

Partnership Learning Project – Part 1

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Guiding Questions

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?



Methods – Part 1

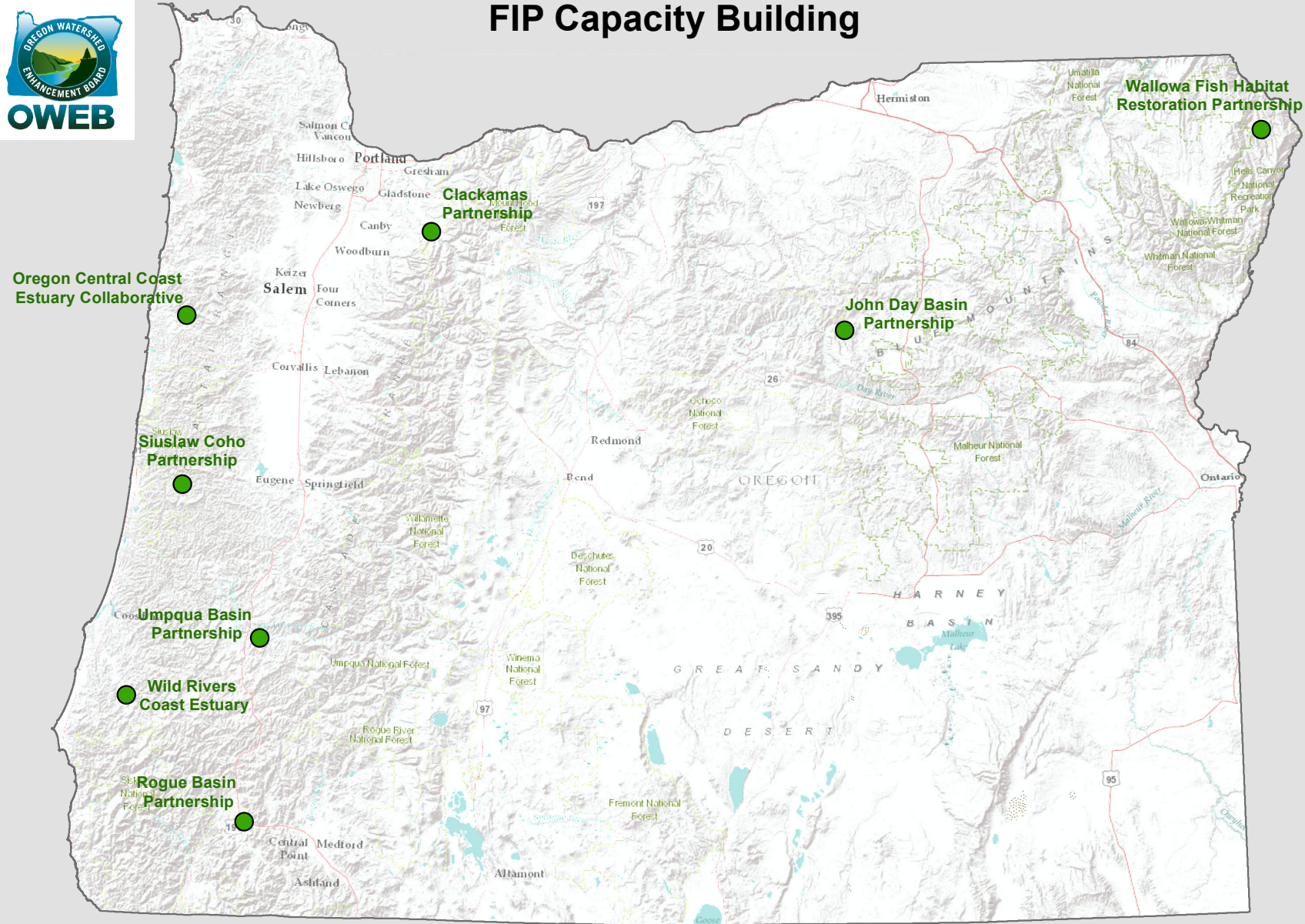
Listened and learned from 8 Capacity Building FIP grantees

8 partnership meetings | 17 partner interviews | 80 survey responses





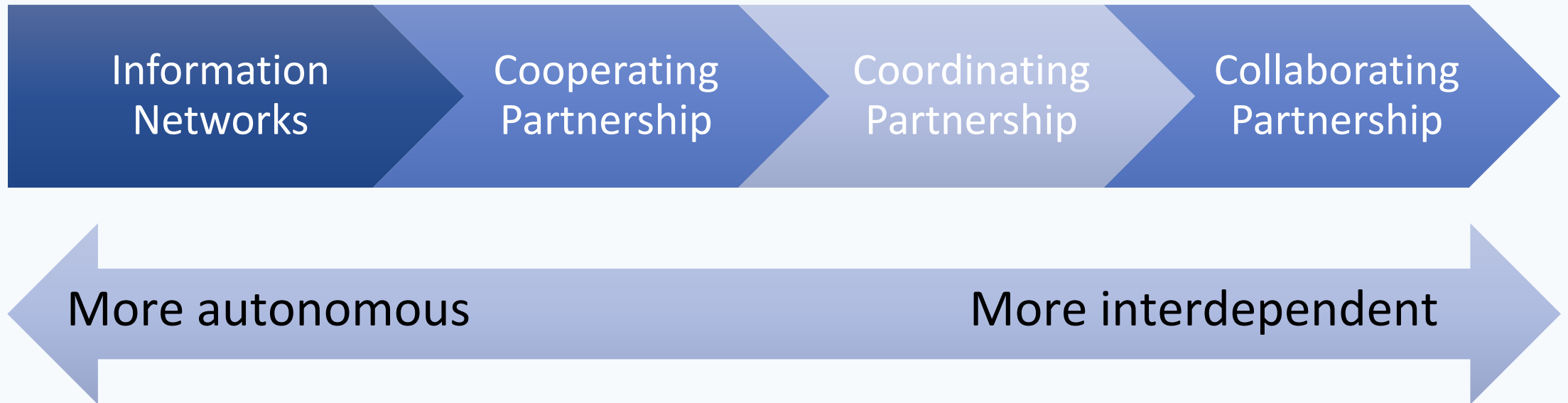
FIP Capacity Building



Funded Capacity Building Applications 2016

A Continuum of Partnership Types

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



The Value Proposition of Partnerships

“A big part of the motivation was working together in a more strategic way so that we could attract larger funding into the basin. The message was loud and clear that funders didn’t want to fund single entities focused on single actions. If we wanted to get the work done that we wanted, then we had to work in a different way.”



Findings

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



What It Takes to Build a Partnership

- Relationship building and organizational development (1-3 years)
- A cyclical process of addressing doubts and fears, reassuring partners of the value proposition of the partnership
- Leaders that emphasize listening, dialog, diplomacy and patience
- Clarity within partner organizations especially for leadership roles
- Figuring out how to make decisions together
- Capacity for coordination, governance and partner engagement



Elements of a Resilient Partnership

- Capacity to Partner
- Tribal Engagement
- “Rightsizing” Governance
- Centralized Resources
- A Smooth Transition from Planning to Implementation
- Diversified Fundraising



Capacity to Partner

“Funding for capacity is the thing that could make or break watershed-wide efforts. If you really want that long-term success, there has to be attention to the work that isn’t clearly associated with just one project. That’s what this grant allows. It is wonderful thinking ahead to provide that. The next step is how can we support the success and continuation of this effort in a way that is not project specific, but still feeding that goal of on-the-ground restoration?”



Tribal Engagement

“The general understanding of the partners – understanding of the tribe’s role – is an interesting concept. Not many people understand how the tribe manages their resources. And all tribes are different. Out of everyone in the room, the tribe has been there the longest and probably will be there the longest. The impacts will be seen and heard the longest. Having people understand our role is a challenge sometimes. And people don’t understand the tremendous landscape that we cover – multiple counties and millions of acres – as opposed to a single watershed or jurisdiction.”



“Rightsizing” Governance

Governance refers to how partners define their roles, partnership operations and decision-making.

- Governance discussions provide an opportunity for building trust and deepening relationships. Without this, partnerships are vulnerable to undercurrents of resistance and destabilizing conflict.
- Yet too much emphasis on governance can drag down a group.
- Open communication allows a group to identify what type of governance is “right” based on their history and future goals.



Centralized Resources

- GIS and IT are critical technical resources that are difficult for small organizations and even some partnerships to provide, and consultants are expensive.
- Partners suggested it would be extremely valuable if OWEB could provide GIS services at a regional level that could be broadly accessed.



Transitioning from Planning to Implementation

“Once we start having implementation money and ranking projects, it will take a different tone for the partnership. That will be challenging as the partnership changes.”

- Importance of facilitators to help partners navigate difficult conversations about priorities and funding
- Funding gaps limit key actions, such as hiring a coordinator and registering a website domain.
- Without implementation funding, partners may lose interest.



Diversified Fundraising

“What we’re really trying to get people to do is to jump boundaries and look for money.”

- Concerns about how collaborative fundraising would affect individual fundraising and how funds would be distributed
- Smaller organizations don’t have the capacity to invest more time in fundraising beyond what they already do.



Findings

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?



Overall Reflections on FIP Program

“So far this grant has worked very well. I think the secret to this success is flexibility at OWEB. Had OWEB led these grants with hard and fast prescriptions, I think success would be much lower.”

- Capacity Building FIP grant praised for its flexibility
- Grantees were more influenced by Implementation FIP guidelines
- Concerns with linkage between Implementation FIP grants and open solicitation grants



More than One Way to Be Strategic

OWEB restoration funding programs

- Focused Investment Partnership (FIP)
- Open Solicitation

Recommendation: More discussion is needed to figure out how to best link these programs (or not) and to provide clear guidance and messaging to minimize confusion and speculation among potential grantees



More than One Way to Be Strategic

Restoration Approaches

- Aim for the biggest environmental “win” by identifying priority geographies and activities and willing landowners to make it happen
- Aim for “restoration through relationships” that starts with modest environmental wins and a “neighbor to neighbor” approach to transform skeptics into champions for landscape-scale restoration

Recommendation: Provide more support to help partners respectfully discuss these different views and develop prioritization frameworks that are inclusive of the diverse partner organizations and constituencies

Overall Reflections on FIP Program

“FIP or no FIP we’re going to use our plan to leverage more money. The leverage is the plan. The better the plan the better the leverage.”



Suggested Four Phases of Support

Start-up Phase

- Relationship building, organizational development and exploring the value proposition of the partnership

Planning Phase

- Governance documents, a strategic action plan and an outreach plan

Pre-implementation Phase

- Business planning, technical assistance, launching fundraising and outreach

Implementation Phase

- On-the-ground projects, monitoring and partnership coordination
- *More feedback expected in Spring 2018 from Implementation FIP grantees*

Suggested Future Investments in Communications & Outreach

- Studies on the economic value of restoration and why it matters to the public,
- Clear messaging from these studies to launch a state-wide campaign that could be tailored at the local level, and
- Increased relationship building, particularly with local leaders and influencers with a history of skepticism toward government



Appreciation for Learning

“I was so excited to see that this [Partnership Learning Project] was part of this effort. It shows that OWEB wants to make this something that works. I am very appreciative.”

“Thank you for taking time to get feedback from the tribes.”

“Thank you for the opportunity to read and offer comments on this report prior to it being finalized. It was fascinating to learn of the similarities between these 8 partnerships.”



Thank you



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