

Tool: FACA Committee or Community-based Collaborative?

Summary

When people come together to form a collaborative group, they must choose how the group will be governed and determine the nature of its relationship with the Forest Service or other agency. Community-based collaborations operate very differently than FACA-chartered committees.

Keys to Success

Thoroughly discuss the purpose and role of the group early in its formation, so the structure is a

“We ultimately decided that a community-based collaboration would give us more ‘street cred’ than a formal, FACA committee.”

—Bruce Farling,

*Montana Trout Unlimited and
Beaverhead-Deerlodge
Collaborative organizing
committee member*

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Some Choices in Structuring Your Collaborative

A collaborative effort on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest was considering how to structure their group, and thought hard about whether to form a committee that’s chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act or a community-led collaborative. The discussions resulted in a comparison of the features of each kind of structure.

FACA-chartered committees:

- Are directed by the Forest Service, who sets the agendas.
- Require that the agency provide staff support (capacity and funding can be an issue here) and name a Designated Federal Officer.
- Are highly structured and formalized.
- Have a set number of members and specific categories of interests to be represented. Membership is approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, which can take a long time.
- Are “institutionalized” in that they will live beyond any particular Forest Supervisor or other Forest Service staff’s tenure in the agency.
- Operate using votes. Consensus is specifically not allowed.
- Must give official public notice for all meetings.
- Usually are narrowly focused, and a change in scope requires approval from the Secretary of Agriculture.

Community-based collaborations:

- Are member driven and led.
- Can range from informal to highly-structured.
- Can make decisions however they choose, including consensus.
- Must structure themselves in a way that doesn’t violate FACA.
- Set their own agendas and the group’s purpose can change according to the desires of the members.
- Can involve the Forest Service as members or can develop formal or informal relationships with the agency.

Links

- [Partnership Guide Chapter on FACA](#)
- [Forest Service thoughts on Collaborative and FACA](#)
- [FACA - Key Principles and Practical Advice](#)
- [National Forest Foundation Peer Learning Session Notes](#)