

The Roles of Leadership Committees in Forest Collaborative Capacity

By Emily Jane Davis¹

The organizational capacity of natural resource collaborative groups can be an important factor in how effective they are at meeting their goals. Organizational capacity refers to the ability of a group or organization to undertake administrative and management activities. Most of Oregon’s current collaboratives begin as informal groups of volunteers, and are not officially incorporated as nonprofits or other organizations. They typically utilize an existing organization for fiscal sponsorship, but lack their own infrastructure, such as a board of directors, treasurer, or other organizational elements. Frequently, collaboratives have a facilitator or coordinator. This individual may be paid or contracted to undertake this work. Standing leadership committees often assist the facilitators/coordinators with a range of organizational and functional activities. This type of committee is found in 77% of Oregon’s 24 forest collaborative groups. In most cases, the group formally elects leadership committees to fairly reflect its range of interests.

This brief reviews the leadership committees of five forest collaboratives working on similar issues in eastern Oregon.² It is intended to help new and existing groups best utilize this important component of organizational capacity for success.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Capacity to contribute is crucial.** Committees wherein all members are busy in their primary jobs can have a hard time convening, making progress on issues or opportunities, and supporting the facilitator/coordinator. Including a statement of required time commitment in the group’s operational charter, discussing expectations up front, and/or signing an agreement may be useful.
- **Transparency is necessary.** Although some collaborative participants trust the committee and appreciate its service, others may view it as an “inner circle” with undue power. Clearly describing the committee’s scope of work and decision making in the group charter may be helpful. It is recommended to notify the full group of committee meeting dates so those interested may attend, make committee meeting notes available, and provide regular reports.
- **Regular oversight of finances and grantwriting can aid group sustainability.** Committees vary in degree of involvement in collaborative finances and grantwriting. Taking a more active role can help committees better understand their financial needs, identify appropriate deliverables, and use grantwriting to plan for future work. Options may include creating a treasurer with regular reports on available funds and their use, developing a memorandum of understanding between the collaborative and its fiscal sponsor, and keeping an active chart of granting opportunities and deadlines.

Committee Roles

- **Meeting review and planning:** A common task is reviewing issues and needs generated in the previous full group meeting and planning the agenda for the next meeting. This can help ensure meetings are being planned with a range of interests, key issues are being tracked and operationalized, and the facilitator/coordinator is supported.
- **Hiring and transitions:** These committees are typically in charge of developing position descriptions, leading searches, and selecting new facilitators/coordinators as needed.
- **Strategic planning:** Strategic planning and work planning for collaboratives often occurs at the committee level, with some engagement of the full group, as planning can be easier in a smaller group setting.
- **Grantwriting and finances:** Committees primarily assist by providing letters of support, and some may conduct reviews of proposals before they are submitted. The majority of grantwriting typically is performed by the facilitator/coordinator or fiscal sponsor.



1. Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society/Forestry and Natural Resources Extension, 321 Richardson Hall, Corvallis, OR 97731.
 2. The Lakeview Stewardship Group and Harney County Restoration Collaborative are not included because they do not have these committees.

Table 1. Overview of forest collaborative leadership committees.

Collaborative	What the committee does	Roles within the committee
Blue Mountains Forest Partners (BMFP)		
<p>Active on: Malheur National Forest in Grant County Formed in: 2006 Meets: Once a month for two hours in time slot before full group meeting, with frequent work over emails and phone with each other and with subcommittees. Committee name: Operations Committee, Board Committee membership in Fall 2014: Forest products industry, contracting business, conservation, regional nonprofit, private landowner, forester</p>	<p>The BMFP's operations committee is unusual in that it also serves as a board since the organization became a 501c3. The committee helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold strategic discussions about relationship and coordination with Forest Service • Orient new Forest Service employees to the BMFP • Serve as ambassadors of the BMFP in the community by speaking at other groups and recruiting members • Lead different subcommittees on topics such as grants or field trips, and reports back to the operations committee. • "Set the tone" for the rest of the collaborative, demonstrating collaborative behavior and relationships • Lead search for staff/director as needed <p>The executive director develops grants but gives them ample chance to review. The treasurer carefully reviews the director's financial records and assists with a quarterly financial report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there has been an executive director, that individual has provided extensive support to the committee, including setting meeting agendas, staffing meeting, note taking, setting direction, suggesting new participants, prompting an annual review. • The committee/board chair helps with setting tone and addressing interpersonal relationships and needs. • A committee member with experience in organizational development organizes the executive director's annual review and helps develop their work plan. • Another committee member with legal and technical writing expertise is often the lead on reviewing documents, drafting letters or statements, and similar tasks. • The Forest Service are invited as needed but do not regularly attend meetings. They are not decision makers in the collaborative.
Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative (WWFC)		
<p>Active on: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Formed in: 2012 Meets: Once a month for one hour over the phone, one week after full meeting (occasionally twice a month as needed) Committee name: Operations Committee Committee membership in Fall 2014: County, forest products industry, state agency, university extension, conservation, private landowner cooperative, regional nonprofit, local community-based organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the previous full meeting and identify key follow up issues for which information gathering, facilitation planning, or other action is warranted before the next meeting. • Draft agenda items for that next meeting. • Provide feedback and support to the facilitator as needed. • Lead searches for new facilitators as needed. • Provide leadership for any subcommittees. • Provide letters of support for grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fiscal sponsor/interim facilitator serves as chair. This includes setting agendas, facilitating the call, and leading the identification of needs and next steps. • The Forest Service Supervisor and rangers are generally included on correspondence and emails and attend committee meetings. They are not decision makers in the collaborative.
Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC)		
<p>Active on: Ochoco National Forest Formed in: 2011 Meets: 1 hour or so, once per month; with greater frequency during strategic planning Committee name: Executive committee Committee membership in Fall 2014: Local city, county, state agency, regional council of governments, conservation, forest products industry, university extension.</p>	<p>This committee did not exist for the first year of the OFRC, and was inactive/in name only until spring 2014 when it engaged to respond to the loss of a key staff person from Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council. Since then, the committee has met at least once a month to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a strategic planning process to provide more direction for the group. • Discuss meeting agendas, transition in facilitators, and OFRC responses to an objection process on a project. • Provide letters of support for grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Prineville and Crook County are the conveners of the collaborative. • Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) is scheduling meetings and developing agendas for committee. The contracted facilitator also provides leadership of meetings. • The Forest Service is largely not included in committee meetings. They are not decision makers in the collaborative.
Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project (DCFP)		
<p>Active on: Deschutes National Forest Formed in: 2010 Meets: Roughly every two months; are trying to achieve more frequent meetings on a regular schedule. Committee name: Steering committee Committee membership in Fall 2014: Forest products industry, contracting business, conservation, community wildfire protection, watershed/water resources, local government, state and federal government (not including Forest Service), recreation and tourism, tribes, private landowners, researcher, and at large for a total of 19 members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a "filter group" and decision making body for oversight and approval of work of subcommittees to ensure it meets the mission of the collaborative, as well as the objectives of Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program legislation since this is a CFLR-based group. They will request revisions if subcommittee work does not appear to be something that will receive full consensus. • Serve as the face of the organization and ambassadors to the community, legislators, media, funders, etc. • Meet with Forest Service leadership between meetings for good coordination and communication. • Provide letters of support for grants. • Meet with funders. • Review grant proposal drafts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deschutes County is the convener of the collaborative. • There is an elected chair and vice chair. • Currently, The Nature Conservancy and Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council provide staff support. • The Forest Service supervisor, rangers, and natural resource staff attend regularly. They are not decision makers in the collaborative.
Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group (UFCG)		
<p>Active on: Umatilla National Forest Formed in: 2012 Meets: Once a month for one hour over the phone, one week after full meeting (occasionally twice a month as needed) Committee name: Administrative committee Committee membership in Fall 2014: Watershed council, forest products industry, regional nonprofit, state agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what has happened at the previous meeting and discuss outstanding issues, information needs, and priorities for the next meeting. • Have taken the lead in selecting facilitation and conducting a review of progress in the group. • Provide letters of support for grants. • Review finances and grant deliverables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fiscal sponsor sends out agendas and facilitates the meetings. • Other committee members occasionally take on information gathering tasks or follow up on specific issues as needed. • Forest Service rangers and natural resource staff are invited and typically participate in the calls. They are not decision makers in the collaborative.

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