability of the Responsible Official to make a decision…	…make sure that all participants understand the range of possible outcomes. Clarify how the Responsible Official will use the collaborative input in the NEPA process early and often.
If there is lack of familiarity with the Decision Document and what it contains…	…invite the Responsible Official and members of the Interdisciplinary Team to a meeting of the collaborative to answer questions, explain Adaptive Management and go over the Decision.
If there is backlash from non-involved stakeholders or participants in the process or if participants are unclear about their responsibilities post-decision…	…consider using a Support Matrix that outlines how supporting collaborative members will respond to an objection/appeal and/or the media. Have a Communication Plan in place. Reach out to non-involved stakeholders to better understand their concerns and interests.
If there has been input from collaborative groups or individuals...	…demonstrate how and where that input is reflected in the Decision. Track issues raised during scoping through the process.
If there are mid-project changes in the project "sideboards" (Forest Plan, laws, regulations or court decisions)…	…clearly communicate those changes to the stakeholders. Share what the changes mean for the project, the timeline, and the collaborative process.

For the Agency:

Clearly communicate the Decision and timeline to all those involved. Should an appeal or objection be received, update the collaborative group on the appeal process and timeline. Remember, it is possible to collaborate without abdicating your decision-making ability.

Work with the collaborative group to communicate project outcomes. Members of the collaborative group need to report back to funders and constituencies and you can help by sharing information, photos, and highlighting success.

For the Collaborative:

Understand the timeline for response to the Decision before the Decision is published. Timelines are short and for the collaborative group to respond during the appropriate time period, meetings and response devices should be scheduled ahead of time. Even Letters of Support need to arrive on time!

One collaborative group facilitator noted that collaborative input enabled the agency to craft components (e.g. management strategies) that were widely supported, based on good science, and that could be used in subsequent analysis.

INFO

Two-thirds of studied cases where the collaborative relationship was unsustained over time showed "unilateral agency decisions that undermined or strained group decisions, failure to follow through with agreed-upon tasks, failure to replace key individuals, and withdrawing resources needed to continue the group's efforts." (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 1997).

Implementation

Goal: Implement the project as planned.
NOTE: Implementation in the NEPA sense includes monitoring, evaluation and adjustment. However, it has been separated here to address concerns specific to on-the-ground project activities.

TOOLS:

Regular Updates to Collaborative

Leverage Resources

Field Trips & Site Visits

Handover Memo (In Case of Staff Turnover)

Mitigation Checklist

ROAD WORK AHEAD!

SLOW	GO
If the belief exists that once implementation begins the collaborative process is over...	…focus on the project. Implementation is CRITICAL. Putting the plan on the ground is as important as the NEPA process, if not more so. Success or failure (and the feelings generated) will carry over to the next project.
If there is staff turnover...	…utilize the Handover Memo or other means of thoroughly briefing new personnel (both agency and collaborative group). Review operating protocols and Roadmap Worksheet.
When Adaptive Management is included in the Decision Document…	…understand and communicate the Adaptive Management process clearly and early.
If there is variable funding or lack of funding…	…communication is key, especially when factors such as funding may delay project implementation. The investment by all parties to this point is substantial; without the intent to implement, many of the gains made to-date can be lost.
If there are problems with implementation or Mitigation measures…	…evaluate and communicate. Explore potential solutions together.
If stewardship contracting is planned or if a contractor will be used to implement the project…	…use the Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration Best Practices Guidebook (Boetsch, 2008). Field-check the contract with the collaborative group and members of the Interdisciplinary Team. Ensure that Mitigation measures and design features in the NEPA document have been incorporated into the Request for Proposals and any contracts awarded.

For the Agency:

Collaborative groups want to be involved in implementation and believe this phase is as important as the NEPA planning process, if not more so. Trust gained during the planning process will either be cemented or lost during implementation. Maintain regular communication with partners during implementation and ask for help in seeking funding. Convey any delays or funding issues.

For the Collaborative:

Implementation timelines and successes can depend largely on available funding. Partnering during implementation can help ease the burden on the agency and ensure the final product is as planned. Collaborative groups can help seek funding for implementation. Be aware of staff turnovers, long delays between the Decision Notice/Record of Decision and implementation. Communication can help overcome these challenges.

Monitoring

Goal: Determine efficacy of actions and mitigation measures, provide data for adaptive management, and ensure project iss implemented as designed.

TOOLS:

- Multi-Party Monitoring
- Monitoring Protocol
- Field Trips & Site Visits
- Monitoring Training
- Photo Points
- Project Website

When the perception exists that monitoring is a nice to-do, but no big deal if it doesn't happen…	…remember the agency is committed to monitoring that is identified in the Decision Plan for monitoring early. Monitoring is about learning. No other phase in the project process offers as many opportunities for joint learning and improvement.
If there is lack of confidence in data collected by multi-party monitors…	…hold joint Monitoring Training sessions. Discuss U.S. Forest Service corporate data requirements. Be clear about monitoring objectives.
If there is lack of funding, knowledge or equipment...	…work with partners to pursue outside funding. Hold trainings to increase knowledge and build trust.
If there are unclear monitoring objectives…	…develop a monitoring plan that identifies objectives and sets realistic expectations. Agency monitoring should be incorporated into the NEPA document in the description of the alternative.
If there has been poor implementation of previous projects…	…the importance of monitoring is increased. Focus on an open, transparent monitoring process.

For the Agency:

Monitoring is not just about collaborative groups ensuring agency compliance with the Decision Notice/Record of Decision. Multi-party monitoring can help answer important stakeholder questions about resource concerns and treatments and collaborative groups can help by leveraging funding and resources. You can help them as well. One member of a collaborative group noted her organization lacked equipment, data storage space, and historic photos. These are needs the agency may be able to meet that will benefit all involved. Monitoring is about seeing what is working, what isn't, and how to improve.

For the Collaborative:

You can work together with the U.S. Forest Service to help fund monitoring efforts. Use monitoring as an opportunity to generate data for future decisions, share resources and expertise as well as increase accountability. Identify clear questions and measureable indicators, and discuss with the agency how the data will be used. Only collect monitoring data that will answer the group's key questions.

Agency monitoring is specified during the development of alternatives and is incorporated into the Decision Document. Don't wait until this stage to share monitoring priorities or implementation questions.

Measurement, monitoring and evaluation are continual sources of questions. How do we evaluate collaborative success? How do we measure project success? What milestones and measureable outcomes should we use? While there are no quick answers, there are excellent resources available. See the Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration, The Evaluation Sourcebook, and Closing the Feedback Loop.

Evaluation

Goal: Quantitatively and qualitatively determine what went right, what went wrong and where to adjust in this and future projects.

TOOLS:

- After Action Review
- Monitoring Results
- Surveys
- Joint Research and Fact-Finding
- Utilization-Focused Evaluation
- Individual Interviews and Telephone Interviews
- Roundtable Discussion

If there is concern that surveys (i.e. evaluative surveys to gauge the process) may trigger the Paperwork Reduction Act….	…see Surveys in theToolbox.
If, once surveys or evaluations are completed, the project ends…	…use the results of your evaluations to make adjustments to the process and collaborative model. Monitoring and evaluation of the process should be ongoing throughout the project.
If no other collaborative project is planned (limited incentive to evaluate for collaborative group)…	…evaluate anyway! Share your results with adjacent units and collaborative groups.
If evaluation becomes a means for assigning blame...	…focus on understanding the issues. Stress how to adapt and improve.

For the Agency:

You are evaluating both the project (i.e. in the case of adaptive management) as well as the collaborative process. Consider using an After Action Review. Consider evaluating the Interdisciplinary Team's perception of collaboration, the amount of time invested, the quality of the planning document and project implementation. Initial gains may be small; collaboration is an ongoing process.

For the Collaborative:

You are likely to have more flexibility than your federal partners to complete Surveys regarding the effectiveness of collaboration. In addition to informing future projects, survey results can make a compelling case for collaborative group funding. Network with other collaborative groups or organizations to share results and lessons learned. Remember that in addition to the evaluation of the collaborative process, the evaluation phase is important to the project process itself, particularly with respect to Adaptive Management.

Adjustment

Goal: Learn from the process and improve. Implement adaptive management based upon monitoring and evaluation.

TOOLS:

Lessons Learned Document

Revised MOU (see Commitment)

Revised Collaborative Roadmap

Collaborative Charter/Goals/ Protocols (and revision of)

Letter to Your Successors

If evaluation shows a need for implementation of adaptive management or adjustment to the process…	…adjust the project as specified in the Decision Document and communicate that adjustment to all involved. See Closing the Feedback Loop (Moote, 2013). Set up a group process to discuss what and how changes will be made. Consider an educational forum to share monitoring and evaluation results. Clearly communicate any adjustments to all (especially if the adjustments come in the middle of the project).
If evaluation shows ineffective collaborative process...	…work to build your collaborative process. See Building Collaborative Groups and Collaborative Training. Remember that the process is never perfect. Focus on improvements, not solutions.
If no evaluation was completed...	…it is never too late to evaluate the project or the collaboration. Take the time to do so. Consider working with an external expert (the National Forest Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service Collaboration Cadre, or member of the academic community) to help evaluate and adjust your process.
If there is staff turnover…	…use tools such as the Handover Memo to make sure gains are not lost in transition. Lessons Learned Documents will also help successive collaborators.

For the Agency:

Each trip around the collaborative NEPA roadmap will get easier with successful adjustment. It can take months or even years to build the relationships and trust necessary for a successful, ongoing collaboration. Don't be afraid to adjust your collaboration roadmap if parts of the process didn't work. Collaboration is a continuous feedback loop.

For the Collaborative:

Each collaborative effort will build on itself. Use the evaluation results to learn and improve. Don't expect one successful project to eliminate all future sources of conflict. Be willing to innovate and encourage stakeholders, partners and the agency to do the same.

Success should not be defined as achieving perfection. Rather, success in collaboration and public land management can be thought of as an incremental improvement – in the condition of the land, the relationships between people, and the capacity of the community and the agency.

Toolbox

Below you will find the specific tools identified in each stage of the NEPA process. Resources and additional information are given for each term. Think of this as an interactive glossary. Entries are listed in alphabetical order. Beneath each tool you will see hyperlinks to return you to the stage (or stages) that mention(s) the tool in question. Note: The tools below may apply to stages other than those mentioned. In addition, there may be tools that are not listed that are as effective (or more so). Be creative, mix and match tools to your needs, and/or create your own tools! Please forward updates, suggestions, or new tools to the National Forest Foundation.

Adaptive management:

- **Is a decision process.**
- **Is a feedback loop.**
- **Is systematic.**
- **Requires monitoring and evaluation.**
- **May require adjustment.**
- **Allows for flexibility.**
- **Emphasizes learning.**
- **Should be explicit and transparent.**
- **Is not trial and error.**
- **Is not a way to get out of analyzing environmental impacts.**

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is often used by the agency to account for uncertainty and to allow flexibility in management. For the agency, adaptive management consists of specifying what actions will be taken if a certain threshold is reached, then monitoring, evaluating and adjusting as necessary. The learning component is a valuable part of the adaptive management process and an excellent opportunity for stakeholders and the agency to work together.

The flexibility of adaptive management can be in conflict with stakeholders who need clarification and certainty. Nie and Schultz (2012) highlight the potential conflict of agency discretion vs. the search for certainty and need for agency accountability and examine the use of trigger points (predetermined points at which action is tripped, specifically "if X, then Y"). They make five recommendations for the use of adaptive management:

1. Adaptive management should include a clear feedback loop and be conducted in a way that allows for learning.
2. Monitoring programs and triggered mitigation measures should be enforceable and include pre-specified timelines.
3. In order to survive judicial review, agencies must demonstrate that they will not violate substantive legal requirements.
4. The responsibilities for designing, conducting, interpreting, and funding monitoring should be made explicit and up front.
5. Decisions about trigger points and trigger mechanisms should be made transparently and be explicit.

These recommendations are particularly important when collaborating during the NEPA process. Adaptive management is a good tool for the agency but can be a potential stumbling block for stakeholders when it is unclear or vague. In addition, adaptive management that ignores the opportunity for learning can result in adjustment of management activities without understanding why the adjustments were made.

Collaborative monitoring and adaptive management can increase trust and mutual learning; however, as the fourth recommendation indicates, the responsibilities for implementing monitoring must be made clear. Otherwise, there is a risk for undermining the relationships between the stakeholders and the agency.

With respect to the fifth recommendation, Nie and Schultz advise:

> Agencies also should consider incorporating a continuum of trigger points instead of a single red-light trigger that must not be crossed. This allows for proactive intervention before resource conditions reach a crisis point. In almost all cases where natural resource conservation is a goal, we recommend that triggers be used in a way that prevents the crossing of ecological thresholds, since these often correspond with tipping points that may not be reversible. In some cases, the best approach will be to include several types of triggers, some of which serve as green lights allowing activities to proceed, some of which serve as indicators or warnings, and some of which indicate bottom line standards for legal compliance that cannot be crossed.

The development of this continuum of trigger points appears to be fruitful ground for agencies and stakeholders to work together. Even where the results of management activities are relatively uncertain, the process for dealing with that uncertainty can be clear. For more information, see the National Forest Foundation's Adaptive Management Technical Guide Information Sheet (NFF, 2008g), the US Department of the Interior Adaptive Management Technical Guide (Williams et al., 2009), and the Collaborative Adaptive Management Network (Collaborative Adaptive Management Network, 2013).

Return to Alternatives, Decision/Notification, Evaluation, Implementation

After Action Review

The After Action Review is a tool that can be used to capture what happened during a process or event and what can be learned from it. The After Action Review Reference Guide (USDA FS, 2006c) includes the review process, tips and techniques, and resources. The After Action Review Worksheet (USDA FS, 2006b) can also be used. It may be worthwhile for both the agency and collaborative group to conduct their own separate After Action Reviews in addition to coming together to discuss the NEPA process and how the interaction between the collaborative group and the agency worked.

Return to Evaluation, Lessons Learned Document, Letter to Your Successors

Brainstorming Sessions

During brainstorming, participants are encouraged to respond to a question or problem freely, typically by stating ideas verbally. Because participants are asked to generate ideas without judging or evaluating their ideas or the ideas of others, brainstorming can be an excellent way to encourage creative solutions. Brainstorming sessions can be an effective way to collect a large amount of information in a relatively short amount of time. For more in depth information on brainstorming, see:

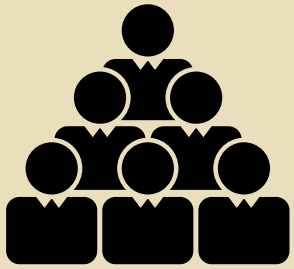
Knowledge Sharing Toolkit, Brainstorming (Knowledge Sharing Toolkit, 2013a) – A project of several United Nations programs to share information and resources surrounding knowledge sharing.

Community Toolbox, Brainstorming (USDI NPS, 2002a) – A National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program project with excellent "how-to" information. Includes information on basic brainstorming technique as well as alternative approaches.

You can also pick up a copy of *Facilitation at a Glance!* (Bens, 2008) or the *Facilitator's Guide of Participatory Decision-Making* (Kaner et al., 1996). Both books have specific sections on how to facilitate brainstorming sessions, including ground rules, tips, techniques and useful variations.

Brainstorming is a good tool when there are a great number of possible options that will ultimately be reduced to one or more selection(s). Brainstorming can open up the discussions between the agency and collaborative groups because it asks the participants to think freely while suspending judgment.

Return to Where, Proposed Action, Alternatives



In order to share the mission, vision and values of the collaborative group (as well as the benefits of collaboration), one collaborative group printed large posters about the collaborative and shared them with agency partners. The collaborative group felt that this empowered partners to share their positive experiences about collaboration with agency employees.

Building Collaborative Groups

Careful thought to how a collaborative group is initially set up can help the group weather challenges over time. People are drawn to participate in collaborative groups for many different reasons (e.g. shared goals, common problems, sense of place, sense of crisis (Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000)). All participants want to know that their voice is heard and their perspectives are considered by the others at the table. Below are listed resource documents to help guide the establishment of a collaborative group. See also Facilitation and Collaborative Charter/Goals/Protocols (and revision of).

Important Questions for a Collaborative Process (National Forest Foundation, 2007e) – Document intended to promote thinking about the collaborative process and its design.

The Collaboration Cloverleaf: Four Stages of Development (Wyckoff and DiBari, 2011) – National Forest Foundation publication addressing stages of development commonly experienced by collaborative groups: formation, foundation, fruition and future.

Stages of Collaborative Development – (National Forest Foundation, 2008f) Table summarizing the four common stages of development.

Collaboration Handbook (Daly, 2010) – Produced by Red Lodge Clearinghouse. A practical guide dealing with everything from collaborative formation to meetings, facilitation, funding, participant burnout, and more.

Return to Where, Adjustment

Collaboration

Collaboration can be defined as the process of exchanging information and enhancing the capacity of each other by sharing resources, rewards, risks and responsibilities to achieve a common purpose for mutual benefit.

While different models exist (see Bentrup, 2001; Bartlett, 2012; Cheng and Sturtevant, 2012; Daniels and Walker, 1996), the general framework is largely the same. The process typically begins with an assessment, followed by organization of the collaborative process itself, problem identification and exploration, implementation, and assessment. Collaboration is not a state of being; it takes time, plus effort and resources, to work through the process.

Key to most models of collaboration is an emphasis on mutual learning. McCool et al. (2000) make the point that learning is not just about the resources, but also about the participants. Collaborators need to learn about each other as well as the technical aspects of a project. It is important to remember that learning is not an automatic outcome of collaboration (Brummel et al., 2010). You can direct staff to attend collaborative group meetings but you can't direct them to engage in mutual learning. For collaboration to work, the parties at the table must be open, honest and willing to engage in constructive dialogue. "Token" efforts will not yield the benefits of collaboration.

Practical advice from Red Lodge Clearinghouse (Daly, 2010):

There's no one "right way" to collaborate, but effective collaborations incorporate the following key ingredients:

- The process is open, inclusive, transparent, accessible, and tailored to local needs.
- Meetings are civil and safe. No bullies allowed.
- Deliberations are thoughtful, frank and never rushed.
- There is an agreed-upon way to make decisions.
- Commitments that are made are honored. Trust is built on that confidence.
- It's a team effort. You win, you lose, you temporize as a team.

There are a number of excellent general resources on collaboration.

Red Lodge Clearinghouse Collaboration Handbook (Daly, 2010) – A step by step guide to the process of collaboration.

USFS Collaboration Primer (Williams and Bedell-Loucks, 2011) – U.S. Forest Service Empowering Collaborative Stewardship publication designed to help agency personnel begin collaboration.

Building Collaborative Relationships: Elements of Success (NFF, 2013a) – a short guide to the best ingredients for collaboration.

Council on Environmental Quality Collaboration in NEPA Guide (CEQ, 2007b) – Definitive guide on collaboration in NEPA.

The Partnering Toolbook (Tennyson, 2003) – An overview of partnering, complete with models, tools and best practices.

The Partnership Guide (NFF and USDA FS, 2005) – While this guide focuses largely on partnerships, it contains valuable information to help non-agency personnel understand the U.S. Forest Service and vice versa.

Quick Guide to Collaboration and the NEPA Process (Pinchot Institute for Collaboration, 2005) – General overview of NEPA and opportunities for collaboration.

"Participant involvement in a collaborative process is not simply a matter of generating 'public acceptance' for fuels management or other projects, but is a complex negotiation and possible redefinition of core values." —Sturtevant et al., 2005

For more issue- or project- specific guidance on collaboration:

A Quick Guide to Incorporating Collaboration into Watershed Condition Framework (Moseley and Davis, 2012b) – A step by step guide to collaboration during the watershed condition framework process.

Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration (Boetsch, 2008) – Produced by Sustainable Northwest. Outlines basic principles of stewardship contracting, opportunities for collaboration and lessons learned.

The Utilization of Collaborative Processes In Forest Planning (Burns and Cheng, 2005) – Research study detailing collaboration on six forest plan revision processes. Contains valuable information regarding lessons learned, best practices and the perceptions of both agency and collaborative group personnel. While focused on forest plan revision processes, many of the lessons highlighted are valuable to any project using collaboration.

For technical support and assistance:

Conservation Connect: A Learning Network for Collaboration (National Forest Foundation, 2013b)

Partnership Resource Center (USDA FS, 2013e)

National Collaboration Cadre (USDA FS, 2013i)

US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (US ECR, 2013a)

Conservation Partnership Center (The Nature Conservancy, 2010)

Return to When To Use This Tool, Tips for Your Trip:

Consider collaboration if (Daly, 2010):

- **The problem is beyond the ability of a single individual or group to handle.**
- **The identified problem is not so controversial or divisive that stakeholders cannot at least reasonably discuss it in the current circumstances.**
- **There is general agreement that a problem exists, but there are uncertainties or differences of opinion about how it should be addressed.**
- **There is some possibility of taking constructive action.**
- **The time is right (new shared threat, major community events, cooling of previous tensions, changes in government policies, and/or transitions in leadership).**
- **Key people/organizations are willing to come to the table.**

Collaboration Continuum

The Collaboration Continuum (at right) was adapted from the Council on Environmental Quality's Spectrum of Engagement in NEPA Decision-Making (CEQ, 2007b). Changes to the CEQ Spectrum of Engagement have been made to emphasize the importance of multi-directional communication (i.e. communicate versus inform). Where changes have been made, they are noted. Few collaborative groups and agency units will have the need, desire or capacity to collaborate at every stage in the NEPA process. The Collaboration Continuum is provided to show the possible spectrum of participation.

	Communicate[1]	Consult[2]	Involve	Collaborate
Definitions[3]	Exchanging information for mutual benefit.	Exchanging and incorporating information for mutual benefit.	Exchanging and incorporating information to achieve a common purpose for mutual benefit.	Exchanging information and enhancing the capacity of each other by sharing resources, rewards, risks and responsibilities to achieve a common purpose for mutual benefit.
Agency Commitment[4]	Provide parties with comprehensive, accurate and timely information about its NEPA decision-making.	Keep parties informed and consider their concerns and suggestions on the NEPA process. Provide documentation of how their input was considered in the decision-making process.	Communicate with parties to ensure that suggestions and concerns are addressed and reflected within legal and policy constraints when assessing environmental effects during the decision-making process. Provide iterative feedback on how their input is considered in the decision-making at various steps in the NEPA process.	Work directly with parties at one or more stages of the NEPA process, seeking to share information and engage in mutual learning about[5]: the purpose and need, range of alternatives and potential design criteria or mitigation measures to be included in the alternatives, collection and use of data, environmental impact analysis, and development of a preferred alternative (if used).[6]
Collaborative Group Commitment	Provide the agency with comprehensive, accurate and timely information about structure, stakeholders, protocols and goals. Listen and seek clarification when necessary.	Engage in the process and on the issues. Provide open and honest information to the agency centered on the NEPA process and project at hand.	Communicate with the agency throughout the process in order to convey suggestions, issues, concerns, local knowledge and data. Listen to those involved and share information openly.	Exchange information and enhance the capacity of each other by sharing resources, rewards, risks and responsibilities. Engage in mutual learning.
Phase[7] (including phases in Pre-Proposal, NEPA or Implementation)	Scoping, draft and final review and comment periods (CEQ, 2007b). Communication can and should also occur in all phases.	All phases.	All phases.	All phases.
Agency Goal[8]	Provide sufficient objective information for parties to understand the issues being addressed through the NEPA process.	Obtain feedback on issues in the NEPA process, the alternatives considered, and the analysis of impacts.	Consistently solicit and consider parties' input throughout the NEPA process to ensure that parties' concerns are understood and addressed before the analysis of impacts is concluded and a final decision made.	Directly engage parties in working through aspects of the NEPA process potentially including the framing of the issues, the development of a range of reasonable alternatives, the analysis of impacts, and the identification of the preferred alternative – up to, but not including, the agency's NEPA Decision.
Collaborative Group Goal	Understand the NEPA process.	Exchange information with the agency and stakeholders on issues, alternatives and analysis of impacts.	Share information to achieve a common purpose.	Share information and engage in mutual learning to achieve a common purpose for mutual benefit.
Processes[9]	Fact Sheets, Newsletters, Project Website, Open Houses, Panel Presentations, (see Educational Forums), Public Meetings.	Notice and Comment (see Scoping), Surveys, Focus Groups, Consultation, Tribal, State, Public Meetings.	Project Workshops, Deliberate Polling, Individual and/or group consultations, Advisory Committee[10].	Individual and/or group consultations, Advisory Committee, Consensus-building, Facilitation, Interagency Working Groups, Mediation, Joint Research and Fact-Finding.

1 The CEQ (CEQ, 2007b) refers to this stage as "Inform." In order to better represent the multi-directional exchange of information and allow for information to come from stakeholders to the agency, this stage has been renamed "Communicate."

2 CEQ (2007b) specifies that this term is used generically, as opposed to a specific meaning tied to a specific statute (e.g. Consultation under the Endangered Species Act).

3 Definitions adapted from "The Collaboration Continuum" by Dynamica Consulting (Wyckoff, 2011).

4 As specified in the CEQ Collaboration in NEPA handbook (CEQ, 2007b).

5 The CEQ handbook (2007b) uses the term "seeking advice and agreement on" in this section. Advice can be sought only from collaborative groups formed under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Sharing information and engaging in mutual learning to expand zones of agreement between multiple interests can be done without FACA sanction.

6 NEPA regulations do not require that a preferred alternative be identified in an EIS.

7 The CEQ Collaboration in NEPA handbook (CEQ, 2007b) specifies this row as "NEPA Phase." In order to emphasize that the collaboration continuum incorporates proposal development (e.g. determining the why, where, when, what of an action, also known as "pre-NEPA" or "left-side of the triangle"), this header has been broadened.

8 As specified in the CEQ Collaboration in NEPA handbook (CEQ, 2007b).

9 As specified in the CEQ Collaboration in NEPA handbook (CEQ, 2007b).

10 Chartered Advisory Committees under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Formal Agency Consultations and Government to Government relations are not addressed in this document.

One of the most often cited benefits of collaboration is an increase in trust (promoted by processes that emphasize fairness and relationship building (Davenport et al., 2007). A clear collaborative charter can lay the foundation for trust building.

Collaborative Assessment

Prior to beginning the process of collaboration it is critical to assess both your capacity for collaboration and the situation itself. The U.S. Forest Service Partnership Capacity Assessment Tool (Resolve, Inc., 2004) is a resource for Forest Service units wishing to explore their capacity to collaborate. It can also be filled out by the agency's partners and stakeholders to facilitate a deeper discussion of the unit's capacity. The Capacity Assessment Tool does not evaluate specific projects to determine if collaboration is a viable option; rather, the tool helps units evaluate their strengths and needs in the partnership arena. It provides an excellent starting point for exploring the capabilities of the unit for partnership and collaboration.

The collaborative group itself must have the capacity to engage with the natural resource planning process. Cheng and Sturtevant (2012) have developed a framework for assessing collaborative capacity. Their work identifies six areas of collaboration: organizing, learning, deciding, acting, evaluating and legitimizing. Within each area, they explore capacity of the individual, the collaborative group, and external organizations. See Table 2 (pp. 680-681) (Cheng and Sturtevant, 2012); it can be used as a checklist to identify areas where collaborative capacity exists and where improvement is needed.

The National Forest Foundation has also put together a survey of Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration (NFF, 2008e). This is can be used as both an initial assessment tool as well as an evaluation tool (have participants fill out the survey at the beginning and end of the project).

For stakeholders assessing whether to participate in a collaborative process, Yaffee and Wondolleck (2001) developed a strategic assessment to stimulate thought and discussion. No point values or metrics are applied. The questions are open-ended and require both input and evaluation.

Return to When To Use This Tool

Collaborative Charter/Goals/Protocols (and revision of)

Governance documents are critical pieces to collaborative success because they get down on paper the collaborative members' agreement about group purpose, strategies, organizational structure, protocols and process. When conflict arises, governance documents should provide guidance about steps the group will take to address it. The National Forest Foundation produced Governance Documents for Collaboratives (NFF, 2008b) – a document highlighting collaborative governance and including full-text examples and best practices.

Return to Adjustment, Building Collaborative Groups

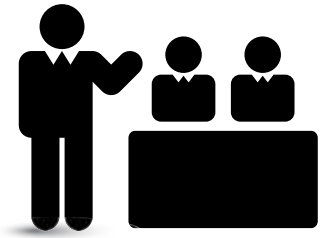
Collaborative Project ID Process

One of the key factors to collaborative success is a feeling of ownership among collaborators (Belton and Jackson-Smith, 2010; Bryan, 2004). This feeling of ownership begins with the selection of the project location. That selection can be the general area of a national forest or when or where within a particular unit project activities will focus. More and more collaborative groups are requesting a voice in the location of projects. Different units have different methods for identifying and prioritizing projects within their borders. Some processes are formal while others are less so. The key for collaborative groups is to understand the process that is in place. Ask the Line Officer how projects are prioritized on their unit and explore opportunities to work together.

One element collaborative groups continue to highlight is the importance of socioeconomic factors in project prioritization. Developing socioeconomic performance measures for the Watershed Condition Framework (Moseley and Davis, 2012a) identifies four major categories of socioeconomic measures: adaptive capacity, economic impacts, social equity, and provision of ecosystem services. These performance measures could be adapted to aid in

the project prioritization process. Another excellent socio-economic resource is the Economic Profile Systems- Human Dimensions Toolkit (EPS-HDT) (Headwaters Economics, 2013). An add-on to Microsoft Excel, EPS-HDT allows users to access socio-economic data specific to their geography as well as compare and contrast across regions.

Return to Where, When



Tip: Consider tools like field trips, reading lists, educational forums, and Q&A panels to exchange information.

Collaborative Training

Several excellent collaboration training sessions are available for both agency and collaborative group personnel.

Collaborative Forest Management: Policy and Practice (Moote, 2006) – A downloadable paper aimed at forestry practitioners and those who work within collaborative land management.

U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (US ECR, 2013c) – Courses on collaboration, facilitation, environmental dispute resolution and more.

Peer Learning Sessions (NFF, 2013d) – Online free sessions hosted by the National Forest Foundation and covering a wide variety of collaboration topics. Past sessions are also available for download.

Collaboration in NEPA and Planning – Flyer on training by the U.S. Forest Service's National Collaboration Cadre. Training can occur on your unit and include both members of the community and the agency.

Return to Where, Adjustment

Collaborating Mid-Stream

Collaboration can begin at any point in the NEPA process. While early involvement by collaborative groups is important, don't let the fact that you didn't start at the beginning keep you from starting at all. Collaborative groups can enter the process mid-stream in order to engage in projects that have already begun. Sometimes groups develop their own alternative to present to the agency. In this way, the collaborative group can enter the NEPA process, share their knowledge and concerns with the agency, and continue to collaborate as the NEPA process moved forward. Keys for beginning to collaborate mid-stream:

- Gain agreement amongst collaborative members that they are ready, willing and able to commit the time and energy to engaging in the project.
- Meet with the Responsible Official as soon as possible to customize your roadmap to collaboration. Identify where you will interact and what that interaction will look like.
- Work to bring the collaborative group's knowledge base up to date. For the collaborative group: become familiar with the why, where, when, and what of the project. Consider tools like field trips, reading lists, educational forums, and Q&A panels to exchange information.
- Work to bring the agency's knowledge base up to date. Familiarize members of the Interdisciplinary Team with the participants in the collaborative group as well as the basic principles of collaboration. Consider tools that emphasize relationship building as well as mutual learning and make sure ample time is included before and after activities to allow for social interaction.
- While it is impossible to collaborate on NEPA stages that have already been completed, it is not impossible to communicate. Communication becomes increasingly important when collaborating mid-stream. For the agency: communicate what has been accomplished in the proposal development and NEPA stages to date.

If a new partner enters the collaborative process, share the Roadmap Worksheet with them along with governance documents, cooperating agreements, fact sheets and/or previous products of the collaborative group. The Diablo Trust has an excellent packet for new members which you can learn about here (NFF, 2011).

Return to When To Use This Tool, Alternatives

Commitment

There are a variety of ways to document commitments and partnerships. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a formal vehicle for outlining the relationship between the agency and the collaborative group. Although MOUs are non-binding, they are still valuable in documenting roles and expectations. See:

Uncompaghre Plateau MOU with multiple partners (NFF, 2008a)

Northeast Washington Forest Coalition MOU with the Colville National Forest (NFF, 2008c)

Clearwater Basin Collaborative MOU with the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests (Clearwater Basin Collaborative and USDA FS, 2010)

The USFS Partnership Guide (NFF and USDS FS, 2005), Chapter VI, also contains helpful links on grants and agreements. USFS Employees and others may find the Agreements Desk Guide (USDA FS, 2003) helpful as well for specific guidance for developing agreements.

A MOU is not the only way to formalize a collaborative or cooperative process. The Harney County Declaration of Cooperation (Haney County Restoration Collaborative, 2009) is an excellent document spelling out the collaborative process and including stakeholder statements.

These documents can be reviewed and revised based upon the knowledge gained during the evaluation process and prior to the beginning of additional projects.

Return to When To Use This Tool, Adjustment

Tip: These plans can be simple. The key is thinking about your communication strategy before it is needed.

Communication Plan

It is extremely important for both the agency and the collaborative group to know how they will communicate with each other as well as notify interested stakeholders of developments in the planning process. Not only does each need to have a plan in place for keeping people informed, it is helpful to clearly spell out how communication success will be measured. Strategic communication plans can help identify goals, methods and measures well in advance. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provides an in-depth communication plan template (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2006). Remember, these plans can be simple. The key is thinking about your communication strategy before it is needed. This is especially relevant for collaborative groups who need to communicate with their stakeholders during the relatively short comment and objection and/or appeal periods. Doing as much work ahead of time (including planning for communications) can make a large difference in the 30 or 45 day response window.

Other quality communication resources include the March 2012 e-newsletter (Nicholson, 2012) of the International Association of Business Communication, which focuses on writing effective communication plans. Articles also include information on strategy and measurement. The National Council of Non-Profits maintains an excellent page of communications, marketing and planning (National Council of Non-Profits, 2013) tips, tools and techniques. The USFS Partnership Guide (NFF and USDA FS, 2005) also contains a helpful section on communicating partnership successes to the broader community (see page 73).

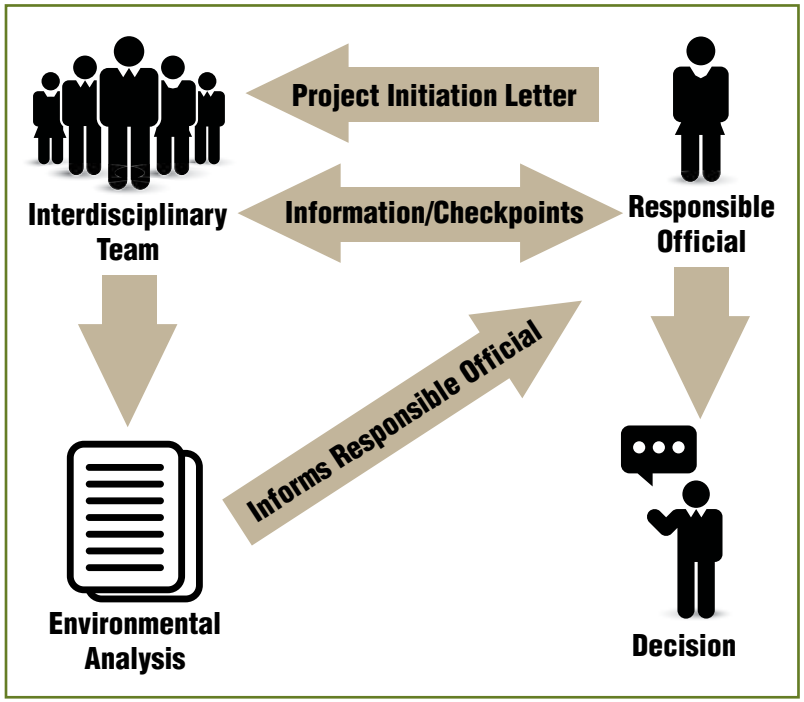
Return to Decision/Notification

Decision Document

The Decision Document is the formal mechanism for conveying the Responsible Official's selected course of action and the rationale used to make that decision. Decision rationale includes how the selected alternative meets the purpose and need for action, documents the consideration of environmental impacts and public involvement, and details why the selected alternative was chosen.

The agency is bound by the information contained in the Decision Document (e.g. any monitoring committed to in the Decision Document is the only monitoring the agency must complete). It is important for stakeholders and collaborative groups to understand the Decision Document, how it fits within the larger NEPA context and what it does or does not contain.

This graphic displays the decision making process:



The Environmental Analysis document informs the Responsible Official (a Line Officer such as a Forest Supervisor or District Ranger) so that they can make an educated decision among the alternatives about the course of action. The decision is captured in a Decision Document.

The type of Decision Document depends on the type of environmental analysis completed (which is driven by whether or not the effect of the proposed action are considered "significant"). The Decision Document types are:

Analysis document	Decision document
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	Record of Decision (ROD)
Environmental Assessment (EA)	Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)/Decision Notice (DN)
Categorical Exclusion (CE)	Decision Memo (DM)

Required content of the Decision Document varies depending on the type of document, but generally includes the decision and decision rationale, a description of public involvement, findings required by law, implementation date, objection or appeal rights, and contact information. For more information on Decision Documents, see the references listed under the National Environmental Policy Act section of the toolbox.

Return to Decision/Notification, National Environmental Policy Act

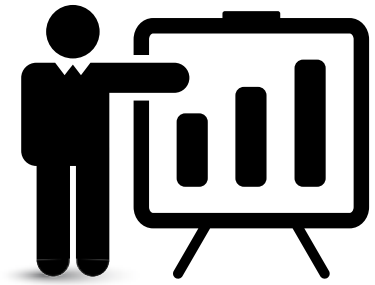
"Ultimately, of course, it is not better documents but better decisions that count. NEPA's purpose is not to generate paperwork—even excellent paperwork—but to foster excellent action. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. These regulations provide the direction to achieve that purpose."
—40 CFR 1500.1 (c)

Desired Condition vs. Existing Condition

The existing condition is the present state of the landscape. The desired condition is the goal for the landscape. What should the ground in question look like? The purpose and need for action is essentially a comparison of the desired condition and the existing condition. The discrepancy between the two is why action should be taken.

Working to achieve mutual understanding of the existing and desired condition is critical as the fundamental reason for action flows from this point. It is worth investing time in exploring perceptions of the existing condition as well as the desired condition and its rationale. Tools identified in Dealing with the Scientific Dimensions of Issues (Coughlin et al., 1999) are excellent ways to explore the scientific rationale for the desired condition. Field Trips & Site Visits are excellent ways to both explore the existing and desired condition and strengthen collaborative relationships. The Forest Resiliency Indicator Checklist for Collaborative Groups (NFF, 2009b) is a tool to help collaborative groups structure their thinking about desired conditions.

Return to Why, Purpose & Need



Tip: It is important to have panelists that are respected in their field and perceived as subject matter experts.

Educational Forums

An educational forum is a gathering designed to increase knowledge of a particular subject through mutual learning. Forums can focus on the project as a whole, but are often more effective when narrowed to one element of the project (e.g. state of the riparian area as opposed to watershed restoration). One method of hosting a forum:

- Identify topic and preliminary agenda
- Identify facilitator
- Choose date and location (a neutral location is ideal)
- Invite panelists (subject-matter experts, well-respected)
- Set agenda
- Advertise forum
- Provide refreshments!

A typical agenda will include an initial greeting and ground-rule discussion by the facilitator, an overview presentation (e.g. on the project itself, context, location, etc.), and then a short presentation by each of the panelists. The audience then has an opportunity to ask questions. The goal of the forum is to share information and deepen understanding of the issue. It is important to have panelists that are respected in their field and perceived as subject matter experts. During the NEPA process, an educational forum might include members of the Interdisciplinary Team as well as subject matter experts from within the collaborative group or community at large. In "From the Forest to the River: Citizens' Views on Stakeholder Engagement" (Walker et al., 2006), surveyed stakeholders identified forums as their preferred method of stakeholder engagement, followed by public meetings and field trips. See also: Science Summits.

Return to Why, Collaboration Continuum

Facilitation

A facilitator's job is to ensure the collaborative meetings and processes support constructive dialogue amongst the diverse participants involved in the group. As a neutral guardian of the process, the facilitator enables group members to focus on the issues being discussed. Good facilitators work with group leadership to set agendas and establish ground rules, manage conflict in a way that leads to identification of constructive solutions, and keep the group moving forward toward achieving its objectives. Facilitators also often serve in a coordination role, maintaining records and meeting minutes and communicating with members about upcoming meetings and tasks.

Roster of ECR Practitioners (US ECR, 2013c)

Guidance for Selecting a Facilitator (US ECR, 2013b)

Conservation Connect (NFF, 2013b) – facilitation services from the National Forest Foundation

Better Decisions through Consultation and Collaboration (Dalton and Harter, 2009) – produced by the US EPA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center. Page 68 contains information on working with a facilitator/ mediator and Appendix III is centered on how to choose a facilitator.

Return to Where, What, Building Collaborative Groups, Collaboration Continuum, Public Meetings

Federal Advisory Committee Act

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) often is raised as a concern when the agency interacts with outside groups. In order to avoid violating FACA as well as avoid letting the fear of violating FACA prohibit collaboration, it is important for all parties to familiarize themselves with the parameters set forth in the law. The U.S. Forest Service document Key Principles and Practical Advice for Complying with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (USDA FS, 2011) (also known as the FACA Easy Button) is a short, effective resource. One of the most important questions is when FACA applies. According to the FACA Easy Button:

When Does FACA Apply?

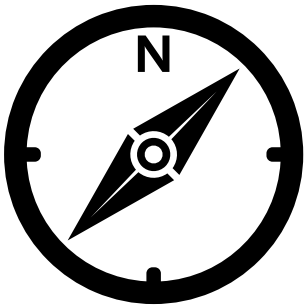
- A federal agency must comply with FACA when it (1) establishes, utilizes,* controls, or manages (2) a group with non-federal members that (3) provides the agency with consensus advice or recommendations.
- Only groups that meet all three of these legal elements are subject to FACA.
- Whether a particular group is subject to FACA is a fact-specific inquiry that generally requires consultation with the Office of General Counsel.

** Under FACA, the term "utilize" does not have its ordinary meaning. Instead, FACA's regulations provide that an agency "utilizes" a group only when it exercises actual management or control over a group's operations. 41 CFR 102-3.25.*

The FACA Easy Button also contains a decision tree that steps participants through the process of determining if FACA is likely to apply in a given situation. Collaborative groups that are citizen-led and who set their own agendas are highly unlikely to trigger FACA. The bottom line: get educated about FACA. Don't let ignorance or fear keep you from collaborating.

Return to What Collaboration in NEPA Can and Cannot Do, What, Proposed Action, Scoping, Open Planning Meetings

Tip: One widely suggested tool for collaborative group meetings is the provision of food! Consider sharing a meal before or after a meeting (or even just refreshments) to allow for the opportunity to build personal relationships among the stakeholders.



Tip: Field trips and site visits are one of the most important tools groups can use to work through NEPA in a collaborative way.

Field Trips & Site Visits

Many collaborative groups have learned through experience that sitting in a room and talking for hours can sometimes lead to frustration. Field trips and site visits are one of the most important tools groups can use to work through NEPA in a collaborative way. Discussions in the field can not only lead to "ah-ha moments" and valuable dialogue, but also support shared learning and relationship-building.

The National Forest Foundation has identified several keys to a successful field trip, including facilitation in the field, a hands-on activity, and note-taking of decisions and issues discussed on the trip. For specific details on best practices and how to host a field trip, see:

Creative Approach to a Field Trip (NFF, 2008d) Details a field trip example as well as highlighting keys to success.

Community Toolbox, Field Trips (USDI NPS, 2002b) Contains "how-to" information.

Return to Where, Why, What, Proposed Action, Scoping, Alternatives Implementation, Monitoring, Desired Condition vs. Existing Condition

Handover Memo

The transition of personnel involved in collaborative efforts is a commonly identified stumbling block. Wondolleck and Yaffee (1997) identify continuity of people and philosophy as one of the four critical factors to sustained collaborative success. Ideally, personnel would not change over the lifetime of the collaboration. However, that is unrealistic! When there cannot be continuity in personnel, continuity in philosophy and approach can maintain the collaboration (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 1997). A "Handover Memo" can help provide this continuity. Handover memos are completed by the outgoing staff and detail current collaborative efforts, commitments, and procedures as well as suggest strategies for the successor. The Partnership Resource Center has an informational page (USDA FS, 2013g) on handover memos as well as a template (USDA FS, 2006a). Handover Memos are particularly important when there is a transition in the decision maker (District Ranger or Forest Supervisor) or collaborative group leadership during the NEPA process. If a collaborative roadmap has been designed, it should be a part of the handover memo as well. (See Roadmap Worksheet).

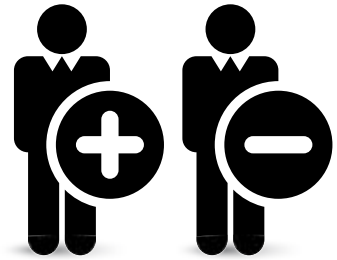
Collaborative groups can also be proactive in reaching out to orient new members. Some groups have been inspired by the Forest Service handover memo and have created a packet of information with a series of informational paragraphs, facts and photos detailing the work of the collaborative. This packet can be used during transitions but also to unify the existing collaborative group. See the Diablo Trust's orientation packet here (NFF, 2011).

Return to Implementation, Adjustment, Letter to Your Successors

Individual Interviews and Telephone Interviews

Interviews can be excellent tools to gather information when trying to bring stakeholders together, identify issues or evaluate programs. However, the key is gathering information in a way that is useful! In order to be relevant, it is important to know what you are hoping to learn or gather from the interviews. Schedule a time that is acceptable to both parties so you will have enough time to gather the information you are looking for. Have a specific set of questions and be prepared to take notes. Information gathered through interviews needs to be well documented. Sitting down face-to-face with stakeholders can help build rapport and trust and can be a key tool for facilitators as well as Interdisciplinary Team members and leaders. The National Park Service Community Toolbox (USDI NPS, 2002d) contains some helpful information on telephone interviews.

Return to Scoping, Evaluation



Tip: Convene a team of people with different perspectives on the issue.

Joint Research and Fact-Finding

Coughlin et al. (1999) highlight joint research and fact-finding as a strategy to deal with the difficulties of legitimizing information. Bartlett (2012) uses joint fact-finding to illustrate how a unit worked through being paralyzed by science. Joint research and fact-finding include working together to identify research needs (e.g. current stand condition, stream data) and interpret those results (Bartlett, 2012). Collaborative groups and the agency can also work together to fund independent research. One approach can be to set up treatment units so they serve as experiments that test different approaches. This enables the collaborative group and the agency to learn together whether a particular treatment is more effective than another in achieving the desired condition.

Moote (2013) identifies joint fact-finding as a tool that can be used during evaluation. The process outlined in Closing the Feedback Loop is:

1. Convene a team of people with different perspectives on the issue
2. Agree on the nature of the problem and questions that need to be answered
3. Identify and select qualified experts to assist the team
4. Work with the experts to refine the questions and agree on methods for answering them
5. Identify and review relevant information, including technical and scientific documents
6. Write a summary report synthesizing what has been learned, including any outstanding questions or disagreements

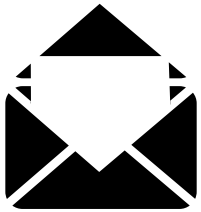
Joint-fact finding can also be used as an evaluation tool. Consider using it to evaluate project effectiveness, adaptive management, or the NEPA or collaborative process.

Return to Why, Evaluation, Collaboration Continuum

Joint Press Release

A joint press release is an opportunity to highlight partnership successes and project milestones. Note that a joint press release is separate from the formal notification of interested parties that the lead agency is required to complete. Press releases referencing the Decision document should be very clear that the decision was made by the Responsible Official (i.e. was not a joint decision of the agency and collaborative group). The USFS Partnership Guide (NFF and USDA FS, 2005) contains a helpful section on communicating partnership successes (see page 73). Work with the agency's public affairs officer to make sure that any joint press release conforms to the agency's guidelines.

Return to Decision/Notification



Letter to Your Successors

Taking the time to sit down and write a letter to your successors can help impart valuable information. This is your opportunity to share key pieces of information about the relationships you have forged, key people your successor can go to for more information, where you see future needs, opportunities for improvement and adjustment, and important successes. Also consider sharing a list of people who are important for your successor to connect with in their first month. You may also think about areas where you or the collaborative struggled and how the group responded. Use the letter as a way to bring your successor up to speed. Less formal than the Handover Memo, a letter to your successors can be written by any member of the Interdisciplinary Team or collaborative group.

Return to Adjustment, After Action Review

Strategies to capture lessons learned can also include:

After Action Review

Hiring a third party evaluator

Conducting a Surveys of members

Holding a meeting to review what went well and what could be improved

Lessons Learned Document

Creating a lessons learned document is incredibly helpful for the collaborative group and the agency as they move forward in their working relationship. It allows future projects to benefit from the lessons learned in the past. Lessons learned documents are also effective ways to share tips and techniques with other collaborative groups and agency personnel in the field. Consider exploring what went well, areas that could be improved, best practices, and strategies for success.

Facilitation of Lessons Learned Discussions (Stensland, 2009) - While not specific to natural resource management, this guide contains several best practices.

Lessons Learned Methodology (Carnegie Mellon University, 2013) - Contains a one hour agenda for a lessons learned meeting. Can be easily adapted to the natural resource environment.

The Case Study Toolbook (Tennyson et al., 2006) - Designed to facilitate the creation of effective case studies.

Closing the Feedback Loop: Evaluation and Adaptation in Collaborative Resource Management (Moote, 2013)

Lessons learned in collaboration (example documents and case studies) include:

Red Lodge Clearinghouse Lessons Learned (Red Lodge Clearinghouse, 2013)

The First Five Years of the White Mountain Stewardship Project (Sitko and Hurteau, 2010)

Front Range Roundtable (NFF, 2007c)

Upper Joseph Creek Landscape Scale Assessment (NFF, 2007d)

Return to Adjustment

Leverage Resources

Many collaborative groups have the capacity to apply for grant funding or to attract contributions from local businesses and/or collaborative members. External funding can help support process facilitation, project implementation, and monitoring activities. In this way, collaborative groups can leverage resources to enhance the capacity of both the collaborative group and the agency to achieve their goals.

If a stewardship contract is used for implementation, funds generated from the sale of material ("receipts") can be retained by the Forest Service. Known as "retained receipts," these funds can be applied to other stewardship contracts, monitoring, or even facilitation (Boetsch, 2008). The collaborative group can help prioritize projects and/or uses for these retained receipts.

Return to When, Implementation

Maps, Maps for Comments

Maps are an important tool for communication, coordination and collaboration. They provide a visual representation of the relevant landscape and/or treatment and allow for clarification and education (particularly during the effects analysis). Rolle (2002) noted that one of the successes of the Applegate Partnership was the consolidation of GIS information from a variety of sources into one planning map of the watershed that could be used by all stakeholders.

Consider involving stakeholders in the development of alternative maps. Burns and Cheng (2005) note that in the forest plan revision process it can be helpful to have stakeholders participate in the generation of maps. This concept can be extended to project-level analysis and the generation of alternatives.

Maps can also be used as a tool for information gathering during issue identification. Stakeholders and collaborators can place comments directly on maps in pencil, on sticky notes or on mylar overlays. Projects are more than just the maps, however. In order to avoid seeing the project only on paper, make sure to take planning maps into the field during field trips and site visits. In this way, the maps can become connected to the activities proposed on the ground. Save your planning maps – they can serve as a visual history of project evolution.

Return to Scoping, Effects, Decision/Notification

Maps, Sticky Notes, and the Hood of a Truck

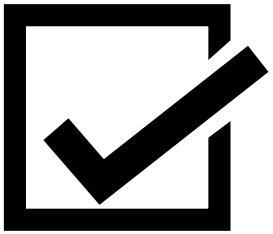
This is an informal way to start a dialogue about possible activities and it can easily be combined with a field trip. Take a map with you on your site visit. Use the hood of the vehicle to spread out the map. Talk about where you are, what you are seeing, and potential options while in the field. Collaboration doesn't have to be formal! You can use sticky notes to capture your ideas.

Return to What, Decision/Notification

Meeting of the Collaborative

Collaborative group meetings take a variety of forms. Some are standing monthly or quarterly meetings while others are scheduled on an as-needed basis. The National Forest Foundation has assembled a collection of best practices to consider when running a collaborative meeting (NFF, 2009a). One widely suggested tool for collaborative group meetings is the provision of food! Consider sharing a meal before or after a meeting (or even just refreshments) to allow the opportunity for participants to build personal relationships.

Return to What, Alternatives, Decision Notification, Regular Updates to Collaborative



Mitigation Checklist

The Lolo Restoration Committee has created a mitigation checklist to help collaborative groups better understand how issues raised during the scoping process and subsequently incorporated into the Decision Document as mitigation measures are reflected in the contract used to implement the project. The checklist was originally conceived to aid in implementation monitoring. The checklist can be used for any project design features a collaborative group would like to track during implementation monitoring.

Return to Alternatives, Implementation, Decision Notification, see also Mitigation measures (in the NEPA portion of the Toolbox)

Monitoring Protocol

The term protocol is defined as "a detailed plan of a scientific or medical experiment, treatment, or procedure." When applied to natural resource monitoring, protocols refer to consistent methods of making repeatable measurements over time, using common definitions. The objective is to collect high quality data that answers key questions about the impact of a project or treatment, despite changes in who is collecting the data. Oakley, Thomas and Fancy (2003) offer a useful and concise article offering guidelines for long-term monitoring protocols. While the authors focus on ecological monitoring from an agency research perspective, the article's principles can still be applied to a multi-party, collaborative monitoring effort. Collaborative groups often develop objective and repeatable protocols for data collection that enable non-scientists to easily collect the data in an unbiased and methodical manner. Once the protocols are agreed upon, data can be gathered by a subset of the multi-party monitoring group, volunteers or students. Often groups use photo points to show change over time. The diverse interests involved in the multi-party monitoring effort should agree on the plan, data collection protocols, analysis, and follow-up actions to what has been learned. For sample protocols, go see the National Forest Foundation's Mutiparty Monitoring webpage (NFF, 2013c).

Return to Monitoring

Monitoring Results

Before the first piece of data is collected and the first observation is made, it is critical to plan for how that data will be used. Successful multi-party monitoring plans target data collection to respond directly to the key questions identified by the group. Successful plans also anticipate how the data will be analyzed and synthesized. For an excellent resource that provides many examples of how different groups have put the information they've gathered to use, check out Closing the Feedback Loop: Evaluation and Adaptation in Collaborative Resource Management (Moote, 2013).

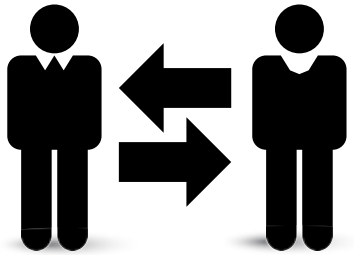
Return to Evaluation

Monitoring Training

Many multi-party monitoring efforts have a shared learning component. Whether this means that stakeholders are out collecting data themselves or are involved in the discussion of the results after the data has been synthesized and analyzed, it is important that people understand why certain procedures are used and how those procedures contribute to answering monitoring questions. An appreciation of the objectivity of the data collection and analysis process can lead to full group support of the results. Monitoring training can take many forms depending on what a collaborative group is trying to achieve, but it is helpful to have an objective trainer orient the group to:

- the types of monitoring and their different objectives,
- the value of multi-party monitoring, potential types of monitoring questions,
- strategies and protocols for data collection,
- and a description of the processes often used to jointly share, discuss and apply the information gained through monitoring to the project (adaptive management).

Return to Monitoring



Tip: How you monitor, and what you monitor, will depend on the needs of the project and available funding. Focus monitoring on the questions that matter.

Multi-Party Monitoring

There are two general types of monitoring: implementation monitoring, which determines if the project was implemented as designed, and effectiveness monitoring, which determines if the project was effective in achieving its purpose. Multi-party monitoring requires people with varied backgrounds and interests to work together to better understand and measure project efforts and impacts. A multi-party effort can:

- Prioritize and agree upon a list of issues to be monitored and identify good questions to ask;
- Assess how well a project is meeting desired outcomes and respond to diverse concerns;
- Identify how management can be adapted to improve results; and
- Increase understanding among diverse interests.

In order to be successful, multi-party monitoring groups must identify and agree upon what they will monitor, how data will be collected, and then analyze it together. Often groups jointly create monitoring protocols, though sometimes one or more trusted scientists are called in to create the plan for data collection. While some groups collect their data by sending out teams with balanced representation from the diverse interests involved, others develop objective and repeatable protocols for data collection that are easily collected by anyone in an unbiased manner. During multi-party monitoring, diverse interests should agree on the plan, data collection protocols, and analysis.

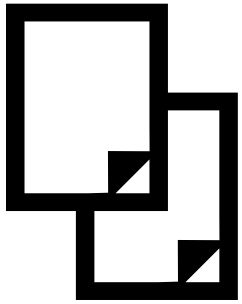
The National Forest Foundation has held several peer learning sessions on multi-party monitoring (NFF, 2013e) and also maintains a webpage (NFF, 2013c) with resources and plans.

Other excellent multi-party monitoring resources include:

Multiparty Monitoring and Stewardship Contracting: A Tool for Adaptive Management (Moote, 2011)

Closing the Feedback Loop: Evaluation and Adaptation in Collaborative Resource Management (Moote, 2013)

Return to Monitoring



Mylar (or GIS) Overlays

Mylar (clear plastic) can be an extremely useful tool for identifying common ground. In one exercise, mylar can be placed over the top of hard copy maps. Each stakeholder can circle their areas of interest or concern (using water-soluble makers such as those utilized for overhead transparencies). When finished, each stakeholder can layer their overlay on top of a common base map. This will literally illustrate the common areas of interest. The exercise can be modified to have stakeholders working in teams to color possible treatment activities. Many GIS practitioners have the ability to print directly onto mylar, further expanding the possibilities.

Return to Where, What, Proposed Action

National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is one of the guiding pieces of environmental legislation in the United States. It is also one of the arenas where the agency and the public come into conflict. Senecah (2004) offers some excellent insight to the fundamental nature of this conflict:

> "Because environmental decision making typically triggers competing demands for 1) specific, scientific/technical expertise; 2) ultimate decision making by governmental authorities; and 3) demands for inclusive public involvement, public participation processes, or the lack of them, are often flashpoints among competing perspectives resulting in the escalation of conflicts."

In an effort to ease some of the conflict, it is helpful for all those involved in the NEPA process to have a basic understanding of the process and a common vocabulary. The resources listed at the end of this section can provide in-depth knowledge. The information offered below is far from exhaustive.

The road through NEPA begins with a proposed project. See Project Proposal in the toolbox for a more complete discussion. The first thing that needs to occur is to determine whether NEPA applies and then to ensure that the project is consistent with all applicable laws and management direction. See Participate in Forest Plan Revision, Watershed Assessment, 5 Year Vegetation or Restoration Action for more information.

There are three different documents required to disclose environmental effects: Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, and Decision Memos (Categorical Exclusions). If a proposed action is likely to cause significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement is required. **Significant impacts** must be considered both in terms of context and intensity. For more detailed information on the definition of "significance" and significant impacts, see 40 CFR 1508.27.

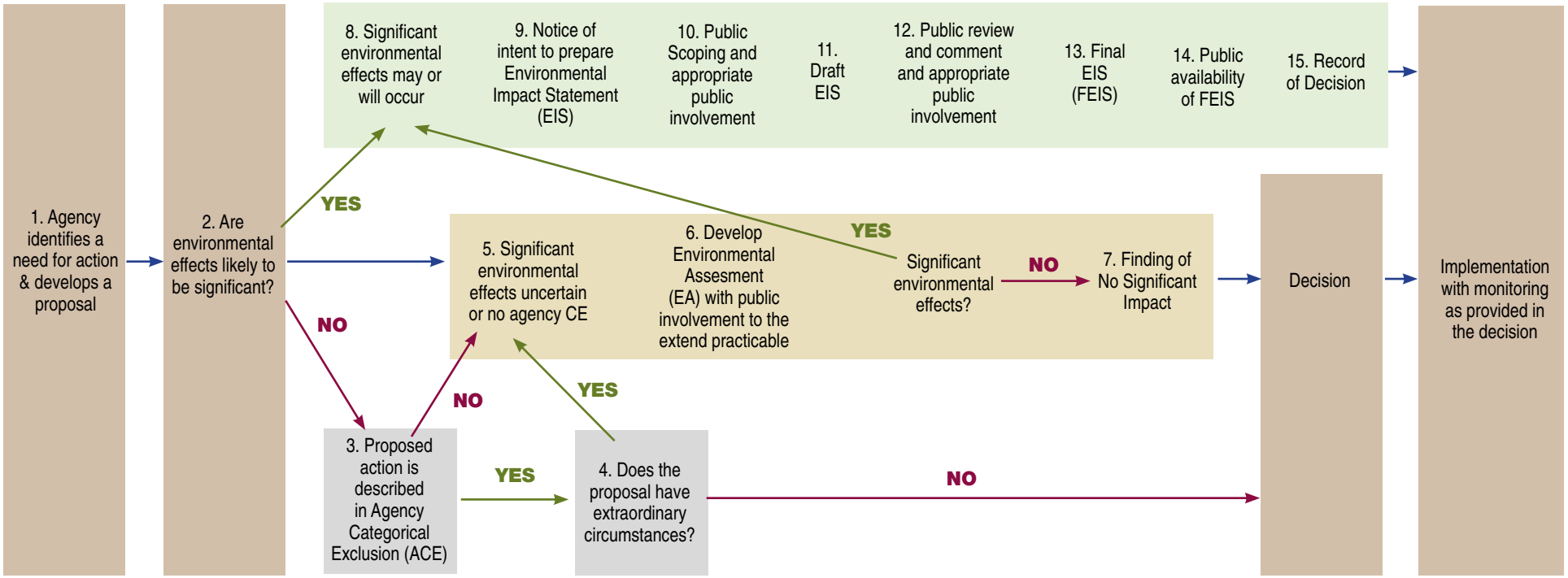
NEPA applies when:

- **The agency has a goal and a decision to make on the means of accomplishing that goal**
- **The proposed action is subject to agency control and responsibility**
- **The proposed action would cause effects on the natural and physical environment**
- **The proposed action is not exempt from NEPA**

—FSH 1909.15 (U.S. Forest Service NEPA Handbook)

NEPA Process

The following flow chart from *A Citizens Guide to the NEPA* (CEQ, 2007a) is helpful to understand the NEPA process and which document is likely to be needed.



Significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns or substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns may necessitate preparation of a supplemental EIS following either the draft or final EIS or the Record of Decision (CEQ NEPA Regulations, 40 CFR 1502.9 (c)).

Within the Forest Service, NEPA is completed by a team of specialists from a variety of disciplines. These teams are known as **Interdisciplinary Teams (IDTs)**. The composition and size of an IDT varies widely (Ceveny et al., 2011). Specialists on IDTs often include wildlife biologists, soil scientists, aquatic specialists, archeologists, fire managers and others (depending on need) with one member serving as the team leader.

IDTs receive their instructions from the **Responsible Official** (typically a District Ranger or Forest Supervisor). These initial instructions are conveyed in a Project Initiation Letter. For a visual representation of the interaction between the Responsible Official and IDT, see the graphic displayed in the Decision Document section of the toolbox.

Purpose & Need is the difference between the desired condition and the existing condition. It describes the reason management action needs to be taken (and not the management action itself).

The Proposed Action is just a proposal—not a certain outcome. It is not final nor is it necessarily the preferred option of the Responsible Official. It will often reflect the agency's best available information on how to resolve the need for action but should be considered a starting point. The Proposed Action can be modified during the NEPA process. In addition, issues raised by the IDT or stakeholders can generate alternatives to the Proposed Action.

Scoping is required for all proposed actions and should be commensurate with the complexity of the project. For example, a project likely to have significant impacts to the environment would require more intensive scoping. During the scoping process, interested parties have the ability to respond to the Proposed Action. Some comments received in response are not clear enough to be useful to the analysis. As a result, the intent of the commenter is lost. Effective scoping comments should describe specific cause-effect relationships that are tied to the Proposed Action or identify ways to measure or mitigate effects. See Scoping Letter in the Toolbox.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action are other courses of action or inaction that would meet the Purpose and Need. These alternatives respond to issues or unresolved conflicts with the Proposed Action. If there are no unresolved conflicts, Environmental Assessments only have to analyze the Proposed Action. Environmental Impact Statements require the analysis of taking "no-action" in addition to the Proposed Action and any alternatives arising from unresolved issues.

During the scoping process, alternatives are often suggested by stakeholders. However, NEPA does not require the analysis of all suggested alternatives. Alternatives that do not meet the Purpose and Need, are not feasible to implement, do not comply with existing laws or Forest Plan direction, or duplicate an alternative already being considered in detail do not need to be analyzed in detail. In addition, as previously mentioned, if there are no unresolved issues Environmental Assessments do not need to analyze alternatives to the Proposed Action.

NEPA documents are required to disclose the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives so the Responsible Official can make an informed choice. Effects can be direct, indirect or cumulative.

Direct effects are tied to the action (occurring at the space and in the same time period). **Indirect effects** are tied to the action, but occur later in time or further from the site of the action. **Cumulative effects** must consider all past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions which may contribute to effects of the proposed action. In order to contribute to cumulative effects, the effects of past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions have to overlap with the effects of the proposed action in space and time.

Categorical exclusions (CE) allow the agency to document actions that do not have a significant effect on the environment without using an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. In order for an action to use a CE, it must fall within a pre-specified category and not

"Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead and cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons…. The results of scoping are used to clarify public involvement methods, refine issues, select and interdisciplinary team, establish analysis criteria, and explore possible alternatives and their probable environmental effects."

—FSH 1909.15 (U.S. Forest Service NEPA Handbook)

"When agencies do not document, and in important cases, monitor mitigation commitments to determine if the mitigation was implemented or effective, the use of mitigation may fail to advance NEPA's purpose of ensuring informed and transparent environmental decisionmaking."
—CEQ, 2011

have any extraordinary circumstances (such as, but not limited to, the presence of endangered species, roadless areas or archeo logical sites). Scoping is still required for actions that may fall into a CE category.

Mitigation measures may reduce environmental effects by avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing (or eliminating), or compensating for the impact (40 CFR 1508.20). If certain project design features are essential to the implementation of the project (with respect to the projected scope of the environmental impacts), a means to monitor them should be included in the alternatives. Monitoring should also be included for specific outcomes that are part of an adaptive management protocol. The agency is only committed to the monitoring that is identified in the Decision document. See Appropriate Use of Mitigation and Monitoring and Clarifying the Appropriate Use of Mitigated Findings of No Significant Impact (CEQ, 2011) for a more complete discussion of mitigation and monitoring. Mitigation design and monitoring planning happens during the planning process; don't wait until implementation. See also Mitigation Checklist for a tool developed to help collaborative groups track mitigation measures through the implementation process.

An Objection is a formal written document filed with the agency seeking review of an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement before the Responsible Official makes a decision. Objections must be based on issues raised in writing during a designated opportunity for public participation (i.e. during scoping, a formal comment period or any other time when the agency seeks written comments) and be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action and must include supporting reasons. Objections are reviewed by the Responsible Official at the next highest level of the agency (i.e. if the District Ranger is Responsible Official for the Environmental Assessment, the Forest Supervisor will review the objection). An Objection Resolution Meeting can be held with the Objection Reviewing Officer, any interested parties and the Responsible Official. After the objection resolution meeting, the Objection Reviewing Officer will issue a written decision. The time period for an objection begins when the legal notice is published in the newspaper of record (for Environmental Assessments) or in the Federal Register (for Environmental Impact Statements). The objection time period is 30 days for Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) projects and 45 days for non-HFRA projects.

The Responsible Official then issues a Decision Document containing both the decision and the rationale used to make the decision. See Decision Document in the Toolbox for more information.

An **appeal** is a formal written document filed with the agency after a decision has been issued. Projects that can be addressed during the objection process (Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements) are not subject to the appeal process. At present, Categorical Exclusions with Decision Memos are subject to the appeal process under 36 CFR 215. During the appeal, the Responsible Official can meet with appellants to resolve issues but the Appeal Deciding Officer does not attend. If the appeal is not withdrawn, the Appeal Deciding Officer will issue a decision. For appeals, there is a 45 day period to file and then a 45 day period for the Appeal Deciding Officer to issue the appeal decision. Only after that could potential litigation occur.

For general information on NEPA:

USFS Ecosystem Management Coordination NEPA page (UDSA FS, 2013c) – Webpage containing U.S. Forest Service NEPA policies, procedures and guidance.

Forest Service Manual and Handbook (USDA FS, 2013a)– Direct link to U.S. Forest Service NEPA procedures.

A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard (CEQ, 2007a) – Contains a good basic overview of NEPA as well as more specific information on the process itself.

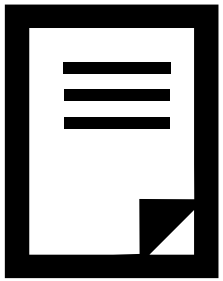
Council on Environmental Quality NEPA Homepage (CEQ, 2013) – Contains information on NEPA as well as links to nationally available training courses.

Online NEPA training modules are also available:

NEPA Concepts Course (USDI BLM, 2013)– Modules 1 & 2, produced by the Bureau of Land Management

NEPA Concepts Course (USDA FS, 2013d) – Module 3, produced by the U.S. Forest Service

Return to When To Use This Tool, What, Mitigation Checklist, When, Scoping, Objection, Decision Document



Tip: Newsletters provide an excellent opportunity for communicating about the project. Photos, status updates and guest columns can all be included.

Newsletters

Newsletters provide an excellent opportunity for communicating about the project. Photos, status updates and guest columns can all be included. Example columns could include the Interdisciplinary Team Leader writing about the connections between resources or a local landowner sharing their knowledge of the issues. Blogs can also be utilized to share the perspective and knowledge of individuals. See also: Regular Updates to Collaborative for a discussion of electronic distribution techniques and Project Website for a discussion of website services that can also be used to create blogs (e.g. Wordpress or Blogspot).

Return to Collaboration Continuum, Regular Updates to Collaborative

Open Houses

Open houses are less formal and more open-ended than a public meeting. An open house consists of a window of time (e.g. from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM) in which the agency offers the public the opportunity to access information and talk to staff about a project proposal. Open houses have no set program; rather, information is made available for the entire period of time and participants come and go throughout. Visual aids such as maps are particularly helpful during open houses for stimulating discussion. The format of an open house also allows participants to spend as much time as they like "up-close" with a map. This can be helpful in early project stages for both the agency and the collaborative group. Open houses do not emphasize mutual learning to the same degree that a forum or even a public meeting does.

Return to Where, Scoping, Collaboration Continuum

Open Planning Meetings

Traditionally, Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) meetings have consisted solely of agency members. However, the opportunity does exist for "participant-observers." Walkers and Daniels (2004) cite the Chugach National Forest land management process as an example in which IDT meetings were open. Citizens could observe but not participate, though they could engage with members of the IDT before and after meetings. Rolle (2002) notes that planning teams established in the Applegate Partnership had active citizen participants. While this is an exceptional opportunity for mutual learning, it needs to be carefully employed to avoid violating the Federal Advisory Committee Act. If involving citizens is an option either the agency or collaborative group is interested in, it should be discussed as early as possible with the unit's Environmental Coordinator and Responsible Official.

Return to Effects

Orientation to NEPA Session

When beginning the NEPA process with the intent to collaborate, it may be helpful to host a short orientation session to familiarize participants and stakeholders with the NEPA process. The orientation could also be lengthened to include tips and techniques for successful collaboration, FACA, andan overview of the project-specific collaborative roadmap (the points in the process that the agency will be interacting with the collaborative group). The orientation can be as simple or as detailed as the participants desire; however, a thorough orientation can help set reasonable expectations, increase understanding of the process and begin to establish a solid relationship between the agency and collaborative group. Materials could include the NEPA Roadmap graphic as well as a discussion of the different NEPA document types. The Colville National Forest hosted a workshop centered on the collaborative process that was considered pivotal in the relationship between the agency and the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition. See page 6 of Building a Citizen-Agency Partnership Among Diverse Interests (Gordon et al., 2012) for further discussion of that workshop.

Return to Proposed Action

Participate in Forest Plan Revision, Watershed Assessment, 5 Year Vegetation or Restoration Action Plan

Project activities do not happen in a vacuum. They must comply with existing laws, regulations, policy and the Forest Plan. Often, project activities are prioritized or selected based upon the information contained in Forest Plans, Watershed Assessments, 5 Year Vegetation, Restoration or Recreation Action Plans, or other larger planning effort. External factors can also contribute to the selection of the project location (including available funding, political impetus, public comments etc.). Collaborative participation in these larger planning processes can be an effective way to understand the context of the project as well as its "sideboards" (guidance with which the project must comply). The collaborative group can also work to identify priorities for restoration activities that will move the forest towards the desired condition. Stakeholders are often interested not only in what is planned on a particular project site, but what the agency is considering on adjacent lands in future years. These resources may be helpful:

Incorporating Collaboration into Watershed Condition Framework (Moseley and Davis, 2012b)

Developing socioeconomic performance measures for the Watershed Condition Framework (Moseley and Davis, 2012a)

The Utilization of Collaborative Processes In Forest Planning (Burns and Cheng, 2005) - research study detailing collaboration on six forest plan revision processes.

Return to Where, When, National Environmental Policy Act

Photo Points

Using photo points is an excellent way to monitor change and share findings. The Photo Point Monitoring Handbook by Frederick C. Hall (2002) is an excellent resource for how to establish photo points. Consider using a project website to display some of your results.

Return to Monitoring

Pick Your Own Prescription

It can be helpful when in the field to ask stakeholders what they would do to improve the condition of the project area. In the case of forest restoration, it can be as simple as asking stakeholders which trees they would leave on the landscape and why. These kinds of discussions can help increase technical knowledge among stakeholders and also identify areas of common ground. The National Forest Foundation has an in-depth publication, the Forest Resiliency Indicator Checklist for Collaborative Groups (NFF, 2009b), which contains step-by-step instructions for a field exercise designed to help structure discussions about forest conditions.

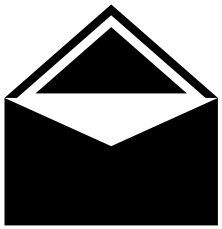
Return to What

Positions Vs. Interests

Put simply, a position is what you think should happen while an interest is why you feel that way. As an example, a position would be "No ice cream for me!" while the underlying interest may be a concern for your cardio-vascular health or a milk allergy. People with opposing positions may have shared interests as well as interests that are incompatible. By focusing on the interests and not the positions, collaborative groups can more easily design solutions or come to consensus. An excellent resource on positions and interests is *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1991).

Return to Why

Project Initiation Letter



The Project Initiation Letter should reflect the Responsible Official's direction to, and expectations of, the Interdisciplinary Team (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, Section 12.1). The Responsible Official could also consider including expectations for collaboration in the Project Initiation Letter. The Umatilla Forest Collaborative worked collaboratively with the Heppner Ranger District on the Kahler Project and this collaboration is reflected in the Kahler Project Initiation Letter (Bushholz, 2012). The Project Initiation Letter could also specify expectations outlined in the Collaborative Roadmap. The Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot Project Initiation Letter (USDI BLM, 2011) also provides an example of how the Responsible Official's expectations for collaboration can be communicated to the Interdisciplinary team.

Return to A Note to Line Officers, National Environmental Policy Act

Collaborative Partners.

The Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative and the Applegate Partnership are long standing community entities that have organizational and administrative structures in place to support development and implementation of the Pilot. They are a valuable conduit to and from local neighborhoods and other stakeholders for outreach, education, and information exchange on forest management issues.

Public Participation.

Collaboration, public involvement and transparency are key objectives in this Pilot. The levels of public involvement runs the spectrum from inform to collaboration, from simply being provided information to consensus building (see the Middle Applegate Pilot Action Plan for details).

—Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot Project Initiation Letter (USDI BLM, 2011)

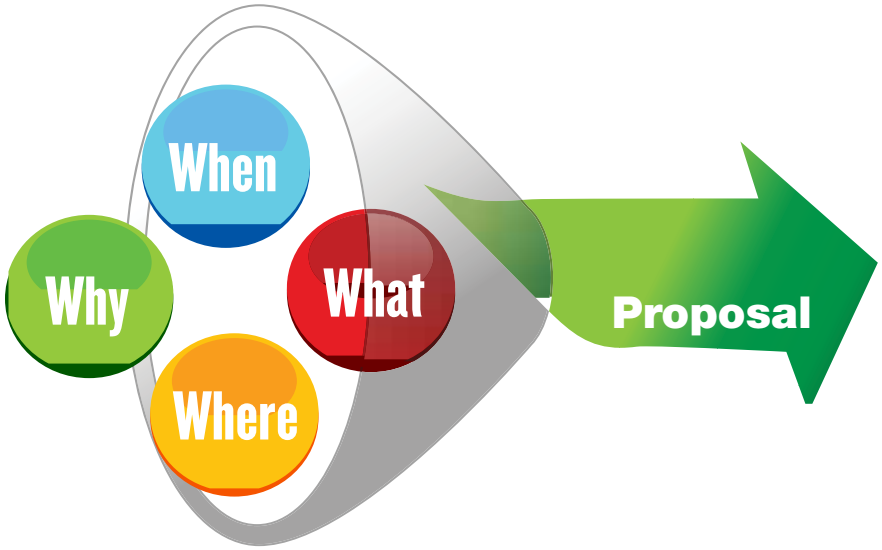
Project Proposal

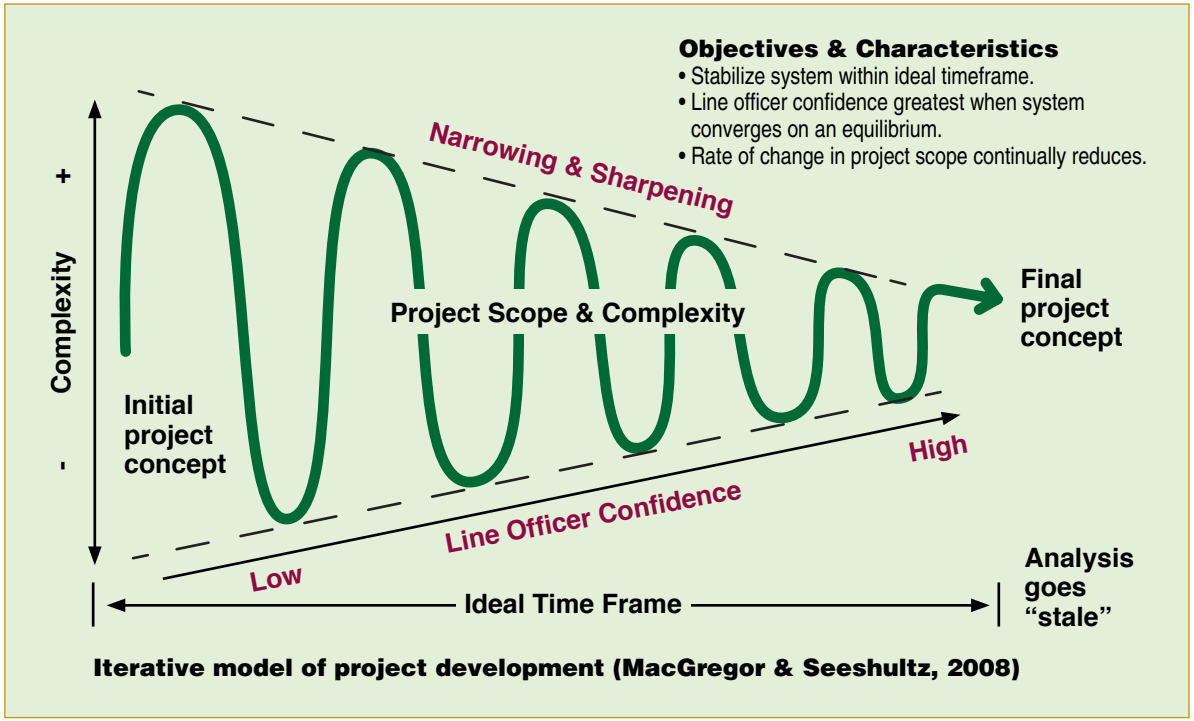
The project proposal consists of where, when, why and what: where and when the project will occur, why it needs to be done, and what specifically is being proposed. Occasionally, people will refer to the process of developing a project proposal into a formal Proposed Action as the "left-side of the NEPA triangle," "pre-NEPA," or "the NFMA (pronounced niff-ma, referring to the National Forest Management Act) phase." Many of these terms refer to a diagram called the NEPA triangle that has been taught in Forest Service NEPA courses since 1990. (Refer to diagram p. 6). Today's term for the left-side of the triangle is "Proposal Development." Regardless of its name, the project proposal components remain the same. The order in which projects are developed may vary widely. Not all project proposals originate inside the Forest Service; external partners can bring project proposals to the agency.

The publication "Factors Influencing Line Officers' Decisions About National Environmental Policy Act Project Design and Development" (MacGregor and Seesholtz, 2008) illustrates the project development model. Their diagram can be considered together with the proposal funnel (above) to further refine the concept of proposal development.

Return to NEPA Roadmap, National Environmental Policy Act

Proposal Development (or Pre-NEPA) Phase





Iterative model of project development (MacGregor & Seeshultz, 2008)

Tip: Communication should be deliberate and part of an overall strategy. Don't have a social media presence just for the sake of having one.

Project Website

A project website is a great way to keep participants informed of meetings, updates, monitoring data and more. Stakeholders appreciate access to information and prefer websites and newsletters (Walker, Senech, and Daniels, 2006). There are a number of great website examples available:

Upper Deschutes River Coalition (2013)

Clearwater Basin Collaborative (2013)

Payette Forest Coalition (Spatial Interest, 2013a) - Uses a "forum" where users can post documents and comments. The website also tracks project progress and organizes the materials generated by the collaborative group.

Tips on website creation can be found in the National Park Service Community Toolbox (USDI NPS, 2002e).

Free websites can be set up through WordPress, Weebly, Google Sites or BlogSpot. Regardless of the vehicle you choose for a website, consider installing analytic software (such as the free Google Analytics) in order to track website use. GoogleDocs is also a helpful service, allowing groups to share and edit documents, contacts, and more.

Increasingly, National Forests have established their own Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. For those who wish to integrate social media into their online presence, the resources below may be helpful. But remember, communication should be deliberate and part of an overall strategy that makes sense given your organization's capacity. Don't have a social media presence just for the sake of having one.

March 2013 e-newsletter (Nicholson, 2013) of the International Association for Business Communications – Contains articles about how to craft a content strategy as well as measure your impact.

Social Media Best Practices (Colorado State University, 2013) – Aimed at Colorado State University Departments, this page provides information on best practices that will be helpful to any social media user.

Constant Contact Social Media Resources (Constant Contact, 2013b) – Includes free publications on best practices and developing a marketing strategy.

VerticalResponse Social Media Resources (VerticalResponse, 2013b) – Includes free information specific to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as well as information on using photographs in social media.

Agency employees creating or managing social media accounts need to be aware of the following guidance:

New Media Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities (USDA Office of Communication, 2011)

Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act (OMB, 2010b)

Social Media Tools and Resources (USDA, 2013) – USDA webpage with links to additional tools including a digital style guide.

Guidance for Agency Use of Third-party Websites and Applications (OMB, 2010c) - Page 3 contains the general guidelines.

Websites and social media accounts are excellent examples of areas where the collaborative group has more flexibility than the agency.

Return to Scoping, Monitoring, Collaboration Continuum, Newsletters, Reading List, Regular Updates to Collaborative

Project Workshops

Coughlin et al. (1999) identifies project workshops as a strategy for ensuring understanding among participants. Project workshops can vary in length (from an hour to several days and can focus on one or more elements of the project). As an example, it may be appropriate to hold a workshop on large and old trees when participating in a forest restoration project. Participants in the workshop may be invited to view and discuss current data on the subject, location of old growth stands in the project area and envision a variety of ways to improve the landscape. The Community Toolbox (USDI NPS, 2002f) notes that workshops are sessions where real work gets done!

Workshops can include a variety of different activities. Daniels and Walker (1996) outline a framework for Collaborative Learning (a specific approach to public participation) that highlights learning as a key component of situation improvement, progress as opposed to solutions, and the integration of technical and local knowledge (scientists and citizens). In a practical application of Collaborative Learning, workshops conducted during the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area planning process included the following activities:

- Issue presentations
- Panel discussions
- Best and worst views and situation mapping
- Individual and small group tasks

Collaborative Learning activities are intended to "create a comfortable and safe environment for learning and interaction" and "foster both dialogue and deliberation." (Walker, Daniels and Emborg, 2008). For more information on the Collaborative Learning approach, see *Working through Environmental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach* (Daniels and Walker, 2001).

Return to Why, Collaboration Continuum, Proposed Action, Purpose & Need, Scoping, Alternatives

Public Meetings

Public meetings can be an effective way to gather interested parties to discuss the proposed project or activities. Meetings should be publicized well in advance in a variety of ways (e.g. newspaper, radio, direct mail). Quality Facilitation is essential. Public meetings are open to any who wish to attend. Make sure to keep a record of those in attendance and the comments made. If part of the formal scoping process, names of attendees and their comments will become part of the project record. Many tips and techniques for public meetings can be found in the Community Toolbox (USDI NPS, 2002c). See also running a collaborative meeting (NFF, 2009a) by the National Forest Foundation. Remember, agency-run meetings must have notice and be open to the public.

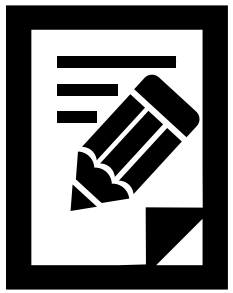
Return to Collaboration Continuum, Scoping

Tip: Make sure to keep a record of those in attendance and the comments made at public meetings.

Q&A Panels

The concept of the Question and Answer (Q&A) Panel is fairly simple. Invite a number of experts (e.g. agency biologist, conservation specialist from the collaborative group, academic professor or researcher) to sit on your panel. Questions can then be posed from the audience. Quality facilitation is important! This is an excellent way for stakeholders to have specific questions about the analysis answered. It also provides a nice feedback opportunity for the Interdisciplinary Team (helpful to see which areas of the analysis required additional clarification). A fun variation of the Q&A Panel is a chat show (Knowledge Sharing Toolkit, 2013b).

Return to Effects, Decision/Notification



Reading List

Ask subject matter experts (both within the collaborative group and outside of it) what publications, other documents, videos or websites are currently informing their thinking. Put together a reading list of reference material that both provides basic information (e.g. during a fuel reduction project this may consist of reading about the fire history of the area) and more technical information (e.g. the latest research on historic stand conditions). Reading and viewing lists provide an excellent opportunity for those who are interested in the technical details to begin forming a common understanding of issues and current research, as well as to provide a vehicle for information sharing. This concept can be expanded with the use of a study group or book club.

A Project Website is an effective place to post articles and other resources, enabling collaborative members to have easy and centralized access.

Return to Why

Recommendations Document

A recommendations document is a useful tool for communicating concerns, comments, and collaborative consensus to the agency. Completed prior to the formal scoping process, these documents can take several forms. Often, collaborative groups develop recommendations documents following a series of intensive meetings or workshops, and represent a substantial investment of time and effort. Stakeholders convey their common ground to the agency early in the planning process in order to help inform the design of the Proposed Action. An example of a project-specific recommendations document and the agency response is:

Recommendations Report (Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition, 2008)

USFS Response to Recommendations (USDA FS, Wenatchee River Ranger District, 2009)

Return to What, Topic-Specific Subcommittee

Regular Updates to Collaborative

A variety of tools are available to update the stakeholders involved in your process. A regularly scheduled Meeting of the Collaborative is a great place for in-person updates (with the opportunity for maps, visual aids and questions and answers). Wondolleck and Yaffee (1997) identified having a mechanism in place to maintain regular and meaningful communication between the agency and the collaborative group as one of the four key factors to sustaining collaboration. While it may seem repetitive to present the same or similar information to a collaborative group monthly (i.e. "We are still working on the analysis document and anticipate completing it in a few months..."), having the mechanism for communication in place is extremely valuable.

Other vehicles for keeping stakeholders informed can include the Project Website, Newsletters or e-mail updates. If you plan on sending a great deal of e-mail, consider using a service like Constant Contact or Vertical Response. VerticalResponse is free to non-profit organizations. Other e-newsletter or e-mail services are detailed in A Few Good Broadcast Email Tools (Quinn, 2010).

Return to Effects, Implementation, Meeting of the Collaborative, Newsletters

Tip: It can be helpful when in the field to ask stakeholders what they would do to improve the condition of the project area. In the case of forest restoration, it can be as simple as asking stakeholders which trees they would leave on the landscape and why.

Research Data Previously Gathered

The U.S. Forest Service operates Research Stations in five regions across the country. A map (USDA FS, 2013f) of the regions is available along with links to the Research Stations themselves. On each Research Station webpage there is a section entitled "Publications" where interested parties can search past research papers, subscribe to receive electronic or hard copies of new publication and more. You can also use Treesearch (USDA FS, 2013h) or GeoTreesearch (USDA FS, 2013b) to search research publications across the nation. This research data can be very helpful in understanding the desired condition of the landscape as well as the purpose and need for action. In addition to U.S. Forest Service Research Stations, universities throughout the nation produce credible, peer-reviewed science that is used to guide the purpose and need. Collaborative groups and agency personnel should share the science that is shaping their activities and opinions.

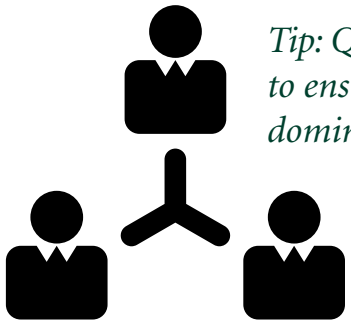
Return to Purpose & Need

Revised Collaborative Roadmap

The Roadmap Worksheet is a tool to help the agency and collaborative group plan their interaction and set reasonable expectations for the collaborative process. It should be considered a living document and reviewed throughout the NEPA process and revised as necessary. Prior to beginning a new project, the roadmap should be revised to be specific to the new project as well as incorporate lessons learned from the previous project.

Some groups may wish to adopt a more specific or detailed roadmap. One example comes from the Payette Forest Coalition. The NEPA Business Process (Spatial Interest, 2012) details the NEPA process in three "lanes" – one lane each for the Responsible Official, Interdisciplinary Team, and Coalition. Interactions between the three lanes are marked and the expectations are clear. The Payette Forest Coalition has also developed a workplan (Spatial Interest, 2013b) outlining their scope of work and proposed timelines.

Return to Adjustment

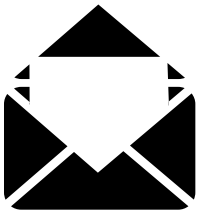


Tip: Quality facilitation is important to ensure no single participant dominates the discussion.

Roundtable Discussion

Roundtable discussions are more informal than an educational forum or Q&A panel and are aimed at a smaller group. The focus is on active and equal participation from all participants. Effective roundtables leave plenty of time for discussion. One example of a roundtable includes 15 minutes of presentations and 45 minutes of discussion. Chairs can be arranged in a circle and presentations should focus on sharing information as fodder for discussion. Quality facilitation is important to ensure no single participant dominates the discussion. Roundtables are effective means of evaluation because they allow interactive discussion that can build on comments from all participants.

Return to Evaluation



Scoping Letter

A Scoping Letter is a formal letter from the agency to all interested parties detailing the proposed action and inviting comments. The responses to scoping letters are used to identify potential issues resulting from the proposed action. Scoping letters are a widely-used means of acquiring input from the public. Comments made to the agency in response to Scoping should be direct, respectful, and focused on the cause and effect relationship between the proposed action and resulting issues. Page 27 of A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard (CEQ, 2007a) contains an excellent section on how to make effective comments.

The Payette Forest Coalition formally requests a copy of comments received by the agency during scoping in order to ask the question "did we miss anything?" Not all stakeholders participate in the collaborative group and comments from individuals have equal weight regardless of collaborative participation. A comment received during scoping may cause the collaborative group to reexamine discussions held during project design, just as it may affect the agency's approach to the project.

Return to, Scoping, Collaboration Continuum

Shared Maps and GIS Data

As Geographic Information Systems (GIS) become more and more common, collaborative groups as well as agencies have the capacity to use these systems to generate maps and facilitate a greater understanding of the project area. "Layers" of GIS data can be shared to allow both the collaborative group and the agency to generate more meaningful project maps. As an example, layers such as crown fire potential or private parcels can help illustrate the need for fuel reduction in the wildland-urban interface. For an excellent GIS resource, see Databasin, which maintains free and open access to GIS data. Also, TechSoup provides ArcGIS software from ESRI free of charge to eligible non-profits with an established capacity for the software.

Return to Why

Commenting tips from a Citizen's Guide to the NEPA (CEQ 2007a)

Comments should:

...be concise, and relevant to the analysis of the Proposed Action.

...be polite and respectful

...try to focus on the purpose and need of the proposed action, the proposed alternatives, the assessment of the environmental impacts of those alternatives, and the proposed mitigation.

Comments that are solution oriented and provide specific examples will be more effective than those that simply oppose the proposed project.

Different members of collaborative groups will have different priorities. In the words of one collaborative group member interviewed: "Not everyone assigns the same weight to each goal. But you must have people willing to assign some weight to each goal."

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders are people, groups or organizations that are affected by or can affect a project, process, or organization. Collaboration is tied tightly to stakeholders; the act of coming together to solve common problems cannot occur without those affected by the problem being a part of the solution.

You can begin identifying stakeholders by asking the following questions (Daly, 2010; Richard and Burns, 1998; USDA NFS, 2002g):

- Who is already actively involved in the project, process or problem?
- Who is likely to support the proposed project? To oppose it?
- Who are key community members who wear "more than one hat" in the community?
- Who has been interested in similar projects in the past?
- Who has respect and credibility within the community?
- Who has the respect of key stakeholder groups?
- Who has the most at stake if the current problems aren't addressed?
- Who has special skills that might be needed to craft a solution?
- Who has the power to make decisions and take actions to implement a solution?
- Who do your previously identified stakeholders believe need to be at the table?

Tip: The number of stakeholders needed is not always a matter of the quantity of people or organizations represented, but rather a matter of the interests represented.

Once you have a basic list of stakeholders identified, you can begin to evaluate whether or not you have all of the relevant interests represented. There are a number of techniques for stakeholder analysis, including power vs. interest grids and participation planning matrices (Bryson, 2004). For a detailed discussion of stakeholder analysis techniques and frameworks, see What to Do When Stakeholders Matter (Bryson, 2004).

How many stakeholders you need at the table varies from project to project. It is not always a matter of the quantity of people or organizations represented, but rather a matter of the interests represented. Early involvement is important so begin stakeholder identification as soon as you can. Stakeholder analyses should also be done periodically throughout the project. It is likely during the NEPA process that the Proposed Action and Alternatives will evolve. As they do, or as the project moves out of planning and into implementation, the answers to the above stakeholder identification questions may change and you may need to invite other people to participate. The level of engagement of particular stakeholders may also change and some may be heavily involved in an early part of the planning process but then be satisfied to communicate (as opposed to collaborate) during other stages.

Some stakeholders may not wish to be a part of the collaborative process. Sturtevant et al. (2005) identified numerous reasons for non-collaboration:

- Lack of resources
- Lack of technical expertise
- Concerns about process
- Legal considerations for collaboration
- Appeals and veto power
- Concerns about goals
- Concerns about trust
- Concerns over constituency support

While some of these reasons can be addressed through solid operating protocols and mutual learning, others can't. After assessing their organizational or individual capacity, some stakeholders may not deem it appropriate for them to collaborate. They may follow the process at a lower level of the collaboration continuum or not all. It is important to remember that the agency values the contribution and comments of individuals as much as a collaborative group.

Return to Where, When

Science Summits

Walker and Daniels (2004) identify science summits (multi-day forums of experts who dialogue openly and constructively about current research needs and findings) as an opportunity for collaborative learning. They also suggest that the science summit could be followed by a forum designed to bring scientific knowledge together with local knowledge.

You may also consider "state of the analysis" presentations in order to provide an opportunity for the Interdisciplinary Team to share what they are seeing on the ground and through their analysis prior to the publication of the environmental analysis document. The collaborative group can invite members of the Interdisciplinary Team to a meeting of the collaborative. Maps are particularly helpful during these presentations.

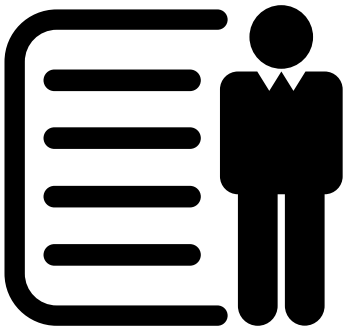
Return to Effects, Educational Forums

Support Matrix

Prior to the publication of a Decision Document, it is helpful for the collaborative group to have a support matrix in place outlining what differing levels of support for a project mean and what members of the collaborative group commit to when supporting a project. The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition Support Matrix (NFF, 2008a) is an excellent example. Support matrices can be used both after the publication of a Decision to express the collaborative group's support for a project as well as earlier in the process. The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition uses the support matrix once a Proposed Action is developed to provide feedback to the Responsible Official about the proposed project.

Return to Decision/Notification

Surveys



Surveys are useful tools for gathering participant feedback and evaluating the project (both in terms of collaborative and NEPA success). Surveys can be written, oral or online. Colorado State University has a basic survey guide (Barribeau et al., 1994-2012) which can help evaluate which type of survey may be most useful. Should you select an online survey, SurveyMonkey is an online tool that allows users to design a ten-question survey free of charge.

One of the most common issues with surveys is poorly designed or biased questions. The Department of Communication at the University of Colorado Boulder has put together a research-based guide on survey question creation (Frey, n.d.).

Surveys and the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA): It is important to note that "items collected by third-party websites or platforms that are not collecting information on behalf of the Federal Government are not subject to the PRA" (OMB, 2010a). Should a collaborative group design an online survey to evaluate the collaborative process and distribute it to members of the agency, this does not trigger the PRA. More information can be found in the Office of Management and Budget Memorandum on Information Collection Under the Paperwork Reduction Act (OMB, 2010a)

Surveys created by the agency: Surveys designed and conducted by Federal agencies are subject to the Office of Management and Budget Standard Guidelines for Statistical Surveys (OMB, 2006a). The Question and Answer document provides guidance for submitting survey requests (OMB, 2006b)

Return to Evaluation, Collaboration Continuum, Lessons Learned Document, Letter to Your Successors

Technical Task Force

Where difficulty exists accessing information, technical task forces or advisory boards can be formed to focus on specific issues (Coughlin et al., 1999; Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000). Comprised of subject-matter experts, these committees can report back to the larger group on findings and recommendations. Dealing With the Scientific Dimensions of Issues (Coughlin et al., 1999) provides an example and some additional guidance (see p. 10).

Return to Why

Topic-Specific Subcommittee

Often, the project being proposed is multi-faceted. Potential areas of interest for the collaborative group may include aquatics, road systems, wildfire management and more. Different members of the collaborative group likely have varying degrees of interest in each particular facet of the project. In order to facilitate meaningful discussion and quality engagement, consider establishing topic-specific subcommittees where members of the collaborative group may engage more fully in the individual area that interests them. The subcommittee can then report back to the collaborative group as a whole. The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition utilized topic-specific subcommittees prior to the beginning of the Chumstick Hazardous Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment. Subcommittee findings were incorporated into a formal Recommendations Document. Findings and recommendations could also be provided to the agency as comments.

Return to Why, Alternatives

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

The term "utilization-focused evaluation" equates to the question of "how are we going to use the information we are gathering?" In Closing the Feedback Loop Moote (2013) identifies utilization-focused evaluation as a tool for targeting questions and data collection strategies. The process is described:

"The first step in a utilization-focused evaluation is to determine how the results will be used. This is done by asking key stakeholders, particularly the expected end users of the results, to identify how and why they would use evaluation results. Involving intended users helps ensure that they understand and feel ownership in the evaluation process and findings, which makes them more likely to use the results. Once expected users and uses have been identified, stakeholders can identify appropriate evaluation questions and methods for answering them."

Return to Evaluation

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