

PART TWO

# Partnership Learning Project



ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH



BONNEVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
FOUNDATION

A REPORT FOR **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board**  
*In collaboration with Bonneville Environmental Foundation*



PREPARED BY

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BEAR CREEK, BEFORE AND AFTER (ECO LOGICAL RESEARCH)

## Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board in coordination with Bonneville Environmental Foundation. The findings presented here were made possible through the generous and thoughtful reflections of participating partners.

Thank you to all who shared your experiences and insights. It is hoped that this report will support your continued success.



### ABOUT RECIPROCITY CONSULTING

Reciprocity Consulting, LLC is a women-owned small business based in Tacoma, Washington that provides customized support to build partnerships and engage diverse stakeholders.

Owner Jennifer S. Arnold, Ph.D. has over 15 years of experience in research, facilitation, and training focused on collaborative approaches to conservation and community development. She specializes in launching new collaborative efforts, growing existing partnerships, managing conflicts productively, addressing equity and effectively engaging diverse stakeholders to have a lasting positive impact in our communities and our environment.

# Partnership Learning Project

## A TWO-PART REPORT

**1** **PART ONE** emphasizes what it takes to initiate or formalize a partnership and work through the growing pains of planning and governance (*focus on Development FIP grantees*).

**2** **PART TWO** emphasizes the dynamic nature of partnerships and the resources, support and guidance from funders that can build resiliency and boost impact (*focus on Implementation FIP grantees integrated with Part One findings*).

# Common Terms

## Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is a state agency that provides grants to help Oregonians take care of local streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. OWEB grants are funded from the Oregon Lottery, federal dollars, and salmon license plate revenue. The agency is led by a 17-member citizen board drawn from the public at large, tribes, and federal and state natural resource agency boards and commissions.

## Focused Investment Partnership (FIP)

A Focused Investment Partnership is an OWEB investment that:

- addresses a Board-identified priority of significance to the state;
- achieves clear and measurable ecological outcomes;
- uses integrated, results-oriented approaches as identified through a strategic action plan; and
- is implemented by a high-performing partnership.

## Development FIP Grant

*(formerly Capacity Building FIP grant)*

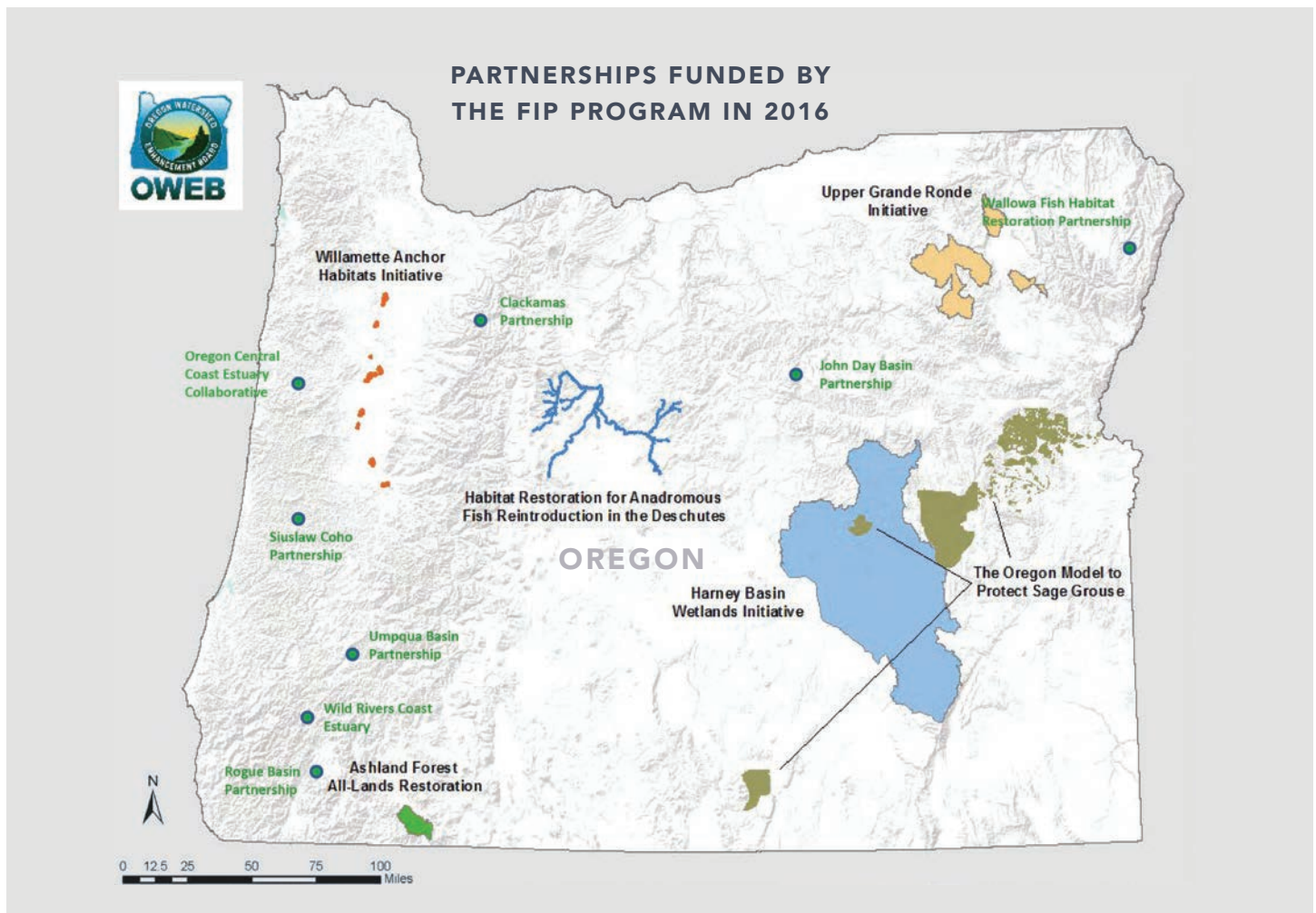
Two-year grants, which are part of OWEB's FIP Program, that are awarded to partnerships to develop a strategic action plan, governance documents and otherwise build capacity to perform at a higher level.

## Implementation FIP Grant

Six-year grants, which are part of OWEB's FIP Program, that are awarded to high-performing partnerships to implement on-the-ground restoration projects.

## Board-identified Priorities for FIP Investments by Habitat

- Aquatic Habitat for Native Fish Species
- Closed Lakes Basin Wetland
- Coastal Estuaries
- Coho Habitat and Populations along the Coast
- Dry-Type Forest Habitat
- Oak Woodland and Prairie
- Sagebrush / Sage-Steppe



# Executive Summary

OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program was inspired by the idea of “collective impact” that partnerships can uniquely leverage the collective capacity of multiple organizations and accelerate the pace and scale of restoration when partners are strategically aligned around shared priorities and committed to mutually reinforcing actions. In the 2015-2016 biennium, two types of multi-year FIP grants were awarded – a Development FIP grant to develop partnership capacity and an Implementation FIP grant to implement restoration projects.

In January 2016, the OWEB Board awarded \$13.7 million to fourteen partnerships:



OWEB recognized this was very different from their other grant programs and initiated this study to better understand:

- 1 What do partnerships need to be resilient and maintain a high level of performance?
- 2 How can OWEB improve and innovate the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program to support high-performing, resilient partnerships that can make progress toward desired ecological outcomes?

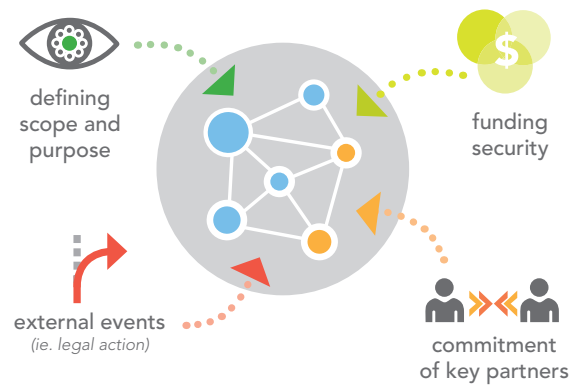
GRANT	PURPOSE	AMT/TIME	FUNDED PARTNERSHIPS
<p><b>Development FIP grants</b> <i>(formerly Capacity Building FIP grants)</i></p>	<p>Develop partnership capacity, e.g., a strategic action plan, governance documents, a funding plan, etc.</p>	<p>Up to \$150,000 each over 2 years</p>	<p><b>8 Partnerships:</b> Clackamas Basin Partnership John Day Basin Partnership Oregon Central Coast Estuaries Collaborative Rogue Basin Partnership Siuslaw Coho Partnership Umpqua Basin Partnership Wallowa Habitat Restoration Partnership Wild Rivers Estuary Partnership</p>
<p><b>Implementation FIP grants</b></p>	<p>Implement large-scale, on-the-ground restoration projects, including some technical assistance and focused outreach</p>	<p>About \$6 million each over 6 years</p>	<p><b>6 Partnerships:</b> Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration Initiative Deschutes Partnership Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership Harney Basin Wetland Initiative Oregon Model to Protect Sage Grouse Willamette Anchor Habitat Working Group</p>



Partnerships are networks of people and organizations working together to advance shared interests.

They operate on the fundamental belief that partners can achieve more collectively than individually. Partnerships require upfront investment in relationship building, typically one to three years, and once a partnership is established, there are inherent costs and challenges related to communication, decision-making, and coordinated action (*Brouwer and others 2015*).

ROGUE BASIN PARTNERSHIP



## Partnerships are dynamic.

They take on different forms over time in response to funding, commitment of key partners, external events and how the purpose and scope are defined.

## Findings

★ Different types of partnerships have different costs, risks and benefits. Resilient high-performers find the right type of partnership to provide the greatest value proposition to partners. (See Figure 1, page 14)

**Partnerships are dynamic** and take on different forms over time in response to funding, commitment of key partners and how the purpose and scope are defined.

**Partners and funders commit** time and resources based on their perception of the value proposition, which may change over time in response to funding, external events or a shift in the key partners or scope.

**Over their history**, many of the 14 partnerships have moved along the continuum of partnership types, sometimes back and forth, with different levels of commitment and funding.

**Coordinated and collaborative partnerships** are often idealized as the model to strive for, yet learning networks or cooperative partnerships with lower costs and risks may have a higher value proposition, especially in the absence of long-term, reliable funding.

## Methods

To guarantee confidentiality and encourage candid feedback, OWEB contracted with an independent social scientist Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. of Reciprocity Consulting LLC. From Fall 2016 to Spring 2018, Jennifer reached out to all 14 funded partnerships:

**Attended** a meeting of each of the 14 partnerships,

**Participated** in 4 conference calls with OWEB and the Development FIP grantees,

**Interviewed** 47 partners (ave. 3-4 per partnership) and

**Received** survey feedback from 137 partners (ave. 10 per partnership).

The data were analyzed using a qualitative approach called **grounded theory**, where an explanation of the system is inductively developed from participant experiences and reflections (Charmaz 2006). This report represents a synthesis of insights across the 14 partnerships with quotes presented anonymously to bring to life the experiences of partners. While these quotes reflect individual perspectives that are meaningful to the bigger picture, they may not be representative of all the partnerships.

### RECOMMENDATION

Create funding opportunities and support to sustain partnerships as learning networks, especially in the absence of large-scale implementation funding.

# Continuum of Partnership Types



Different types of partnerships along a continuum from more autonomous to more interdependent have different costs, risks and benefits. Over time, partnerships may transition from being more autonomous to more interdependent. A better understanding of the value propositions of different partnership types can help partners and funders target their investments and set realistic expectations for short-term and long-term performance.

*(Adapted from Habana-Hafner, S. and H. B. Reed. 1989. Partnerships for Community Developments. Center for International Education.)*

## ★ Efficiency is critically important to performance and resiliency.

Collaboration is a double-edged sword. A more fully developed collaborative process is needed to develop trust and shared accountability, but an overly burdensome process directly stifles group morale, capacity to advance the work and retention of skilled leaders. While exceedingly grateful for the funding, partnerships consistently suggested ways to streamline the program. They also acknowledged OWEB's culture of collaboration and flexibility as critical to navigating the bureaucratic process.

### RECOMMENDATION

Increase efficiencies in the FIP application process and grant administration wherever possible.

## ★ Large, inclusive partnerships that seek alignment and shared accountability have greater costs for coordination and partner engagement.

Efficiency is a more pronounced challenge for large, inclusive partnerships. A more collaborative approach to planning, implementation, reporting and accountability in these contexts has greater potential to be overly burdensome because of the logistics of keeping everyone engaged, aligned and responsive. There are also greater risks that the process will feel exclusive to new partners and that the cost of running the partnership cannot be sustained.

### RECOMMENDATION

Revisit expectations in the FIP rules that partnerships should be inclusive. Provide additional capacity to coordinate inclusive partnerships.

## ★ Even as partnerships move toward increased coordination and alignment, they find shared accountability is a much higher bar to reach.

The 14 partnerships have aimed for increased coordination, and especially those focused on implementation, have made substantial progress, including:

**Integrated Project Planning** – multiple organizations propose and implement projects together;

**Collective Reporting** – partners agree on metrics to track and report progress sometimes to multiple funders; and

**Cross-Organizational Learning** – organizations learn from each other to propose better projects.

These are all key building blocks to develop a sense of shared accountability, where partners hold each other accountable to design and implement the best projects to advance their collective goals, yet shared accountability is a much higher bar to reach. Many, if not most, partnerships have found they are not quite able to ask those harder questions although they aspire to that goal.

### RECOMMENDATION

Consider whether there is adequate, reliable funding for partnerships to operate at a higher level of coordination and shared accountability – or whether a more modest level of strategic planning and cooperative decision-making would provide a better value.

★ **More ambitious goals require careful facilitation and clarity around decision-making.** Innovative approaches to restoration, including work in ecosystems that are not well-understood, tend to yield greater differences in philosophy and expert opinion due to greater uncertainties and risks (Arnold and others 2012).

Many of the 14 partnerships have expanded the focus and complexity of their work, such as:

**Working with new partners** with different perspectives,

**Broadening the scope** to include multiple species or upland and in-stream habitat,

**Expanding the geography** to include basins with different hydrology and geology, and

**Expanding objectives** and prioritization to include social and economic considerations.

In these contexts, partners can work more productively through differences with more clarity around how decisions are made and by whom and more support for careful facilitation. Individuals from many of the partnerships expressed a strong interest to improve in these areas. Effective facilitators, which can be internal or external to the partnership, remind people of decisions already made and effectively open up discussion on key questions to fully leverage the wisdom and expertise of partners.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Create training opportunities for facilitation, team building, leadership and how to manage competition.

★ **Funding drives commitment among partners, which is critical to high performance and resiliency. Multiple aligned funders over longer time frames create the potential for greater impact.**

**Trusting relationships**, respected leadership, open communication, efficiency and a willingness to learn and act together are all critical to a partnership's success, but they are not sufficient for high performance and resiliency if funding is not in place.

**Partnerships described a leap of faith** when transitioning from strategic action planning to implementation. If implementation funding is not secured, partners may not be able to sustain their commitment, and the energy invested in the plan may not yield the value expected.

**When funders are aligned**, for example around priorities, timelines and reporting requirements, partners increase their

commitment to each other and are incentivized to develop systems of shared accountability to reach collective goals.

**When multiple funders make aligned investments** over longer timeframes, partners are better able to commit to a science-based approach to adaptive management that requires substantial investment in developing a planning, monitoring and decision-making framework.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Work with other funders to create alignment around funding priorities, grant duration and reporting and monitoring requirements to offer complementary partnership-focused investments.

★ **To effectively boost impact, the FIP grant program must consider the funding landscape beyond the two-year or six-year grant duration.**

Many partners have said there is no roadmap for what funding will support their work after the FIP grant recognizing that sustained effort will be required on the order of decades, to realize desired ecological outcomes. While grantees were exceedingly grateful, many encouraged deeper thinking about the implications of a six-year timeframe. For many, the tight focus on an ambitious implementation timeline reduced capacity to maintain connection to the strategic action plan, continue updating it based on learning and develop new ideas for future opportunities. As partnerships concluded the two-year Development FIP grant, there was also considerable speculation and jostling about how to carve out the most competitive set of projects for their Implementation FIP application. A better understanding of the overall funding landscape and the value proposition of different partnerships types can help partnerships and funders target their investments and set realistic expectations for short-term and long-term performance.

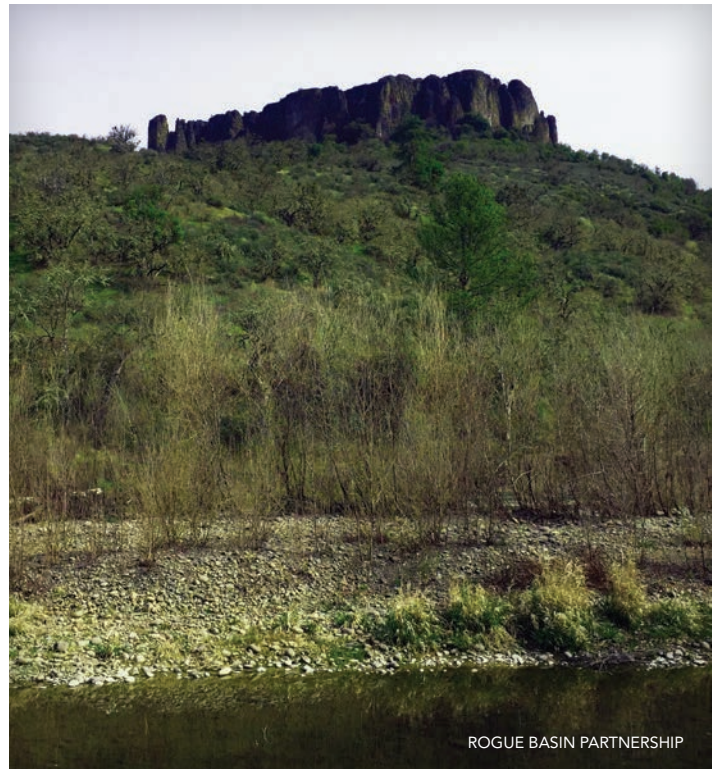
#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Meet with partnerships two years before the end of their six-year grant or at the end of their two-year grant to assess progress and help identify resources and a roadmap forward that holds the greatest value proposition.
- 2 Consider adjusting the grant duration, offering a two-year grant after an Implementation FIP grant or awarding a second six-year grant after a waiting period.



*“I’m really grateful that our partnership has shown sustained success and growth — new partners and additional investment, national and even international attention. It is helping to transform how society is thinking about the bigger problem and, I think, cultivating the ground for a much larger increase in the pace, scale and quality of restoration. We are on the cusp of an orbital leap of what we are able to accomplish because of the success of this project.”*

*Implementation FIP grantee*



ROGUE BASIN PARTNERSHIP

★ Partners need to reach broader audiences and constituencies to boost their efforts to a higher level. They have been exploring new approaches and expertise, but funding is limited to do so.

Many partners have felt they have had sufficient public awareness and support to be effective in the short term, yet they need to build broader awareness and support to reach long-term goals, especially for:

**Efforts focused on public lands** that will expand to private lands in the future or

**Efforts focused on more liberal communities** that would like to extend into more conservative communities.

Across partnerships, people recognized that you don’t have to win over the whole population to be effective, but you do have to communicate effectively with a smaller subset who care about these issues and who can be fierce critics in the absence of engagement and proactive efforts. Many partners have recognized this is an area where growth is needed and are seeking funding, tools and expertise along these lines.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Consider flexibility within the FIP program to fund communications and monitoring – needed to proactively build public support, improve practices and tell a meaningful, science-based story of progress – or work with other funders to address these critical gaps.

★ Tribes have unique and valuable perspectives with respect to long-term restoration goals.

Among the 14 partnerships, tribes have taken on a breadth of roles from a convening or leadership role to a peripheral or new partner. Tribal partners discussed a range of complexities that are often not well-understood but that heavily influence their interest and ability to engage. Partnerships requested more support and guidance on these topics. (See more in Part 1, pages 19-22).

#### RECOMMENDATION

Continue exploring creative approaches to support respectful tribal engagement and leadership.

## Conclusion

Partners have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work and learn with OWEB through this study and this innovative partnership approach to restoration. The findings presented here aim to provide a roadmap and some next steps to push onward toward the next level of innovation and impact.



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# Introduction

OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program was inspired by the idea of “collective impact” that partnerships can uniquely leverage the collective capacity of multiple organizations and accelerate the pace and scale of restoration when partners are strategically aligned around shared priorities and committed to mutually reinforcing actions (Kania and Kramer 2011).

The goals of OWEB’s FIP program are two-pronged:

**1** To accelerate restoration and increase impact at the landscape scale by awarding a small number of Implementation FIP grants to high-performing partnerships to implement projects on the ground (about \$6 million dollars each over 6 years) and



**2** To increase capacity and performance of partnerships by awarding a slightly larger number of Development FIP grants, formerly called Capacity Building grants, to support development of a strategic action plan and/or governance documents, which describe how partners will work together (up to \$150,000 each over 2 years).

While both grants are competitive, the Implementation FIP grant has been highly competitive. In January 2016, the OWEB Board awarded \$13.7 million to fourteen partnerships:

	PURPOSE	AMT/TIME	FUNDED PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Development FIP grants</b> <i>(formerly Capacity Building FIP grants)</i>	Develop partnership capacity, e.g., a strategic action plan, governance documents, a funding plan, etc.	Up to \$150,000 each over 2 years	<b>8 Partnerships:</b> Clackamas Basin Partnership John Day Basin Partnership Oregon Central Coast Estuaries Collaborative Rogue Basin Partnership Siuslaw Coho Partnership Umpqua Basin Partnership Willowa Habitat Restoration Partnership Wild Rivers Estuary Partnership
<b>Implementation FIP grants</b>	Implement large-scale, on-the-ground restoration projects, including some technical assistance and focused outreach	About \$6 million each over 6 years	<b>6 Partnerships:</b> Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration Initiative Deschutes Partnership Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership Harney Basin Wetland Initiative Oregon Model to Protect Sage Grouse Willamette Anchor Habitat Working Group



As OWEB launched this program, they recognized it was very different from their other grant programs. Their thinking was that the FIP grant offerings would incentivize the development of more formalized partnerships with well-developed strategic action plans and governance documents across the state, which would increase the collective capacity for landscape-scale restoration and attract more funding in general terms – whether or not the work of a particular partnership would be funded through a FIP grant. OWEB initiated this study to better understand how the FIP program can advance statewide restoration priorities through investments in partnerships.



## Guiding Questions

**1** What do partnerships need to be resilient and maintain a high level of performance and impact?

**2** How can OWEB improve and innovate the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program to support high performing, resilient partnerships that make progress toward desired ecological outcomes?

## Methods

To guarantee confidentiality and encourage candid feedback, OWEB contracted with an independent social scientist Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. of Reciprocity Consulting LLC. From Fall 2016 to Spring 2018, Jennifer reached out to all 14 funded partnerships:

- **Attended a meeting of each of the 14 partnerships** that received a FIP grant in 2016. (lasting 3-15 hours)
- **Participated in 4 conference calls** (1.5-2 hours) with representatives of 8 partnerships hosted by OWEB to encourage peer-to-peer learning among Development FIP grantees

- **Conducted interviews with 47 partners** from diverse backgrounds lasting 30-90 minutes to understand the history, context and vision for each partnership, including expected benefits and costs from the partnership and their approaches to managing challenges and risks
- **Received survey feedback from 136 partners** across the 14 partnerships using a confidential online survey (See Appendix) that asked about experiences with the partnership and suggestions for what is most needed to build a resilient partnership, and
- Analyzed interviews, surveys and meeting notes using a **qualitative approach called grounded theory** which builds an explanation of the system inductively from the collective experiences and reflections of participants (*Charmaz 2006*).

## Diversity of Partnerships

The 14 partnerships that are the focus of this project have different histories and context, which influence the culture of the group, how they work together, their ability to attract key partners, their potential for fundraising and their outlook for large-scale implementation. Aspects of diversity are described in more detail in Part 1 (see pages 3-5) and include:

- Time that partners have worked together
- Number and size of partner organizations
- Tribal involvement and potential for competing tribal interests
- Agency involvement and the longevity of staff in key positions
- Regional and national environmental non-profit involvement
- Mix of urban and rural communities and proximity to large or affluent urban areas
- “Anchor” funders with an interest in the focus area
- Mix of younger and experienced professionals with connections to local communities
- Prior experience with strategic planning and/or collaborative groups
- Prior experience contributing to the development of OWEB’s FIP Program
- Geographic scope and breadth of activities covered in the strategic action plan
- Rules defining “membership” and
- Degree of formalization of the partnership structure.



## A Useful Way to Think About Partnerships

**Partnerships** are networks of people and organizations working together to advance shared interests. They operate on the fundamental belief that partners can achieve more collectively than individually. Partnerships require a great deal of upfront investment in relationship building, typically one to three years (See Part 1 pages 43-46), and once a partnership is established, there are inherent costs and challenges related to communication, decision-making, and coordinated action (Brouwer and others 2015).

Partners and funders commit time and resources based on their perception that the expected value of the partnership outweighs the costs, challenges, and risks. Various

internal or external events, such as changes in staffing or policies, may influence people’s perceptions of the value and costs of the partnership, and thus partners’ commitment and the overall performance of the partnership. A resilient partnership emphasizes learning and feedback to continually build confidence in the value of the partnership and actively manage the inherent costs, challenges, and risks to maintain a strong value proposition that can maintain engagement despite crisis and change (Habana-Hafner and others 1989; Cigler 1999).

For partnership champions and funders, understanding the range of partnership types can help guide the group strategically toward the structure that best fits the history, context and value proposition for partners. From the Public Administration literature, partnerships are described along a continuum where partners are more autonomous at one end and more interdependent at the other (Habana-Hafner and others 1989; Cigler 1999; Mandell 2001).

## Continuum of Partnership Types



(Adapted from Habana-Hafner, S. and H. B. Reed. 1989. *Partnerships for Community Developments*. Center for International Education.)

### LEARNING NETWORKS

Partners come together to share information but may have little formal connection or shared work together.

### COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Partners remain autonomous, while sharing responsibilities for specific projects, such as a contractual relationship or task force.

### COORDINATED PARTNERSHIPS

Partners retain most of their autonomy, but actively work with each other to align their missions and activities to strategically advance mutual goals.

### COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Partners commit to a long-term shared vision and take on complementary roles and responsibilities to achieve that vision, often referred to as the collective impact model (Kania and Kramer 2011).

The key distinction is the degree to which individual partners remain separate and autonomous or form new combined organizational structures for long-term change and interaction (Cigler 1999, Mandell 2001). They also represent different purposes and structural characteristics that require different levels of trust, depth of communication, investment in partnership operations, and length of time to develop. As you move from left to right on the continuum, you find increasing:

- Complexity of purpose,
- Intensity of linkages,
- Formality of agreements,
- Commitment to each other and greater whole,
- Interdependence of purpose and operations,
- Risk to individual organizations,
- Capacity to achieve systems change, and
- Investment in governance and communications

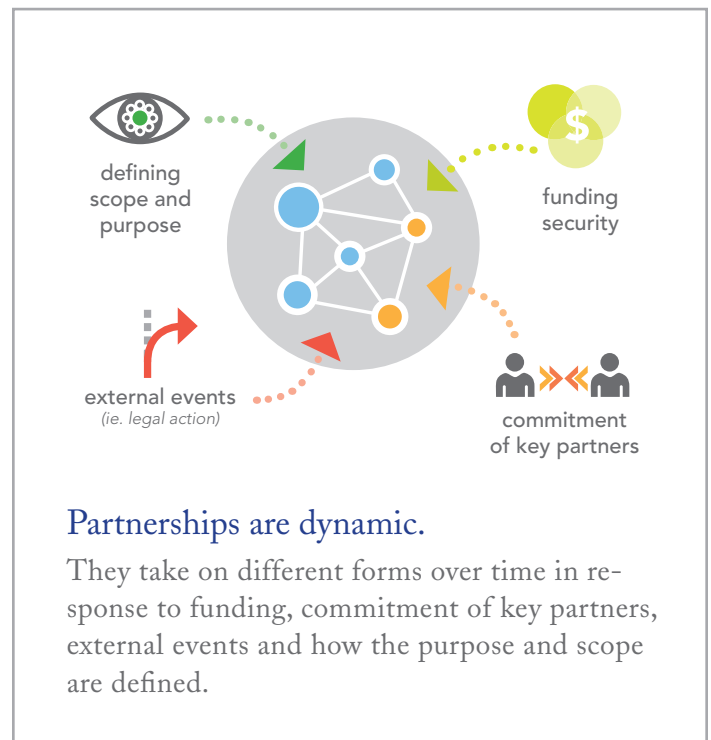
Partnerships are dynamic and may shift along this continuum over time, for example in response to changes in leadership, a crisis, or opportunity. Common challenges frequently encountered by even the most successful partnerships include:

- High staff turnover,
- Personality clashes, including institutional and cultural differences,
- Coping with high expectations,
- Reducing transaction costs, and
- Maintaining the interest of the private business sector (Sanginga and others 2007).

Often new partnerships establish first as a coordinated network and may evolve to a collaborative network with pooled resources and a combined organizational structure as trust and commitment build over time (Raine and Watt 2013). Conversely, some partnerships operate quite effectively as a learning network or cooperative partnership, and the expected value of a more complex, collaborative structure does not offset the increased costs. Some partnerships are established for a specific purpose and time period, which again may not warrant a more resource-intensive collaborative structure. Partnerships are highly dynamic and do not necessarily follow linear trajectories of development (Mandell and Keast 2008).

## Findings

The 14 partnerships in this study represented the full range of partnership types (See Figure 1, page 14) They differ greatly with respect to their history and context. Many have taken on different forms over time in response to changes in funding, commitment of key partners, external events, such as changes in policy or litigation, and how the purpose and scope have been defined.



These findings represent a distillation and synthesis of insights across the 14 partnerships interpreting how each of their contexts shape the larger picture of how partnerships function and what is important for high performance and impact.

Confidential interviews yielded candid feedback, and anonymous quotes in this report are used to bring to life the words and specific experiences of partners. While these quotes reflect individual perspectives that are meaningful to the bigger picture, they may not be representative of all the partnerships.



# What do partnerships need to be resilient, high-performers?

**1** Different types of partnerships have different costs, risks and benefits. Resilient, high-performers find the right type of partnership to provide the greatest value proposition to partners. (See Figure 1, page 14)

The partnerships in this study have each provided different value and required different levels of resources to be effective. Looking back at the history of each partnership, many have moved along the continuum of partnership types, sometimes back and forth, with different levels of commitment and interdependency at different times in large part driven by funding.

Coordinated or collaborative partnerships, which require a high level of alignment and coordination among partners, are often believed to provide the greatest value and are held up as an ideal that all partnerships should work toward. However, learning networks and cooperative partnerships, which require less investment and hold less risk for individual partners, may provide a greater return on investment in many or most contexts. Cooperative partnerships, in particular, which are typically structured to achieve specific project deliverables, can be an efficient way to accelerate implementation and impact.



Learning networks in many cases have had a negative stigma as funders and partners feel there is a risk that learning may not be focused on strategic questions and may not directly increase performance or capacity for impact – or if it did, it would be difficult to quantify or track. However, there is ample literature to suggest if well-designed and targeted, learning networks can and do have great impact (Brown and Salafsky 2004; Senge 2006; Wenger and others 2002). Also, partners clearly expressed the need to strengthen relationships and increase communication and learning to avoid working in silos and proposing piecemeal projects suggesting that the value proposition for learning networks has not yet been fully explored.

*“I’m a fan of collaboration in this mechanism where there is a start and an end. I’m an action oriented person. I like to see results from our discussion. Especially working with our land owners, if they commit to restoration, we need to walk the talk and provide technical and financial assistance to do projects so we can demonstrate impact 10 years down the road.”*

Core Partner

*“I appreciate the cultural shift even in the few years since the I-FIP grant. Connecting more frequently, sharing ideas and plans, technical knowledge and peer-to-peer sharing is great. It will help the greater movement. I hope we can keep that culture going even when the funding for implementation isn’t there.”*

Core Partner

Figure 1

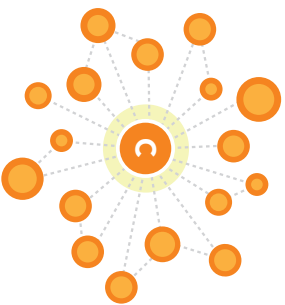
# Identifying the Value Proposition of Different Partnership Types

Different types of partnerships along a continuum from more autonomous to more interdependent have different costs, risks and benefits. Over time, partnerships may transition from being more autonomous to more interdependent and even back again, often driven by funding and the value proposition of the partnership as perceived by key partners and funders. A better understanding of the value propositions of different partnership types can help partners and funders target their investments and set realistic expectations for short-term and long-term performance.

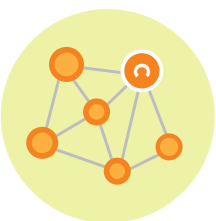
More autonomous

More interdependent

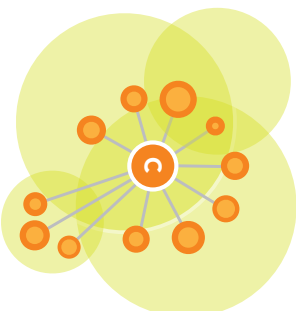
## Learning Network



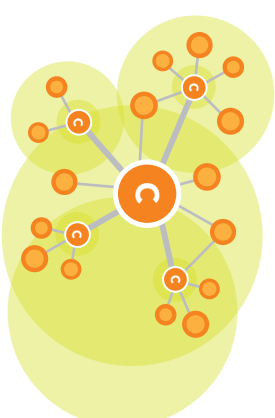
## Cooperative Partnership



## Coordinating Partnership



## Collaborative Partnership



**Purpose:** Share information, improve on best practices and build social capital for future collaboration.

Usually a large number of partners.

**C** Coordinator serves as an ambassador and convener.

**\$** A low level of investment focused on convening, learning and communication.



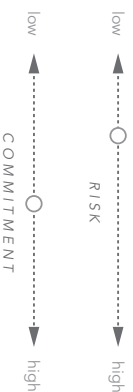
Partners are **loosely committed** to high-level strategic priorities for learning and communication.

**Purpose:** Increase capacity to implement projects identified as a shared priority.

Usually a small number of partners.

**C** Coordinator serves as a project manager, often a role taken by one of the partners, in some cases rotated among partners.

**\$** A moderate to high level of investment focused on project implementation.



Partners are **moderately committed** to a strategic action plan as long as there is funding for implementation.

**Purpose:** Align partners around shared priorities and coordinate implementation.

Usually a moderate number of partners.

**C** Coordinator serves as facilitator and project manager

**\$** A high level of sustained investment, typically multiple large funders, focused on planning and implementation with some outreach and monitoring.



Partners are **moderately to strongly committed** to a strategic action plan. Their commitment is renewed with each new round of funding.

**Purpose:** Align around shared priorities, coordinate implementation and improve outcomes through science-based adaptive management.

Usually a moderate to large number of partners.

**C** Coordinator serves as a facilitator, convener and ambassador. If the structure includes work groups, the coordinators of these work groups serve as project managers.

**\$** A very high level of sustained investment, typically multiple aligned funders, focused on planning, implementation, monitoring, outreach and adaptive management.



Partners are **strongly committed** to a strategic action plan and an adaptive management framework based on reliable long-term funding.

## 2 Funding drives commitment among partners, which is critical to high performance and resiliency.

Funding that has required or promoted collaborative work, such as OWEB's FIP program, has pushed partnerships toward being more interdependent.

*"The process for applying [for an Implementation FIP grant] although complicated does a great job of pushing partnerships to organize for successful planning, implementation and monitoring of projects."*

*"The FIP program helps to form resilient partnerships by forcing partners to work together through the implementation of the FIP grant itself. Significant relationships can be built in 6 years, whereas the partnership may have unraveled without funding to help push it along for those 6 years."*

*"Money drives commitment in a big way. However, not all project concepts evolve the way they were initially thought of, so commitments have to also evolve."*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

**3 Aligned funders create greater commitment and shared accountability among partners, for example when funders are aligned around priorities, timelines, reporting requirements, etc. Aligned funders over longer timeframes create the potential for greater impact and the possibility of science-based, landscape-scale adaptive management.**

The most pronounced examples of collaborative, integrated work among the 14 partnerships have developed alongside the alignment of multiple large funders, referring to complementary or mutually reinforcing funding priorities, timelines, reporting requirements, etc. In essence, significant funding awarded to the partnership drives greater commitment and interdependency. And greater alignment among funders especially over longer

timeframes motivates even greater commitment and integration among partners, to the point where partners are willing to invest in shared structures for planning, reporting and continuous improvement that go beyond grant requirements.

This long-term commitment that develops from aligned, reliable funding creates more long-term possibilities to effectively implement a collaborative approach to science-based, landscape-scale adaptive management – which is the idealized vision of how partnerships can collectively increase their impact, often referred to as collective impact (Kania and Kramer 2011) or collaborative adaptive management (Scarlett 2013; Susskind and others 2012).

Alignment among funders is extremely valuable with the caveat that flexibility is also critically important to partnership performance. Many partnerships were able to increase performance because they had the flexibility within their portfolio of funders to mix and match project proposals and funding sources based on project duration, geographic focus, specified land ownership and preferred type of activity, etc. If funders were too rigidly aligned around the same priorities or requirements, partnerships might not have this type of flexibility.

**4 Trusting relationships, respected leadership, open communication, efficiency and a willingness to learn and act together are critical to success, but not sufficient for high performance and resiliency if funding is not in place.**

While commitment has largely been driven by funding, partners described how their success and ability to live up to the partnership's potential was largely tied to their ability to build trust and open communication so that partners work effectively together and build public support. However, even with high levels of trust and willingness to work together, partners described a clear risk that without funding to support their collective work they may not be able to maintain strong linkages and continue working together in a sustained way (See Part 1 pages 25-27). Overall, this study finds that partner commitment is largely driven by funding and efficiency, while collective success is largely also driven by trusting relationships, respected leadership, open communication and a willingness to learn and act together.



*“One of the problems that that I see crop up from time to time is the lack of monetary compensation for participation as this can take away time and energy from partners’ day-to-day work. Right now, we have all decided that this is worth it, but in the long run, we all will need to dedicate time and resources we sometimes don’t have readily available. Monitoring and evaluation programs are time consuming and don’t get enough funding to provide the necessary feedback to the partners.”*

*Core Partner*

In many cases, partnerships have invested significant resources in relationship building and planning to stretch and grow to a higher level of commitment along the continuum where they hope to more intentionally integrate their work and attract partnership funding to tackle ambitious landscape-scale objectives. In other cases, partnerships have experienced trust issues, but they continue to work effectively together and realize success because of the interdependency established by the funding along with commitment to their shared vision and pride in their work.

**5** Integrated project planning, collective reporting and cross-organizational learning are key building blocks to developing a sense of shared accountability for greater impact. Shared accountability is a much higher bar to reach.

Based on long-term reliable funding or good prospects for funding and high partner commitment, most partnerships focused on implementation have made substantial progress toward integrated project planning, collective reporting and cross-organizational learning – although achieving shared accountability is still a work in progress.

Several partnerships have promoted integrated project planning by defining partner roles and structuring work groups in ways that require different organizational partners to work together in designing and implementing projects. Yet for many partnerships, projects are still proposed and implemented by individual organizations working relatively independently of each other. Thinking into the future, many of these partners are increasingly

interested in developing collaborative projects, referring to the difference between “slicing the pie,” as in dividing available funding among partners, and “expanding the pie,” as in working together creatively to attract more funding. However, partners need a certain level of trust and capacity to invest the time and take on the risk of developing project proposals jointly and jointly applying for funding.

*“Our partnership is strong and stable but also growing and strengthening as partners are slowly beginning to collaborate more and more on a project level with one another.”*

*“This is relatively new for the old guy in the room. We can let some project ideas fall off the list if there are better ideas in the room. We have the opportunity to talk about it instead of sending a flurry of applications to the funder independently.”*

*“The partnership and FIP grant has helped to align our groups to work more closely together toward a shared common goal. We are really getting to know each much better, building trust between one another and collaborating much more with one another than ever before. Several of us have taken on new projects together as a result of getting to know and trust each other more through our partnership.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

Most partnerships, which are actively focused on implementation, have made progress developing systems to report collectively across funding sources, typically focused on outputs, but in some cases also ecological outcomes. Most partners realized quickly that this is no small lift and requires capacity to agree on categories of data to track, to collect and manage data and to generate reports that are meaningful to different audiences. Several

partnerships have invested time and resources in developing databases and a streamlined workflow to maximize efficiency and the usefulness of data collected and shared. Time for discussion and agreement is needed to identify processes and metrics that work for everyone, including considerations for land owner privacy and expectations for how data will be analyzed and used. Some partnerships used grant funds to develop databases and improve workflow. Some partners have reported investing considerably more time than budgeted, but admit the investment is worthwhile if it establishes a system that everyone can use moving forward assuming the partnership continues to attract funding.

Most partnerships discussed clear “wins” in cross-organization learning, mostly directed at improving best practices and project implementation, as a result of more frequent communication, better established relationships and in some cases the technical review process. Partnerships have approached technical review in different ways. Some technical review teams have been initiated by OWEB, while others were already established by the partnerships and influenced by other funders. Not all partners view the technical review process as beneficial primarily due to the inefficiencies and awkwardness of the bureaucratic process. However, many partners do find value in technical review beyond the funder’s requirement for due diligence, especially when there is a site visit component or other facilitated forum to encourage learning among project proponents and technical reviewers that goes beyond receiving and responding to comments.

*“Meeting quarterly seems good for our group. I think it would be really helpful for us to have at least one field trip annually to see partner projects on the ground so we can also be collaborating on successes, challenges etc. Conversations will be very different when on site compared to in a meeting room all day.”*

*Core Partner*

Many partners had specific suggestions for improving the technical review process to enhance cross-organizational learning, for example developing a structured decision-making framework, inviting in specialized technical experts, providing support for stronger facilitation and creating layers of review to tease out strategic policy

questions from technical issues. Partners who shared some of these suggestions had mixed feelings about how to share their ideas with funders and/or other partners, which indicates room for improvement to promote open communication and shared accountability.

Overall, developing a sense of shared accountability, where organizations hold each other accountable to effectively implement projects and advance the larger collective vision, is a much higher bar than integrated planning or collective reporting. Shared accountability requires significant trust, well-developed communication skills, strong and diplomatic leaders and a culture centered around feedback, learning and adaptation to achieve the collective vision. As one partner explained, we have not yet developed the trust to ask those harder questions during project development and technical review, but that is where we would like to go.

*“I feel responsible for my specific project. I feel zero commitment in other people’s projects. Ideally, I guess we would all want to see one another succeed, but there is a weird level of competition and few incentives to cooperate when we compete for funding.”*

*“People are just starting to share projects – they are not yet asking deeper questions to critique each other’s projects. They are still careful and polite and don’t want to step on toes. If I were to ask those deeper questions as the coordinator, they might stop responding to my emails.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

Not surprisingly, this is a persistent challenge in partnerships since accountability can be a sizeable challenge even in well-run traditional organizations that have the luxury of clear lines of authority with policies and procedures to promote accountability in job descriptions, work plans, performance reviews, promotion criteria, etc. (Senge 2006).

Partnerships that demonstrated the clearest examples of integrated planning and collective reporting, which are the building blocks of shared accountability, come from partnerships where there is some alignment among large

funders. This seems to drive coordination and collaboration most even where trust among partners is limited. In some partnerships, trust among partners and commitment to a larger vision have created the push for integrated planning, but even in these cases, partner commitment to implementation and accountability has become clearer and more explicit when funders are aligned.

**6 When working with innovative restoration approaches or in ecosystems not well-understood, partnerships benefit from more clarity around decision-making and more support for careful facilitation to productively work through differences in philosophy and expert opinion.**

Innovative approaches to restoration, including restoration in ecosystems that are not well-understood, tend to yield greater differences in philosophy and expert opinion – for good reason, because there are greater uncertainties and greater risks about whether planned activities will have the desired impacts (Arnold and others 2012). However, the potential for learning is also greater in these situations and arguably that learning is critical to the recovery of priority species and habitats.

In these contexts, partners are better able to productively work through differences in philosophy and expert opinion when there is more clarity around decision-making, for example clarity for how decisions are made and by whom, and support for careful facilitation. Individuals from many of the partnerships expressed a strong interest in improving in this area. Effective facilitators, whether internal or external to the partnership, can remind people of decisions already made through the accepted process and effectively open up discussion on key questions to fully take advantage of the wisdom and expertise of the partnership. (See *benefits and risks of internal and external facilitators in Part 1 pages 27-28.*)

Several partnerships also discussed the challenge of teasing apart philosophical questions at the level of strategic action planning, for example what type of restoration activities are prioritized in what areas, and technical questions at the level of project development, for example best practices for weed control or placing woody debris in sensitive wetland areas. In some cases, philosophical issues are not identified until specific projects are discussed through the technical review process. For example, in some cases, new partners or new experts to the technical review process have stepped into a partnership with questions about decisions that were already fully vetted



*“While we meet fairly regularly, we still need to work on developing a clear decision-making process. Are we a democracy with majority rules or is there room for dissenting opinions? We don’t have this down yet, and it does lead to some confusion among partners. That being said, we are light years ahead from where we were just six or seven years ago.”*

*“This group often uses a ‘consensus’ model in which two or three vocal individuals express their thoughts openly. If the other individuals in the group remain silent instead of agreeing or disagreeing, then the group facilitator assumes they have reached group ‘consensus.’ Silence can’t be interpreted as consensus since many team members don’t feel comfortable disagreeing with others publicly.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

and established. If the new person represents a key constituency and the partnership would like to encourage their long-term commitment, it may be important to slow down and revisit decisions. In other cases, facilitators can reiterate the decisions already made to bring the new person up to speed and move onto other discussion topics. In the worst-case scenario if not handled well, these situations can lead to hard feelings, distrust and frustra-





tion among partners who either feel shut out of a decision or who feel paralyzed that the work is not moving forward despite past decisions to do so.

Partners highlighted a few key steps to facilitate these philosophical and technical conversations smoothly:

- documenting key strategic decisions and providing a clear rationale for each,
- clarifying who makes decisions in strategic action planning and in the technical review process,
- ensuring everyone feels comfortable sharing their views, and
- clarifying how consensus is reached.

On this last point, partners from a few different partnerships described a familiar situation where the facilitator would ask if everyone was in agreement and when people nodded and no one spoke up, the facilitator concluded that consensus had been reached. These partners felt that at times there were differences of opinion where the group would have benefited from more discussion and that facilitators could use more training and clarity on how to facilitate consensus building. Some partners also suggested that training and mentoring on facilitation, team building, leadership and how to manage competition would greatly help partnership performance.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Create training and mentoring opportunities for facilitation, team building, leadership and how to manage competition.

**7** Partners need to reach broader audiences and constituencies to boost their efforts to a higher level. They have been exploring new approaches and expertise, but funding is limited to do so.

Most partnerships have built community credibility through the diversity of their boards (or the boards of their partner organizations), who represent different interest groups, constituencies and sectors. Also, a few partnerships have had remarkable success developing trust and buy-in among landowners – and much can be learned from them. Yet most partnerships have admitted that their potential to build public awareness and support in a broader sense is underdeveloped. Many partners felt they have had sufficient public awareness and support to be effective in the short term, yet they need to build broader awareness and support to reach long-term goals, especially for efforts focused on public lands that will expand to private lands in the future or efforts focused on more liberal communities that would like to extend into more conservative communities.

*“You’re not going to resolve most natural resource issues within boundaries, especially if you want to maintain ecological productivity. Most habitat is on private lands, not just the federal lands. If we want to be effective, we have to work with private land owners, and we need relationships to do that.”*

*Core Partner*

Across partnerships, people recognized that you don’t have to win over the whole population to be effective, but you do have to communicate effectively with a smaller subset who care about these issues and who can be fierce critics in the absence of engagement and proactive efforts. However, across the partnerships concern was expressed that few funding sources are available for proactively building relationships and conducting education and outreach, which limits the time and capacity that people have to dedicate to reaching these broader audiences.

*“The inability to implement restoration actions on private land has posed a chronic challenge.”*

*Core Partner*

*“While the entire public is not even interested in being informed, the few that are want it badly. They will get information from the partnership, as well as potential detractors, so it is important to provide the positive narrative.”*

*“For the most part, 80% or more of our public has no interest in this work, so the support (or lack thereof) from the 20% becomes magnified (or not). This is a challenge to us only in that the interested 20% of the public can drive debate, discord and delay around our project implementation schedule and costs.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

Despite this limitation, some partnerships have been positioning themselves to boost their efforts to a higher level of engagement working with consultants, hiring communications staff and/or relying on in-kind partner contributions. These partnerships have worked on a range of engagement and communications activities, such as:

- defining specific target audiences,
- more intentionally building relationships for example through a neighbor-to-neighbor approach,
- building a “library” of successful restoration projects for public tours,
- developing a communications plan,
- building an online and social media presence,
- increasing visibility through videos and storytelling, and
- working with social scientists to understand social acceptability and economic trade-offs.

Many partners have recognized this is an area where growth is needed and are seeking funding, tools and expertise along these lines. (See Part 1 pages 22-24 for more examples.)



*“We need more outreach and education to the community about progress and successes. We want to do this, but it’s hard to find time, capacity and funding for it. We need to come up with an achievable communication and outreach plan, and we need to have specific messages for defined audiences (current grant funders, potential grant funders, farmers and rural residential, urban, etc.). We need more funding to achieve this.”*

*“When we look at the landscape, everyone really loves the word resilient. What does it mean? Adaptive to change. It’s really hard because so much stuff is changing all the time, human conditions, economics, climate change, sea level — you have to more realistic about the timeline. It’s got to evolve organically. You’ve got to respect the people that live there. I asked land owners why they were willing to work with me. They said, you walked into this room and you really cared about what we had to say and you didn’t have an agenda. That’s why we said we want to work with someone like you.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

**8 Tribes have unique and valuable perspectives with respect to long-term restoration goals. Partners requested more support to respectfully engage tribes.**

Among the 14 partnerships, tribes have taken on a breadth of roles from a convening or leadership role to a supporting or new partner. As discussed in Part 1 of the report, tribal partners discussed a range of complexities that are often not well-understood but that heavily influence their interest and ability to engage (See Part 1 pages 19-22).

After reviewing Part 1, many non-tribal partners expressed a strong interest in this section of the report, especially some partnership leaders who are highly motivated to build stronger relationships with tribes. Several partners acknowledged that their standard approach of calling or emailing tribal representatives about upcoming meetings falls far short of their goals for tribal engagement. People have been very interested in tools and strategies to build authentic tribal engagement, yet relationship building takes time and capacity is often limited. Several partners expressed gratitude for the training presented by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and organized by the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Continue exploring creative approaches to support respectful tribal engagement and leadership.

**9 Efficiency is critically important to performance and resiliency. Collaboration is a double-edged sword. A more fully developed collaborative process is needed to develop shared accountability, but an overly burdensome process directly stifles group morale, capacity to advance the work and retention of skilled leaders.**

Keeping partnerships functioning smoothly is no small task – both for coordinators who provide leadership and connectivity, but also for individual partners who must keep up with decisions at the partnership level along with specific tasks associated with planning, outreach, proposal development, project management, technical review, reporting, etc. The more time-intensive or bureaucratic any of these tasks become, the more risk there is that partners might not be willing or able to follow through, which can directly impact group morale.

Some partners brought up the risk that an overly burdensome or bureaucratic process may push skilled leaders to

*“The biggest challenge is commitment of time, not that I’m not willing. It’s just easy for this work to bump to a second or third priority as other things come up that are more important to my primary responsibilities, especially knowing that someone else will step up.”*

*Supporting Partner*

look for other opportunities where they would have more capacity or flexibility to do the work they are most passionate about. Partnerships broadly expressed that the real cost of keeping everyone connected, informed, engaged and making decisions together is generally underestimated and underfunded. And yet to realize the ideal of a collaborating partnership through greater interdependence and shared accountability requires greater investment and complexity at each step to maintain buy-in and incorporate learning into implementation.

Many partnerships have an informal style of running meetings and communicating with each other as a result of working together for many years. Yet many partners also emphasized the value of formalizing their partnership as a result of the FIP grant, which led them to have more open conversations about scope, vision, roles, responsibilities and decision-making – the importance of this step was especially emphasized by some tribal partners (see Part 1 page 21). An informal approach can be more efficient as long as leaders are able to maintain trust and open communication so that all partners can contribute to planning and prioritization decisions, which becomes more difficult as the partnership stretches to achieve more ambitious goals, work in new geographies and/or include new partners as evidenced by the partners who felt strongly that more clarity was needed around decision-making (see Finding 6 above).

*“One of the partners felt we needed a partnership document early on – an agreement of how we will work together. We said, ‘No, we know how.’ But ultimately, they were right. We needed an inter-organizational agreement to resolve issues that came up. We haven’t returned to it since, but we can go back to our agreement if something does come up.”*

*Core Partner*



In some partnerships, trust has been stretched thin, and partners have different expectations for roles and work products, which have not been fully discussed leading to tensions and even divisions in some cases. Partnerships that have long-term underlying trust issues require more time and investment to manage tensions and perceptions of territoriality. Across the partnerships, there was interest in more tools, support and access to coaching to help partners proactively work through challenging trust issues and build a framework for open communication that would free up time and energy to advance their work, ultimately increasing efficiency and performance.

*“Sometimes partners can’t articulate or identify the type of help they need. Professional coaches could come in and help partners with internal relationships and mechanics. OWEB might not be the right funding source, but some partners might need things like that to advance to the next level challenges.”*

*“The most challenging is the combo of different levels of commitment and engagement from different stakeholders and tension with different people’s priorities that shift over time too. It’s frustrating and hard. Sometimes you click with some personalities and with others you don’t.”*

*Quotes from Core Partner*

When considering efficiency, governance documents are another area where important conversations and decisions can help set a foundation for success, while too much time or formality can feel burdensome. Many partners described governance documents as useful, especially the conversations that went into developing them, but they also emphasized that respected leadership and group culture was equally or more important to building trust, open communication and ultimately working effectively together.

### RECOMMENDATION

Provide more tools and leadership training on group dynamics and governance could so partnerships can “right-size” their governance documents, including defining roles, responsibilities and decision-making rules.

**10** Large, inclusive partnerships that seek alignment and shared accountability have greater costs for coordination and partner engagement. Efficiency is a more pronounced challenge. There are greater risks that the process will be overly burdensome and feel exclusive to new partners. There are also greater risks that the cost of running the partnership cannot be sustained.

Large, inclusive partnerships that cover a broad geographic area and encourage new participants have even higher costs for outreach, onboarding and ongoing communications. A coordinated or collaborative approach to planning, implementation, reporting and accountability in these contexts has greater potential to be overly burdensome because of the logistics of keeping everyone engaged, aligned and responsive. The amount of time required for active engagement and the limited implementation funding available to each partner may create significant barriers for participation. In some of these seemingly inclusive partnerships, new partners have felt excluded or that they had to be persistent to find an opening to participate.

*“About a year ago I engaged with this group. There were LOTS of phone calls and emails with our coordinator. I had such a steep learning curve. It’s a little hard to engage in a funding process when there are no funds on the table for you, but you are written down as a partner. It’s been a challenge at some points to convince our board that it’s worth the staff time to go.”*

*New Partner*

Coordination for these large successful partnerships requires in-kind or general capacity funding, but this type of flexible funding at the scale required is difficult to secure. In many cases, it is only available in specific geographies or habitats where funding agencies or private donors have existing investments. With these costs and inefficiencies associated with large, inclusive partnerships, there is greater risk that the process will be overly burdensome and that there will not be long-term funding to support coordination and broad partner engagement.



*“In hindsight, there is too little money for the role of coordinating such a large partnership. I was totally naïve about that. I completely underestimated. A lot of things would be good for partners to know – reporting on funder priorities and interpreting technical review comments – but there’s not a lot of capacity for me to do that. People start cutting budgets, and you cut in those places because you want the projects on the ground.”*

*Core Partner*

Shared accountability can also be a bigger lift in large, inclusive partnerships. Coordinators, especially of inclusive partnerships, carefully weigh efficiency and diplomacy as they reach out to partners to request input, feedback or participation in shared work. They have a key vantage point to see gaps in follow-through and offer feedback or ask hard questions to improve shared accountability. However, they also realize that if they push too hard or ask for too much from partners, they risk overwhelming or alienating them, which could actually reduce participation and follow-through, for example asking partners to contribute to a shared reporting database that is different from other reporting requirements or asking partners to reprioritize proposed projects based on new information.

**11** A roadmap for how to sustain funding is critical for resiliency. A better understanding of the value propositions of different partnerships types can help partnerships and funders target their investments in planning and set realistic expectations for short-term and long-term performance.

Many partners have said there is no roadmap for what funding will support their work after the Implementation FIP grant – or after the Development FIP grant if they are not successful in getting an Implementation FIP grant. After the Implementation FIP grant, some partnerships may be close to completing the actions in their strategic action plan if it addressed a focused scope of work and geography that was designed to fit the six-year funding window for the FIP grant (See Figure 2, pages 24-25, Scenario A). These partnerships may be ready to transition their work to a maintenance and monitoring phase. Other partnerships focused on large-scale, complex restoration challenges will have to secure additional funding to continue working in a coordinated or collaborative partnership.

*“From a partner perspective, it’s going to be a challenge. I don’t know if other partnerships have gotten to this part where initial investments to keep partners at the table are not there the way they were in the past.”*

*“Frankly you don’t have resiliency without institutional funding. You build the capacity, the strategic thinking, the ability to fundraise – that’s your resiliency – but there needs to be institutional funding if you want the partnerships to thrive in the future. Otherwise it will be hard to them together.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

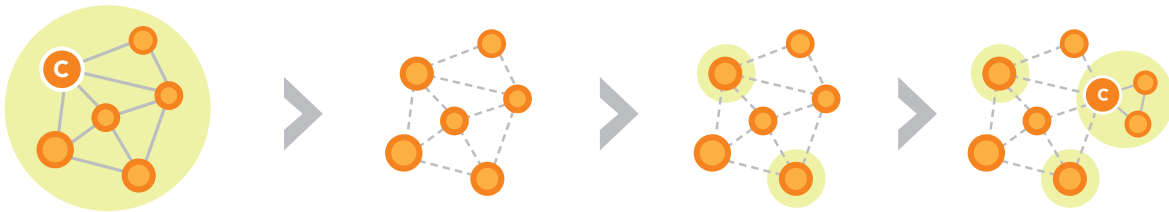
Many partnerships have said they have some flexibility for general capacity support to hold the partnership together after the FIP grant, but the long-term outlook will depend on what funding opportunities can be lined up (See Figure 2, pages 24-25, Scenarios B and C). A few partnerships have other large reliable funding sources, but many of these are also scheduled to ramp down over the next few years. Several partnerships have been optimistic that they will attract other large funders to support a high level of collaboration even though their sources might not yet be fully identified.

Figure 2

# A Roadmap for Partnerships with Different Funding Options



## Scenario A Investment in Accelerated Implementation

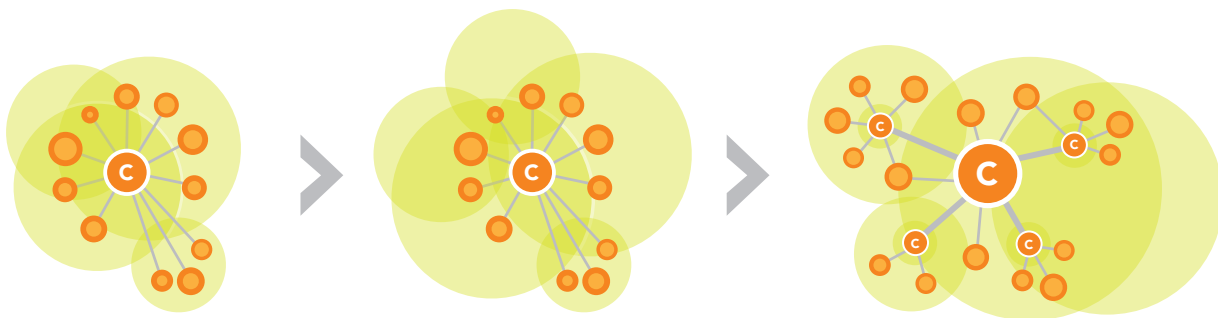


Partners develop a focused strategic action plan and raise enough funds to complete priority actions.

Then linkages and commitments among partners become looser or potentially the partnership is reconfigured to focus on a new geography or set of priorities.

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## Scenario B Investment in Long-term Coordination and Implementation with Potential for Adaptive Management



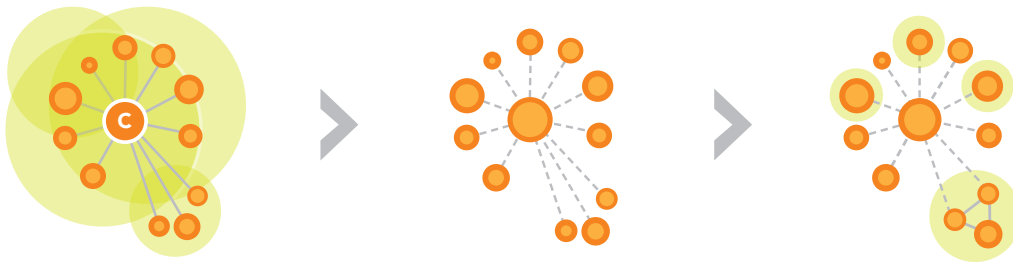
Partners create a long-term strategic action plan and secure adequate funding to support ongoing coordination and implementation of collaborative projects.

With multiple aligned funders, there is a greater chance that they will develop commitment for shared reporting, monitoring and adaptive management.



### Scenario C

## Investment or Incentives for Long-term Coordination with Risk that Implementation Funding is Not Secured

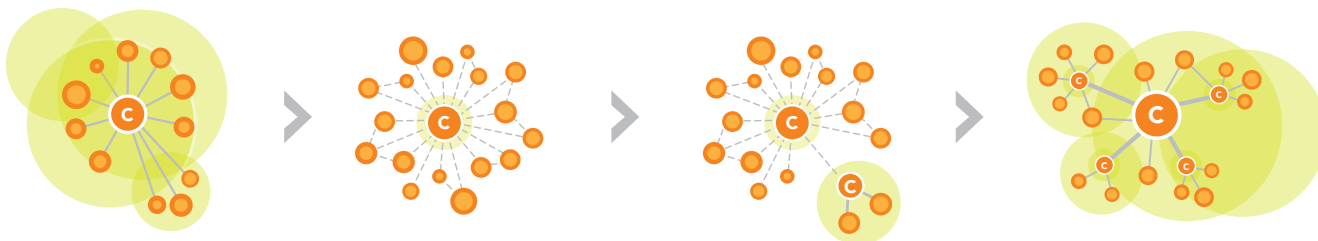


Partners create a long-term strategic action plan, but implementation funding is not secured for the partnership, only grants to individual projects.

The linkages and commitments among partners become looser. The plan may still be used for general guidance as partners find it useful, but there is no capacity to coordinate joint fundraising, project planning and reporting or to update the plan based on new information and learning.

### Scenario D

## Investment or Incentives for Long-term Coordination with Risk Mitigated by Investment in a Continued Learning Network

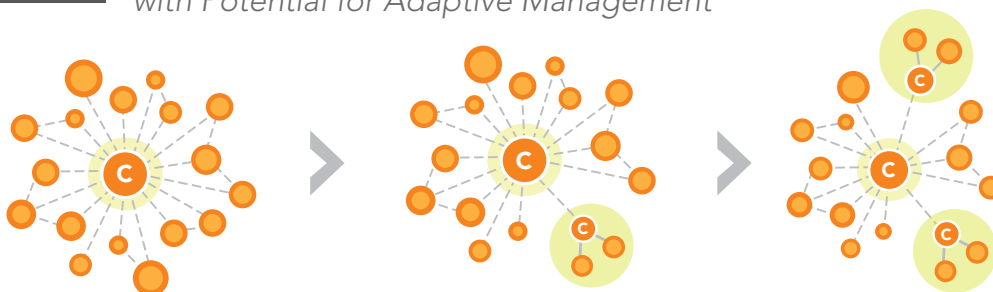


Partners create a long-term strategic action plan, but implementation funding is not secured.

A subsequent investment in the coordination of a learning network could sustain the partnership at a lower level of coordination, while building social capital for future collaboration as funding becomes available.

### Scenario E

## Investment in Learning Networks with Potential for Adaptive Management



Partners create a high-level strategic plan focused on key assumptions and learning objectives, for example centered around best practices and priority restoration strategies.

Targeted investments in convenings and communications create the potential for adaptive management and learning that could yield more robust, more impactful restoration projects even if the partnership does not tightly coordinate which projects are prioritized for implementation.

*“We want to bring in significantly larger amounts of funding into the basin if we are going to deliver on the action plan. We need to steadily increase investment in the basin for our collective work. We’ve had some early successes, but we need to continue to grow our funding base and tap into new ones.”*

*Core Partner*

*“I take a lot of pride in our work. It’s a great process that we’ve built as a partnership. Everyone is a great professional and really knowledgeable. I’ve grown as a person from participating.”*

*Core Partner*

In many if not all cases, partnerships have crafted their governance documents and strategic action plans assuming that the partnership will continue to function at a similar scale and level of coordination to complete the work needed to meet objectives. However, if significant funding is not secured for joint work, it is possible that the partners will each go their separate ways to implement restoration actions individually, in pairs or small groups based on project funding (See Figure 2, pages 24-25, Scenario C). There is a moderate to high risk that there will not be consistent capacity to keep the strategic action plan updated in a living document that captures lessons learned and adapts strategies to have the most impact.

Many partners in leadership or coordination positions have begun taking a close look at the future funding outlook, while many project managers have maintained a tight focus on their ambitious implementation schedule. Project managers have appreciated the value of the partnership and may not be questioning whether it will continue or what resources are needed to keep it going. Others who are asking questions have considered how might the focus and scale of their work be affected by their future funding outlook and to what extent will their investments in planning and governance pay off? Will partners come and go based on other funding opportunities? Will a subset of the partnership shift its focus to a different geography? These answers will be different for each partnership, and as this study finds, partner commitments will largely be driven by funding opportunities.

However, as many partners expressed, even if the partnership would dissolve in the absence of funding, over the six years of the Implementation grants or the two years of the Development grants, relationships have been strengthened, trust and learning have increased and lines of communication have opened considerably.

In the absence of sustained funding for implementation, this study suggests that a modest and well-targeted investment in maintaining the partnership as a learning network focused on convening, communications and learning has great potential to sustain the partnership at a lower level of commitment, while continuing to build social capital and a readiness for future collaboration as funding becomes available (See Figure 2, pages 24-25, Scenarios D and E). Central to this idea is the ability for partnerships to clearly define what types of learning and relationships would advance their long-term restoration vision and how targeted investments in convening and communications could yield a worthy return on investment (Brown and Salafsky 2004; Senge 2006; Wenger and others 2002)—an approach that would address the negative stigma that funders and partners often associate with loosely defined convenings with overly broad learning objectives.

A better understanding of the value propositions of different partnerships types can help partnerships and funders better target their investments in planning and set realistic expectations for short-term versus long-term benefits, which is a good transition to the second set of findings focused specifically on the FIP program.



GOLD BEACH, ROGUE BASIN PARTNERSHIP



## How can OWEB improve and innovate the FIP program to support high-performing, resilient partnerships?

**12 Streamline the FIP application process and grant administration wherever possible to boost efficiency, which directly affects partner commitment and performance.**

With respect to the efficiency of the FIP program, partners consistently suggested opportunities to streamline requirements describing the application process and grant administration as cumbersome, repetitive, confusing and requiring more time and effort than expected at multiple points along the process.

*“Once you get down to the project level proposals, there is a lot that OWEB asks of the partner coordinator in particular, and there are not a lot of streamlined processes or shortcuts to get the grants. My feedback — continue to find ways to make this more efficient.”*

*“Every OWEB grant we’ve ever gotten, we’ve been asked to do more with the same money — and sometimes even less time by the time they get the money out.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

Efficiency is important both for maintaining partner commitment, and also for maximizing the leadership, energy and resources dedicated to maintaining high performance and impact (see *Finding 10 Efficiency*).

*“You want talented people to stay around and see that things get done. When you saddle them with the nit-picky admin stuff, it is a morale killer. You don’t want to use their talent and depth of relationships and knowledge of an ecosystem and how it responds to outputs for so much admin. One of the highest priorities for OWEB is to improve on efficiency. Maybe there could be a partnership secretary at OWEB that could make the admin easier.”*

*Core Partner*

Many partners acknowledged some process steps were legal requirements, and others emphasized that the size of the Implementation grants in particular warranted a rigorous application and review process.

However even considering these points, partners suggested opportunities for streamlining, for example minimizing redundancy in the application and reducing the number of awards for each Implementation FIP grant received instead of splitting out separate grants for technical assistance, monitoring, etc. Also, if at all possible, reducing the review time between when OWEB makes a funding decision and when the funds are available. As one partner described, a three-month lag time in getting I-FIP funds was a challenge due to the seasonality and sequencing of their restoration treatments. They were able to still make progress on their work plan, but then they had excess budget that they needed to carry over to the next biennium. They appreciated that OWEB allowed carry-over, but it created more administrative work to manage multiple budgets at the same time, each with their own reporting requirements.

*“We’re managing six awards at once. That’s my main gripe that it should be easier to manage the award. Other than that, the amount of money dedicated is amazing. It does achieve our goal and have that larger impact.”*

*“The application is pretty much more work than the regular grant program with some increased flexibility and the ability to plan.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*



Another suggestion included more standardized email communications from OWEB so that partners receive regular updates and understand expectations for submitting proposals. Improving OWEB's website was also mentioned so that partners who do not have a history of working with OWEB can easily navigate and find information. In a few instances, partners described not being aware of deadlines or steps to submit proposals, for example obtaining a grantee login or not being able to easily review online applications with other partners, which caused a time crunch that affected other work or an unnecessarily delay in receiving funds. The inefficiencies related to these issues were more pronounced for people who had less experience working with OWEB and also for coordinators who had more administrative responsibilities in general.

Consistently, partners described the strengths of OWEB's leadership, organizational culture and staff as critical to helping them navigating these time-consuming and at times confusing requirements emphasizing strengths in listening, flexibility and collaborative problem-solving. However, as explained by multiple partners, more streamlining and efficiencies would go far to boost morale, capacity and impact. Partners acknowledged these near-term challenges related to efficiency and workload seem relatively small in the big picture, but their toll is significant.

*“Long-term outcomes [for the FIP program] outweigh short-term challenges, but the short-term challenges are significant – especially when it comes to unfunded bodies of work that are essential to telling the conservation and restoration story (i.e. monitoring and outreach).”*

*Core Partner*

**13** Revisit the assumption that partnerships can accelerate impact without significant funding for outreach, education and monitoring needed to proactively build public support, improve practices and tell a meaningful, science-based story of progress.

The biggest gap discussed across partnerships was the lack of funding for outreach, education and also monitoring, which are all needed to proactively build public support, improve practices and tell a meaningful, science-based story of progress.

*“It’s really important that we start with trust and relationships before trying to push projects forward. There are groups that talk, talk, talk, and they haven’t talked to the land owners. Then they are playing catch up, and the land owners are taken aback asking, what are you doing?”*

*Core Partner*

Further, without monitoring, the potential for adaptive management is weakened with less information to feed-back into the cycle of learning and adaptation.

*“Effectiveness monitoring would help us tell the story – all those numbers, costs and area treated – this is like gold, very valuable information. And if we really keep track, it’s something that can help us scale up this work.”*

*Core Partner*

While some partners recognize that OWEB has legal restrictions on the types of activities they can fund, like education, and that there are negative stigmas associated with other activities based on history and political forces, such as data collection and experimentation, these represent a key gap that limit the performance and resiliency of partnerships and ultimately their ability to reach long-term restoration goals. Partners have been thinking creatively to find ways to fund some of these gaps (See Part 1 pages 22-24).

#### RECOMMENDATION

Consider flexibility within the FIP program to fund communications and monitoring – needed to proactively build public support, improve practices and tell a meaningful, science-based story of progress – or work with other funders to address these critical gaps.

**14 Analyze the funding landscape and work with other funders to create alignment, particularly with respect to funding priorities, grant duration and reporting and monitoring requirements, that could be targeted to support a focused number of collaborative partnerships.**

Based on findings from this report, one of the best ways to support the success of coordinated and collaborative partnerships is for OWEB to more fully analyze the funding landscape and build greater alignment with other funders to create realistic scenarios for sustaining a focused number of coordinated or collaborative partnerships over longer timeframes. A more targeted approach with commitment from other funders would warrant a higher investment in planning, monitoring and adaptive management with a greater chance that a partnership would be able to maintain the focus and commitment to see an increase in performance and impact from these initial investments (See Figure 2, pages 24-25, Scenarios B and C).

*“With our monitoring approach, a three-year interval for data collection is currently funded with the I-FIP, but after that, there is no commitment to continue that monitoring. There is a big leap of faith – investment in a whole framework, approach and metrics – on the hope that after two times of measuring, someone else will pick it up. Otherwise, it is only an effort to report to OWEB. After the FIP funds go away, what is left of the partnership and the pieces that we put together?”*

*“It’s a big investment in a partnership that doesn’t have a clear future. It feels like we could use a consultant to look at that cost-benefit relationship and even bring their expertise to develop new funding sources so that people could use their time wisely – Is there something to build after this or should people start thinking about maximum use of their time?”*

Quotes from Core Partners

Ironically, despite funders general enthusiasm for collective impact and collaboration among grantees, it can be quite challenging for funders to collaborate with each other to align their investments (Thompson 2014). Yet partners consistently describe OWEB’s culture of collaboration

and progress toward funder alignment. In one instance, partners described how they brought OWEB and another funder into conversation that led to increased coordination and aligned investments. More often, funders are in a position to see the larger funding landscape and network among their philanthropic peers to explore where interests overlap (Brown and others 2016).

**RECOMMENDATION**

Work with other funders to create alignment around funding priorities, grant duration and reporting and monitoring requirements to offer complementary partnership-focused investments.

**15 Revisit the six-year limit on Implementation FIP grants and the requirement that applicants identify a full slate of ambitious projects for six years.**

Partners recognized the value in OWEB’s decision to put a time limit on the Implementation FIP grants to push partners to be disciplined about how they would use the funds and also to create opportunities for other partnerships throughout the state. While all Implementation FIP recipients were exceedingly grateful, they also encouraged deeper thinking about the implications of a six-year timeframe.

Partners consistently questioned why the Implementation FIP grants were limited to six years when different lengths of time were needed to meet different types of objectives in different ecosystems. Some partners suggested that different types of implementation grants with different durations and types of funded activities could be more targeted, for example one designed to accelerate implementation in well-studied ecosystems using commonly accepted restoration practices and another funding opportunity designed to promote learning alongside implementation, such as in ecosystems not as well-understood or where innovative restoration approaches had the greatest potential for impact. Others suggested that partner-

*“When we developed the I-FIP proposal, we asked for a lot. We needed to be ambitious, to stretch, to be competitive. What we identified as the steps were right, but we were too ambitious. Maybe we need a 4-biennium, 8-year process?”*

Core Partner

ships should be able to apply for another Implementation FIP grant to extend the six-year timeframe even if there was a waiting period before they could apply again. While many partners recognized the need to put some kind of time limit on the Implementation FIP grants, it was unclear if a fixed six-year timeline was the best approach.

Many partnerships that received a Development FIP grant and planned to submit an Implementation FIP application spent considerable time speculating about how to best segment their larger strategic action plan into a six-year set of projects that could have the most impact. Some partners questioned whether this was the best approach since they were not debating the top priority projects for the first six years of an ambitious multi-decadal plan, but the top priority projects that could yield the greatest impact after six years of implementation. This results in a subtle shift in how priorities are framed that could leave some partners without funding to advance their part of the bigger picture due to the limitation that partners working within a geography and set of activities already included in an Implementation FIP grant are not eligible to apply for OWEB's open solicitation grant program. This subtle shift seems to give an advantage to proposals and partners that emphasize dramatic, short-term wins over a slower build up to long-term wins, which may disproportionately impact small organizations, such as watershed councils, that focus on a more modest neighbor-to-neighbor approach to restoration on private lands. Small watershed councils expressed concerns along these lines (See Part 1 pages 39-41 for further discussion).

In the experience of many partnerships, the tight focus on an ambitious implementation timeline over six years reduced capacity for the partnership to maintain connection to the strategic action plan, continue updating it based on learning and develop new project ideas for future funding opportunities. Project managers and partnership coordinators had to be disciplined to ramp up quickly, sustain focus to meet benchmarks and sequence stages of seasonal work to be ready to ramp down at the end of the grant period. Many partners had limited capacity to focus on continued planning, monitoring or adaptive management except



*“Six years seems long, but in an ecological sense, it is a blip. You can barely do site prep, planting and plant establishment on one reveg project in six years, let alone see any ecological outcomes from that work. Please remember the ecological outcomes we are working towards are many years to decades ahead of us.”*

*Core Partner*

where some partners had research or monitoring responsibilities within their job descriptions, but even then, they admitted limited capacity to dedicate to the partnership without funding. In most contexts, partners recognized that sustained effort is required over a much longer timeframe, on the order of decades, to realize the ecological outcomes described in their strategic action plans.

*“No one was talking about social science three years ago. Now we are. Being flexible is important. I realize it’s not easy for OWEB.”*

*Core Partner*

*“Six years is a very short period of time speaking in terms of ecological changes. We’re taking on a huge challenge, and if we successfully get all our FIP money put to the ground and monitored, we will still be a long way from where we are going.”*

*Core Partner*

A six-year focus on implementation also seemed to keep partnerships tightly focused on the projects initially proposed in the “project pipeline” to meet ambitious timelines, which could potentially inhibit opportunities for adaptive management and increased performance over a longer timeframe. Timelines proposed for the Implementation FIP grants were especially ambitious to maximize their chances with this highly competitive grant.





In several partnerships, the question was raised whether new project ideas could be developed that might better meet objectives in the strategic action plan. While there was flexibility to change project ideas already in the pipeline, most of this flexibility was exercised when an original project idea ended up not being feasible. In some cases, sudden landowner willingness created an opportunity to move forward with a proposal, and projects already in the pipeline were shuffled around in response to these timing considerations. However, despite this flexibility, many partners described that there was no time to slow down and reprioritize projects as long as the originally proposed projects were able to move forward with adjustments. Although six years is not long in terms of the time needed to implement restoration in these systems, as some partners expressed it is a fairly long time to focus on the same set of projects without an opportunity to revisit or reprioritize based on new information. Also, partners reflected on potential challenges if there were a newly proposed project and it ended up taking funding from one already in

*“Sharing of funding always comes up. There were already pre-negotiations when we developed the I-FIP application, and then some partners wanted to change things so significantly that it became contentious in some of the meetings. It was going to change the stake that our organization had financially. If you have a strong enough partnership, those things can be pushed aside. Even if you are not benefiting as much as you hoped in this or that area, you are still benefiting overall. Funding for your organization is never number one, but it still becomes an issue.”*

*Core Partner*

the pipeline. It would likely cause jostling for position and funding among partner organizations, which could disrupt the delicate balance of commitment and buy-in established through the Implementation FIP application process.

Lastly the suggestion was raised that perhaps there could be some kind of eligibility check-in two years prior to the end of the Implementation FIP grant where OWEB could assess the scale and level of work. Partnerships would appreciate OWEB’s guidance and feedback relative to future funding options so they could decide whether to wrap up the work cleanly and ramp down or whether there might be other funding opportunities to maintain an accelerated pace for another two years, six years or more.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Meet with partnerships two years before the end of their six-year grant or at the end of their two-year grant to assess progress and help identify resources and a roadmap forward that holds the greatest value proposition.
- 2 Consider adjusting the grant duration, offering a two-year grant after an Implementation FIP grant or awarding a second six-year grant after a waiting period.

**16 Consider whether there is a more modest level of strategic planning and partnership support that would still provide value to partners if they could not secure implementation funding to sustain the idealized model of a coordinated or collaborative partnership.**

As a result of the FIP program, more restoration partnerships have formalized throughout the state and developed strategic action plans and governance documents. Partnerships have taken seriously the strategic action plan guidance provided by OWEB, which is an eligibility requirement for the Implementation FIP grant, in an attempt to be as competitive as possible. The planning guidance, which integrates concepts from the Open Standards for Conservation Practice (Conservation Measures Partnership 2013) and collective impact literature (Kania and Kramer 2011), assumes that the partnership will continue to operate as a coordinated or collaborative partnership where partners are aligned around priorities and collecting monitoring data to learn from and adapt their strategies and actions over time. While this is a comprehensive and well-respected planning framework, it requires significant capacity and investment over long timeframes to use in practice (See Figure 2 , pages 24-25, Scenario B).

By design, OWEB has awarded more Development FIP grants, which emphasize strategic action planning, than Implementation FIP grants, which emphasize on-the-ground restoration projects, with the idea that more formalized partnerships in the state with clearly articulated shared priorities will attract more funding and accelerate restoration overall. OWEB's vision is to stimulate the development of many well-organized partnerships and provide some funding for implementation. Many partnerships have formalized as a result of the Development FIP grants, while others have formalized using other resources, in large part motivated by the opportunity to apply for and hopefully get an Implementation FIP grant.

Yet across the diversity of partnerships, the outlook for long-term sustained funding is not clear. Awarding a higher number of Development FIPs to develop plans for a coordinated or collaborative partnership without knowing whether there is adequate funding for implementation creates a moderate to high risk that the investment in planning and partnership building will not reach the potential originally envisioned (See Figure 2 Funding Scenario C). For partnerships that are not able to find sustained funding, there may be frustration and hard feelings among partners and even toward OWEB for substantial time spent in planning that may not directly be translated to action. Many partnerships that were awarded Implementation FIP grants are greatly appreciative of the large grants, but still have questions about how they will raise funds to sustain their momentum toward long-term goals.

*“To take our partnership to the next level, some things would have to change — our ability to fundraise at a higher level, to share funds in a different way. An assumption I hear circulated around is that somehow capacity is built and it sustains itself. Capacity and work needs to be funded every day. When the funding stops, the work stops. None of this happens for free. This partnership has given us a lot of capacity to learn more and work together to solve different problems. It means we are likely to find more money. Our staff is so amazing, but if the funding is gone next year, then the staff are gone too.”*

Core Partner

*“We build these partnerships — don't we want them to grow into something more over these 6 years? We're working to engage new partners, all that stuff. We're building the nucleus of something really valuable, with really limited capacity to build upon it. The pace that we go determines how we are involved in other things.”*

Core Partner

These findings raise the question whether there is a more modest level of strategic planning and partnership support that would still provide value to partners even if they are not able to sustain funding to support the idealized model of a coordinated or collaborative partnership. For example, a more modest level of strategic planning might require partners reach agreement on high level strategic questions, such as what are the limiting factors for restoration or what types of restoration treatments are most likely to meet objectives, without taking the next step of prioritizing specific projects together.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Develop a more modest planning framework that would provide alignment and coordination at a high strategic level without requiring a higher level of commitment and funding to fully integrate project planning and reporting if the resources aren't there to sustain it.

Another suggestion is to make a modest investment in maintaining communications and learning, specifically for partnerships to operate as a learning network focused on specific learning objectives related to identifying strategic approaches or refining best practices for restoration. In some cases, the value proposition and impact would be maximized for a partnership to operate as a learning network over the long-term (See Figure 2 Funding Scenario E). In other cases, it may make sense for a partnership to operate as a learning network until they can raise the funds to operate as a more collaborative partnership (See Figure 2 Funding Scenario D).



*“One of the most difficult things that we’re facing right now is we need to keep up the work, the communication, the dialog, the meetings, all of that needs to continue to keep developing where we are and where we are going. We’re making a tremendous amount of headway all positive and beneficial, thanks in large part to the FIP program, but all of that takes a great deal of effort, and it is expensive.”*

*Core Partner*

#### RECOMMENDATION

Create funding opportunities and support to sustain partnerships as learning networks, especially in the absence of large-scale implementation funding.

#### **17** Consider the added costs and complexity of inclusive collaborative partnerships when providing guidance about whether partnerships should strive for an inclusive or a more focused approach.

Inclusive collaborative partnerships are often idealized for bringing greater capacity and representation of diverse interests to tackle shared priorities and increase collective impact. Inclusive partnerships can take different forms along the continuum of partnership types from an inclusive learning network, where partners come together for learning, to an inclusive collaborative partnership, where partners are aligned and coordinated to advance shared priorities (See Figure 1, page 14 Partnership Continuum). More collaborative inclusive partnerships require much greater investment in coordination, communication and onboarding, which means it may be quite challenging to find adequate funding to sustain commitment. On the other hand, sometimes an inclusive partnership is able to access new and different

funding sources because of the diversity of partners and their funding relationships.

Efficiency is also a persistent challenge for inclusive collaborative partnerships since a robust and inclusive planning process requires layers of process to invite feedback and make decisions together. These process steps create potential barriers for new partners, which ironically can create a feeling of exclusion. Inclusive learning networks, which have much lower costs and risks, focus on convening partners and promoting communication and learning. Through inclusive learning networks, partners can develop and refine best practices, identify high level priorities and build social capital for future collaboration at the project level (See Figure 2 Scenario E). This approach to inclusive partnerships may yield a better return on investment if there are limited sources to sustain funding for an inclusive collaborative partnership at the scale required.

With this in mind, OWEB may want to consider their expectation that I-FIP partnerships should be inclusive, which is articulated in the FIP rule that organizations are not eligible to apply for OWEB’s open solicitation grants if they work in a geographic area and propose activities already covered by the scope of a funded Implementation FIP grant. One suggestion that perhaps would mitigate the challenges of expecting all partnerships to be inclusive of all organizations in their geography would be to allow organizations to apply for open solicitation grants, but to ask them to explain how their proposed project uniquely contributes or complements the work of the partnership and assign a rating or point system that would give a lower rating for duplication or lack of coordination.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Revisit expectations in the FIP rules that I-FIP partnerships should be inclusive.
- 2 Provide additional funding for coordination of inclusive partnerships.



**18** Continue OWEB's much appreciated focus on listening, flexibility and collaborative problem-solving, but also realize that partnerships are cautious about sharing candid feedback and questioning FIP program assumptions, especially since OWEB is one of their most prominent funders.

Overall, partners enthusiastically praised OWEB's leadership, organizational culture and staff emphasizing listening, flexibility and collaborative problem-solving as critical to their success in the FIP program. Some partners affectionately described OWEB staff as a partner and colleague.

*"OWEB is a partner as much as a funder."*

*"OWEB has been very helpful, flexible and truly acted as a partner through the whole process."*

*Quotes from Core Partners*

Yet, for most partners, OWEB is one of their most prominent funders, and as such, they put considerable care and thought into how and when to raise questions and share feedback.

Overall, this study found that partners were cautious about sharing candid feedback about the FIP program and questioning core assumptions held by OWEB, especially when their comments might question OWEB's confidence in them as a high performing, resilient partnership. Partners seemed to hold back on several important topics, including assumptions about technical review, guidance for strategic action planning, expectations for monitoring and assumptions about funding to sustain their partnership.

Relative to technical review, some partnerships felt the process was overly cumbersome and repetitive. OWEB has worked with partnerships to customize the process to meet their needs for due diligence as a funder, while also providing value to partnerships by strengthening project proposals through technical feedback. Some partners struggled with how to provide feedback that the technical review process as structured is not the best vehicle to strengthen project proposals.

Relative to strategic action plan guidance used by Development FIP grantees, some partners struggled with OWEB's expectations of how broad and inclusive their

plan should be alongside their hopes of getting an Implementation FIP grant and their own questions about how to fund and sustain a larger effort over time. Partners did not necessarily want to raise concerns that they might not be able to sustain a large effort if their most prominent funder thought they could or should be able to.

Relative to expectations about monitoring, many partners questioned OWEB's assumptions about the capacity and expertise needed to take on responsibilities for long-term monitoring when they felt their responsibilities should stay focused on meeting the benchmarks for their ambitious implementation timelines. Some partners also referenced that historically watershed councils were discouraged from engaging in monitoring and especially research and so they questioned whether those expectations were now shifting and whether they even wanted to take on those responsibilities.

Finally, relative to assumptions about sustainability, partnerships did not want to question OWEB's optimism that they would be able to attract new funding after the end of an Implementation or Development FIP grant, yet they did have questions about where the funding would come from and what realistic options they could plan for. They did not want their success over six years to be discounted if the partnership did not continue to function in the same form or at the same scale after the end of the grant.

Findings throughout this study indicate there would be value in continuing to explore assumptions related to the technical review process, the level of strategic planning recommended, expectations for monitoring and realistic scenarios for sustaining funding. These discussions will likely continue to be challenging for funders to facilitate with grantees, and perhaps it would be more effective to convene partners and discuss expectations in broad terms without drilling down to the specific details of any one partnership.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Continue to support peer-to-peer learning among partnerships, like the FIP grantee gathering in March 2018, and opportunities to provide feedback to OWEB collectively in ways which takes the pressure off individual grantees, for example using a third-party facilitator who can help partners summarize and deliver feedback anonymously.

## Conclusion

Overall, the partnerships were greatly appreciative to OWEB for commissioning this study and for the opportunity to learn from each other alongside OWEB as part of this innovative and much appreciated funding program.

As a result of increased communication among the partnerships and OWEB throughout this project, OWEB made two offerings in response to feedback. In direct response to feedback about the lack of capacity for financial planning from Part 1 of this report, OWEB made \$15,000 available to each of the eight Development FIPs to develop a financial plan consistent with their Strategic Action Plan, including identification of funding sources and development of fundraising strategies.

Secondly, in response to an interest among the FIP partnerships to learn from each other directly, OWEB organized a gathering in March 2018 inviting representatives from the 14 partnerships described in this report plus the new cohort of partnerships that were awarded a Development FIP in the second round of funding. From the mix of presentations and discussion sessions, the question of how to sustain a partnership emerged as an important topic and one that closely relates to the findings and initial recommendations proposed here. This report represents a step along that path of exploring and addressing this question of how to support resilient partnerships for sustained performance and impact with the hope that it will continue to spark dialog among funders and partners to get to the next level.

*“A heartfelt thank you for the support OWEB has given us. And I appreciate this study. It’s a good way for the funding organizations to understand what’s going on without a bunch of bias or perceived bias. I hope some of my comments have been helpful in that way.”*

*“I enjoy the opportunity to have that cross-pollination with the other partnerships, lessons learned and all that. Continuing to come together would be well-received to keep from re-inventing the wheel.”*

*“I’m really grateful and thankful that our partnership has shown sustained success and growth — new partners and additional investment, national and even international attention. It is helping to transform how society is thinking about the bigger problem and, I think, cultivating the ground for a much larger increase in the pace, scale and quality of restoration. We are on the cusp of an orbital leap of what we are able to accomplish because of the success of this project.”*

*Quotes from Core Partners*



# Summary of Recommendations to Evolve the FIP Program

## Efficiencies

- 1 Increase efficiencies** in the application process and grant administration wherever possible
  - Reduce redundancies in the application process
  - Reduce the number of awards for each I-FIP grant
  - Reduce the wait time between funding decisions and when funding is available
  - Consider hiring an administrative support person at OWEB that could centrally take on some of the routine tasks currently handled by partnership coordinators
  - Standardize email communications, including notifications and updates related to the FIP grant administration so that all grantees are aware of deadlines and requirements for proposal submission, management of sub-awards, etc.
  - Improve the website and online application portal, especially considering first time users

## Capacity Building

- 1 Create training and mentoring opportunities** for facilitation, team building, leadership and how to manage competition.
- 2 Provide more tools and leadership training** on group dynamics and governance could so partnerships can “right-size” their governance documents, including defining roles, responsibilities and decision-making rules.
- 3 Continue exploring creative approaches** to support respectful tribal engagement and leadership.

## Funding

- 1 Consider flexibility within the FIP program** to fund communications and monitoring – needed to proactively build public support, improve practices and tell a meaningful, science-based story of progress – or work with other funders to address these critical gaps.
- 2 Work with other funders** to align opportunities to support partnerships, particularly with respect to funding priorities, grant duration and reporting and monitoring requirements.
- 3 Work with other funders** to assess the funding landscape and get a sense for how many coordinated or collaborative partnerships could be sustained throughout the state to fully implement an adaptive management approach to restoration as outlined in the strategic action planning guidance.





ROBERT WARREN

## Planning Guidance and Program Rules

**1 Consider adjusting the duration of I-FIP grants and the requirement that applicants identify a full slate of ambitious projects for six years.**

- Consider alternatives to the six-year Implementation FIP grant to provide opportunities for accelerated implementation and innovation in a variety of ecosystems requiring different time periods and different types of activities to be successful.
- Meet with I-FIP partnerships two years before the end of their six-year grant to assess progress and the funding landscape to continue operating as a partnership.
- Consider the possibility of offering a two-year grant to conclude an I-FIP or awarding a second six-year I-FIP after a waiting period.

*“OWEB could be a compelling convener for an annual conference to talk about what works and doesn’t work among the partnerships. Maybe even twice a year? To talk about all of those things that partnerships typically need at some point, latch onto that general list of needs and focus on how to solve the puzzles.”*

*Core Partner*

**2 Adjust expectations for the type of partnership and level of planning that is promoted through the Development and Implementation FIP grants.**

- Develop a more modest planning framework that would provide alignment and coordination at a high strategic level without requiring a higher level of commitment and funding to fully integrate project planning and reporting if the resources aren’t there to sustain it.
- Create funding opportunities and support to sustain partnerships as learning networks, especially in the absence of large-scale implementation funding.
  - Provide capacity for a coordinator to convene partners and facilitate communication and learning around clearly defined strategic issues.
  - Provide training to coordinators to develop effective learning networks and tell the story of their impact.

**3 Revisit expectations in the FIP rules that I-FIP partnerships should be inclusive.**

**4 Provide additional funding for coordination of inclusive partnerships.**

## Learning and Feedback

**1 Continue to support peer-to-peer learning among partnerships, like the FIP grantee gathering in March 2018, and opportunities to provide feedback to OWEB collectively in ways which takes the pressure off individual grantees, for example using a third-party facilitator who can help partners summarize and deliver feedback anonymously.**

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# Appendix – Partnership Survey

*Thank you for taking the time to share your reflections and feedback!* Even the most successful partnerships face common challenges, such as recruiting key partners and staff turnover. Performance is dynamic, with normal ups and downs expected. This study does not attempt to categorize partnership performance, but collect insights from your experience to understand what partnerships need to be resilient and how OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program can support your success.

If you are short on time, you can complete the required questions in 8-10 minutes. If you have more time, please add your comments, suggestions and examples to promote learning and sharing.

This survey is confidential. At the end, we ask for your name to keep track of who completed the survey. However, your name will not be connected in any way with your answers in the presentation of results. The summarized survey results for your partnership will be shared with you; however, they will not be shared with OWEB. OWEB will only see results that are generalized across all FIP partnerships, and FIP partnerships will have the chance to review preliminary findings.

## Questions?

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### PARTNERSHIP

**1** To what extent do you feel your partnership is actively changing and evolving or stable and established?

Actively changing and evolving      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stable and established

**2** To what extent are you satisfied with your partnership’s process to develop your strategic action plan?

Not satisfied at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely satisfied

★ *Any comments or reflections on the structure, scope or content of your strategic action plan? Any advice for groups just starting their plan?*



## CORE PARTNERS

**3** To what extent do you think the right people, organizations, and stakeholders are actively involved in the partnership, referring to the core partners that will help achieve your goals?

Lacking core partners or not active

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

All core partners involved, active

★ Are there specific people or organizations you would like to see more involved? If yes, please explain what you hope they would bring to the partnership and your thoughts about why they are not as involved as you would like.

★ Any comments or suggestions for recruiting core partners? Any advice to share with other groups?

## COMMUNICATION

**4** To what extent are you satisfied with the frequency and quality of communication among core partners for planning and coordination?

Not satisfied at all

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Extremely satisfied

**5** To what extent are you satisfied with how the partnership communicates with external stakeholders?

Not satisfied at all

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Extremely satisfied

**6** To what extent do you think core partners hold themselves and each other accountable to follow through on their commitments?

Significant gaps in follow-through and accountability

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Exceptional in follow-through and accountability

★ Any comments or suggestions to improve follow-through and accountability? Advice that could benefit other groups?

## GOVERNANCE

7 To what extent are you satisfied with the way that core partners work together to make decisions, for example deciding on the scope for the FIP grant, prioritizing grant funds, or assigning project leads?

Not satisfied at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely satisfied

8 To what extent do you think your governance documents, such as MOU, accurately reflect how partners work together and are useful in supporting your success? If you feel your governance documents are a good start, but would benefit from further development, please note that in the comments below.

Not accurate, useful      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Highly accurate, very not useful

★ *Any comments or suggestions about the usefulness of governance documents or how they can be improved to support your success?*

## VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

9 To what extent do you feel the benefits of participating in the partnership are greater than the costs?

Costs far greater than benefits      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Benefits far greater than costs

★ *Please tell us about the costs and benefits that matter most to you and your organization.*

## CHALLENGES & ADAPTATION

10 To what extent has the partnership faced external challenges that limited what you could achieve, such as changes in laws, policies, land ownership, elected officials, funding, etc.

Few, minimal changes      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Continual, extreme challenges

11 To what extent has the partnership responded well given these limitations?

Struggled to respond      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Responded extremely well

★ Please share an example of an external challenge faced and how the partnership responded.

**SUCCESS**

**12** To what extent do you feel the partnership has made good progress developing a strategic action plan and the capacity to implement it?

Limited progress with action plan and capacity      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Exceptional progress with action plan and capacity

★ Please share your reflections on what have been the key drivers of your success or lack thereof?

**13** To what extent do you feel public awareness and support are important to achieving your restoration goals?

Not at all important      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely important

**14** To what extent do you feel the public is aware and supportive of the value of the partnership’s work? If the partnership has not yet conducted the public outreach desired, please note in the comments below.

Public not aware or supportive      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Public very much aware and supportive

★ Any comments about your success with public outreach or the outreach your partnership plans to do in the future? Suggestions for how OWEB resources could help you achieve your public outreach goals? Advice for other groups?



15 To what extent were you satisfied with the FIP application and selection process?

Not at all satisfied      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely satisfied

★ Any comments or suggestions to improve the FIP application and selection process in the future?

16 To what extent have you been satisfied with the frequency and quality of communication with OWEB staff?

Not at all satisfied      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely satisfied

★ Any comments or suggestions for OWEB to improve communication?

17 To what extent are you satisfied with the FIP program as an approach to support resilient partnerships and implement ecological restoration?

Not at all satisfied      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Extremely satisfied

★ Please share any specific feedback for how OWEB can better structure the FIP program and associated funding to support your partnership's success.





EQO LOGICAL RESEARCH



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