

# Partnership Learning Project

## Part 1 – Findings from the Capacity Building Partnerships

A Report for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

In collaboration with Bonneville Environmental Foundation

Prepared by Jennifer S. Arnold, Ph.D., Reciprocity Consulting, LLC  
July 2017

Robert Warren, Crooked River



**Jennifer S. Arnold, Ph.D.**  
Reciprocity Consulting LLC  
Tacoma, WA | [Reciprocityconsulting.com](http://Reciprocityconsulting.com)

## Acknowledgments

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 our hope that this report will support your continued success.

## About Reciprocity Consulting, LLC

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 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, and effectively engaging diverse stakeholders to have a lasting positive impact in our communities and our environment.

# 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.

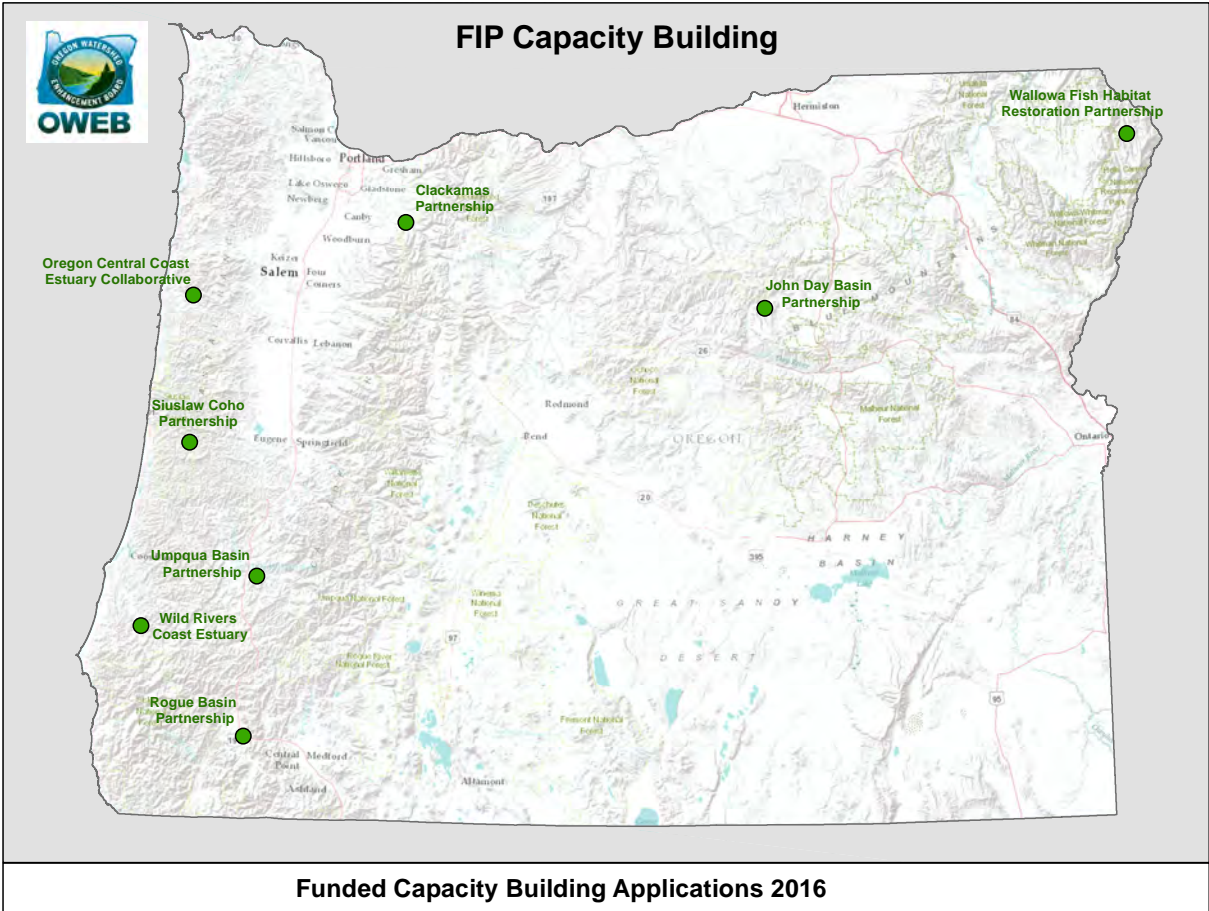
## **Capacity Building FIP Grant**

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

## **Implementation FIP Grant**

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

# Map of Partnerships





# Executive Summary



OWEB, South Coast Region, Sweet Ranch

## Executive Summary

OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program was initiated in the 2015-2016 biennium to make multi-year investments in partnerships, which demonstrated strong potential to accelerate the restoration of priority species and habitats. In January 2016, the OWEB Board awarded \$13.7 million to fourteen partnerships – eight received two-year Capacity Building FIP grants to support the continued growth and development of their partnerships and six received six-year Implementation FIP grants to support large-scale on-the-ground restoration.

By encouraging reflection among grantees, this Partnership Learning Project aims to better understand:

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

**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?**

This report presents findings from the eight partnerships that received Capacity Building grants – **Clackamas Basin Partnership, John Day Basin Partnership, Oregon Central Coast Estuaries, Rogue Basin Partnership, Siuslaw Coho Partnership, Umpqua Basin Partnership, Wallowa Habitat Restoration Partnership,** and the **Wild Rivers Estuary Partnership**. These findings were produced from attending meetings of all eight Capacity Building partnerships from October 2016 to April 2017, in-depth interviews with 17 partners, and online survey responses from 80 partners across the partnerships.

Starting in Fall 2017, the same methods will be used to encourage reflection among the six partnerships that received Implementation FIP grants. Those findings will be presented in a separate report anticipated in Spring 2018.

### Understanding the Value Proposition of a Partnership

Drawing from the public administration literature, it is helpful to think about partnerships on a continuum from **more autonomous partnerships**, where partners are loosely linked and periodically come together for information sharing or project-based collaboration, to **more collaborative partnerships**, where partners are committed to collective goals, complementary roles, and an integrated work plan.



## Continuum of Partnerships



More collaborative partnerships require greater investments in planning, governance, conflict management, and communications, but the promise is that this increased investment will strategically leverage the strengths of diverse partners to tackle more complex restoration goals more effectively (Arnold and Bartels 2014, Warren, Reeve and Arnold 2016). When organizations align and focus their efforts, they also tend to be more attractive to funders, which has been prominent in partners’ motivation for participating in the Capacity Building FIP grant.

*“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.”*

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

Most partnerships in this study have been collaborating on specific projects for many years. Through OWEB’s Capacity Building FIP grant, they have had the opportunity to build on that foundation through the development of 1) a strategic action plan that includes a prioritization framework for restoration activities, 2) governance documents that describe how partners will work together, and 3) an outreach plan that describes coordinated outreach to new partners and external stakeholders.

Reflecting on their history and how far they have come, many partners realized that one to three years of relationship building and internal organizational development were needed to solidify commitment to a collaborative effort before technical planning even began. Those groups that began strategic planning before talking about how partners would work together seemed to experience more internal skepticism and challenging group dynamics.

Throughout this early phase and even beyond, most partnerships experienced a cyclical process of addressing doubts and fears and reassuring partners of the value of working



together. Leaders who practiced good listening skills, diplomacy, and patience were able to effectively address doubts and keep the partnership unified. Partners felt stretched both within their own organization and by the partnership itself to understand how their internal goals aligned (or not) with the emerging focus, goals, geography, and funding opportunities of the larger partnership. Organizations that had recently gone through strategic planning found it easier to demonstrate overlapping interests and alignment with the broader partnership and justify their participation, for some a leadership role.

### *Tribal Engagement*

Tribes played an important role in most partnerships – taking on various roles from leaders to core partners to promising new partners. Non-tribal partners described the learning curve of understanding the complexities of tribal interests, geography, internal organization, etc. Although non-tribal partners often assumed tribes had substantial capacity to participate, the geographic scale and breadth of tribal interests were significantly greater than most partners. With a little extra support, tribes with limited capacity could more fully participate, for example commenting on planning documents, participating in joint fundraising, or getting technical training to more fully participate in project implementation. Also, the complexities of intertribal relations were difficult for non-tribal partners to understand. Developing governance documents, such as an MOU, was seen as a valuable opportunity to respectfully learn about and address partner needs, including tribal perspectives.

### *Capacity to Partner*

A common theme among small groups, such as watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land owner associations, and in some cases tribes, was limited capacity to participate. These groups expressed sincere appreciation for the capacity support provided by OWEB, while acknowledging that the collaborative work has taken more time than anticipated. If more capacity support were available, these small groups could more fully engage in the partnership's work.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

In general, it was difficult for partnerships to involve land owners, agricultural interests, and industrial forest interests at least during development of the strategic action plan. In a few cases, this was possible where well-organized land owner associations existed or where ranchers or farmers participated directly, for example as soil and water conservation district board members. In other cases, core partners worked diligently to reach out through personal networks to get some level of input from these interest groups. Most partnerships anticipated more success with engaging these interest groups once the plan was completed and the work shifted toward implementation.





### *Centralized Resources*

GIS and IT are critical technical resources, most importantly for data analysis and planning, for example to integrate climate scenarios into prioritization frameworks, but also creating maps for outreach. GIS services are difficult for small organizations and even some partnerships to provide, and consultants are expensive. Some partnerships have had success with fee-for-service agreements, where the services of a GIS specialist could be shared among partners. Others relied on federal agency partners to provide GIS services. A few partners suggested that 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*

As partnerships anticipated the transition from planning to implementation, partners described feeling nervous, awkward, and excited. A common sentiment was expressed that if planning moves too slowly or if implementation funding lags too much after the plan is complete, partners may stop showing up, and the collective effort may lose momentum. Part of the awkwardness of transitioning to implementation is that partners are expected to “put their project ideas in the hopper” and accept that the list of prioritized projects may not include their own at the top of the list.

*“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.”*

Many people felt this shift toward broad-scale collaboration wouldn't have been possible without funding for facilitators who can encourage a diversity of partners to feel comfortable participating, especially smaller organizations and younger professionals who at times have felt overpowered by well-funded organizations and senior professionals. Some partnerships selected internal facilitators, while others hired external facilitators – benefits and risks to both approaches were discussed.

Partners also found themselves caught in the transition between planning and implementation and faced with new decisions that represented uncharted territory, for example hiring a partnership coordinator or launching a partnership website before long-term funding was secured. A modest funding commitment could go far to bridge the gap between an intensive planning effort that creates the scaffolding for collaboration and the ability to attract long-term implementation funding to build out the partnership in earnest.

### *Diversified Fundraising*

Diversifying fundraising strategies was highlighted as a critical path to get more capacity for continued partnership coordination and also larger grants to more effectively advance restoration at a large scale. Strategies to diversify funding were discussed by some



partnerships, but many smaller organizations haven't had the capacity to explore other options or invest in fundraising beyond what they already do. The promise of a collaborative model of watershed restoration is that there would be centralized leadership and resources to do fundraising on behalf of the whole to distribute to partners. However, partners expressed uncertainties, concerns, and fears about how this would affect individual fundraising and how funds might be distributed. Concerns were also expressed that there are only so many potential funding opportunities for this type of work, and over time, more funding may be concentrated in partnerships and high capacity organizations.

### ***How can OWEB improve and innovate the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program to support high performing, resilient partnerships?***

Funders have played a prominent role in how these partnerships have come together, including the focus and scope of the partnership. In many cases, partners cited the Capacity Building FIP grants, which supported facilitators, staff capacity, and consultants, as the tipping point that made the shift toward collaboration possible. In other cases, partners leveraged funding from other “anchor funders” and were able to deliver a “higher quality, seamless product” because of the Capacity Building FIP grants. Partners expressed universal appreciation for OWEB’s flexibility allowing modifications to the timeline, scope, and strategic action plan template relative to partner needs.

*“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.”*

### ***Suggested Four Phases of Partnership Support***

As partners reflected on their progress with planning and looked ahead to their goals for implementation, several interesting suggestions surfaced across the partnerships that together paint the picture of how the FIP program could better support resilient partnerships through four phases of partnership support. Specifically, suggestions emphasized the need for more relationship building and organizational development upfront before technical planning began and more capacity to refine the prioritized project list and diversify fundraising strategies to more fully prepare for implementation.

*“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. We don’t have our plan fleshed out to the level that I would like. I would like to say, ‘We have these anchor habitats. Here’s what your money will buy you, and this is what we can do. Here is why it matters, and here are the projects you can be involved in.’”*



## Suggested Four Phases of Partnership Support



The pre-implementation phase in particular seems to be a missing link in the current structure of the Focused Investment Partnership Program. Once the partnerships complete the Capacity Building FIP grants, they are eager to find substantial enough implementation funding to justify continued investment of time and effort in the partnership. Most partnerships are strategically focused on developing a competitive Implementation FIP proposal, despite the reality that the Implementation FIP grant is highly competitive and open to all partnerships in the state.

*“We would definitely continue on and look for other funding if we didn’t get an Implementation FIP grant. But it would definitely help! Since we are investing a lot of our time and effort in defining what our FIP proposal would look like, it would be a shame if we didn’t get that funding source.”*

Most partnerships will not be able to get an Implementation FIP grant because of the small number of grants open to all partnerships in the state, and so a key step in supporting the resiliency of these partnerships is to provide support for them to develop a business plan that would identify a mix of potential private and public funding sources. This would allow

a partnership to layout their work plans along different timelines and pace themselves according to the potential sources of available funds.

A question that requires more discussion is whether these newly strengthened collaborative partnerships will attract new investment for restoration in the state – potentially yes especially if restoration goals are linked more broadly with economic development – or whether this approach will simply concentrate existing investments in more focused geographies and activities. If there is a chance that funding in the state will stay the same or decrease, a measure of caution is wise to avoid encouraging the growth of too many collaborative partnerships if implementation funds are not likely.

### *Communications and Outreach Investments Linked to Strategic Action Planning*

Several partners acknowledged the limitations of a highly technical strategic action plan relative to their goals for stakeholder outreach and the community support needed for project implementation. Suggestions for future investments in communications and outreach linked to the strategic action plan included: **studies on the economic value of restoration and why it should matter to people, clear messaging from these studies to launch a state-wide campaign** that could be tailored at the local level, and **general capacity for relationship building**, particularly local leaders and influencers with a history of skepticism toward government.

### *More Than One Way to Be Strategic in “Moving the Needle” for Restoration*

OWEB’s two restoration funding programs – the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program and the open solicitation program – can be used strategically to respond to different types of opportunities. They have the potential to be complementary if they are appropriately linked and the details are clearly explained to potential grantees.

Similarly, within partnerships, there are different views about what’s most strategic to “move the needle” for watershed restoration. Partners that push for the biggest environmental win tend to rely on a purely scientific approach to prioritization that makes a clear case for specific geographies and restoration activities, which is a good match for the FIP program. Partners that operate with a “restoration through relationships” approach, which some refer to as opportunistic, tend to fit well with the open solicitation program. The latter approach may have more modest environmental wins initially, but this can build trust among potentially skeptical land owners. Through a “neighbor-to-neighbor approach,” one private land owner may turn from a restoration skeptic to a champion, and as a result, an initially modest environmental win can create positive waves of opportunity throughout a basin that can lead to increasingly strategic environmental wins over the long-term.





More discussion is needed to understand how best to link the Implementation FIP and open solicitation programs – or not – to support different paths to long-term restoration. Also, more support within the partnerships to navigate these differences could facilitate the development of prioritization frameworks that better reflect the diverse partners and constituencies represented by the strategic action plans. The value of respecting these differences and working to find common ground for long-term restoration cannot be underestimated.

### **Appreciation for Learning**

From across the partnerships, people expressed appreciation for OWEB’s investment in this Partnership Learning Project to invite early feedback from grantees with a willingness to apply learning to the next evolution of the Focused Investment Partnership Program. Most partnerships also expressed an interest in repeating the survey, interviews, and observations at some point in the future to highlight their progress and any additional feedback that might emerge after more experience as a partnership. They also expressed an interest in future opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing across partnerships.



## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Common Terms</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Map of Partnerships</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Methods</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Partnerships (Capacity Building FIP Grantees)</i>	3
<i>Diversity of Partnerships</i>	3
<b>How Partnerships Work</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Findings</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Making the Shift toward Coordination and Collaboration</i>	11
<i>Value Proposition – Weighing the Benefits and Costs of Participation</i>	13
<i>Trade-offs Between Efficiency and Complexity</i>	16
<i>Engaging and Sustaining Core Partners</i>	17
<i>Tribal Engagement</i>	19
<i>Stakeholder Outreach</i>	22
<i>Transition from Planning to Implementation</i>	25
<i>Centralized Resources and Coordination</i>	29
<i>Governance</i>	31
<i>Strategies for Success</i>	33
<i>Influence of the Funder</i>	35
<b>Topics for Discussion</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>More Than One Way to Be Strategic in “Moving The Needle” for Restoration</i>	39
<i>Communications and Outreach Investments Linked to Strategic Action Planning</i>	42
<i>What is Needed to Support Highly Performing, Resilient Watershed Partnerships?</i>	43
<b>Appreciation for Learning</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendix – Partnership Survey</b>	<b>55</b>



# Introduction



Robert Warren, Harney Wetlands

## Introduction

OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program was initiated in the 2015-2016 biennium to make multi-year investments in partnerships, which demonstrated strong potential to accelerate the restoration of priority species and habitats. In January 2016, the OWEB Board awarded \$13.7 million to fourteen partnerships – eight received two-year Capacity Building FIP grants to support the continued growth and development of their partnerships and six received six-year Implementation FIP grants to support large-scale on-the-ground restoration.

By encouraging reflection among funded partners, this Partnership Learning Project aims 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?**

This report presents findings from the eight partnerships that received Capacity Building FIP grants in January 2016, including insights expected to benefit the partnerships and suggestions to adapt and evolve the FIP Program. In Fall 2017, the six partnerships that received Implementation FIP grants will be invited to share their reflections. Those findings will be presented a separate report anticipated in Spring 2018.

Partnerships are dynamic and experience normal ups and downs in performance depending on both group dynamics and external events. This project aims to consolidate insights across partnerships with the idea that learning at any point in a partnership's evolution will help paint the picture of what is needed for partnerships to be successful and resilient over the long-term.





# Methods



Robert Warren, Monitoring Juvenile Salmon Use of Estuarine Wetlands in the Columbia River Estuary

## Methods

From October 2016 to April 2017, each of the eight partnerships that received Capacity Building FIP grants were visited to observe their process and informally talk with partners. A confidential online survey was developed and sent out to the partnerships using a mix of ranking and open-ended questions asking about people’s experience with their partnership and the support needed to build their performance and resiliency (See Appendix). Phone interviews were conducted to understand the history, vision, and current activities of each partnership, including expected benefits and costs and how they managed challenges and risks. Altogether, this effort included:

- 8 partnership meetings, which lasted 3-8 hours,
- 17 confidential phone interviews, which lasted 30-90 minutes, and
- 80 confidential survey responses, including quantitative and qualitative responses.

Interview transcripts, survey responses, and meeting notes were analyzed using a qualitative approach called grounded theory, which builds theory from emergent themes (Charmaz 2006).

### Partnerships (Capacity Building FIP Grantees)

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ➤ Clackamas Basin Partnership    | ➤ Siuslaw Coho Partnership                |
| ➤ John Day Basin Partnership     | ➤ Umpqua Basin Partnership                |
| ➤ Oregon Central Coast Estuaries | ➤ Wallowa Habitat Restoration Partnership |
| ➤ Rogue Basin Partnership        | ➤ Wild Rivers Estuary Partnership         |

### Diversity of Partnerships

The eight partnerships 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 include:

- **Time that partners have worked together and known each other.** When partnerships overlap with personal friendships, past mentor relationships, and community ties, they tend to operate very well on an informal basis even with moderate levels of complexity.
- **Number and size of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts.** Complexities and competitive tensions tend to emerge when there are multiple watershed councils and soil and watershed conservation districts, especially when one organization operates at a much higher capacity in terms of staffing and success in fundraising.



- **Tribal involvement and potential for competing tribal interests.** Tribes can be a powerful ally in long-term restoration and can often help access specific funding sources. Complexities emerge with multiple participating tribes who have competing interests or a history of past conflicts, which may not be apparent to non-tribal partners, especially when intertribal relations are too sensitive to for discussion.
- **Agency involvement (state and federal) and the longevity of staff in key positions working in the focus geography.** When government staff were in key positions for many years, they acquired extensive knowledge of local geography and the institutional knowledge to mobilize resources and support for collaborative efforts. In some partnerships, they were long-standing members and key partners. Yet when agency staff were newer in their positions, they tended to lean toward a more peripheral role in the partnership, hesitant to over-commit scarce resources.
- **Regional and national environmental non-profit involvement.** Regional and national environmental non-profits tended to be able to pull in significant resources when the partnership goals overlapped with their internal priorities, specifically technical, fundraising and general capacity support.
- **Mix of urban and rural communities and proximity to large urban areas.** Partners based in urban and rural areas discussed the challenges of engaging local residents and leaders. Urban residents tended to be too busy for one more activity or commitment, while rural residents may limit their full engagement due to geographic distance or concerns about privacy. Attracting potential funders and local champions with the capacity to rally others seemed to be associated with being somewhat close to urban areas and more diverse economies. Although within large metro areas, watershed groups found higher competition for funding.
- **“Anchor” funders with an interest in the focus area.** Partnerships that had one or more large anchor funders seemed to have more capacity and flexibility to build relationships and fully engage in strategic action planning since they had some level of certainty in significant funding for implementation. These anchor funders tended to invest in specific geographies or habitats aligned with their mission and goals.
- **Mix of younger and experienced professionals.** Some partnerships notably had a broader age range, which was seen as an advantage when the full range of partners actively participated. Younger professionals offered fresh perspectives and an ability to connect with younger constituencies, while senior professionals provided valuable institutional and content knowledge.



- **Prior experience with strategic planning and/or collaborative groups.** Partnerships benefited when one or more partners with a leadership role had past experience with strategic planning and/or leading collaborative groups.
- **Prior experience contributing to the development of OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership Program.** Many partnerships had one or more people who actively participated in the development of the FIP program or submitted comments during the public process. These partners described how their early involvement inspired them to see how they could operate in a different way and have impact at a different scale. This inspiration created a sense of vision and persistence to counter the tedious pace of planning and the sometimes challenging work of partner engagement.
- **Geographic scope and breadth of activities covered in the strategic action plan.** Partnerships with a more focused geography and scope tended to have a smaller set of partners that were used to working together and comfortable with the scope. However, most partnerships expanded their geography and/or scope to some degree from previous planning efforts.
- **Rules defining “membership.”** Some partnerships intentionally started with a small, well-defined group of partners, while others sought the full range of potential partners from the beginning, which created more work but also more energy and new ideas. Some partnerships struggled with the slower pace of working with a bigger group in scheduling meetings and working through complex topics, and these worked to define representatives and tiers of participation. Tiers of participation, including working groups defined by geography or interest area, were also adopted by many groups to provide opportunities for engagement that matched partners’ interests and ability to participate.
- **Degree of formalization of the partnership structure.** Smaller partnerships where most people had a long history of working together tended to operate more informally relying on contract terms and letters of agreement to define roles and expectations among partners. Groups that were larger or tackling more complex issues or scope tended to invest time early in their process to formally define roles and expectations for decision-making and communication, for example in MOUs or partnership manuals.



A large flock of snow geese is captured in flight against a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise. The birds are silhouetted against the warm, golden light of the low sun, which creates a strong contrast and highlights the intricate patterns of their wings. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and the overall scene conveys a sense of vastness and natural beauty. The title text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

# How Partnerships Work

Robert Warren, Snow Geese Near Burns, Oregon

## How Partnerships Work

**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, 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 leadership, funding, 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 (Arnold and Bartels 2014, Warren, Reeve and Arnold 2016).

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 (Cigler 1999; Mandell 2001).

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 (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.

## A Continuum of Partnership Types



- **Information 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, sometimes referred to as the collective impact model (Kania and Kramer 2011, Christen and Inzeo 2015).

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.

Notably it may seem counterintuitive that as partnerships become more collaborative, individual organizations may experience greater risk since the ideal of a collaborative model is that “all boats rise on a rising tide.” However, as individual organizations commit to each other and the greater whole, the success of the partnership’s vision may require that individual organizations change their internal operations and priorities to benefit the

greater whole. In some cases, organizations may be ready and willing to make these changes, while in other cases, such changes may represent a risk that the organization is asked to fundamentally shift or in some cases even dissolve or merge with others to realize the larger vision of the partnership. In these cases, individual organizations risk losing their self-determination, possibly even their identity as an organization.

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, for example to maintain a high level of communication and coordination given costs for travel, meeting time, etc., and
- Maintaining the interest of the private business sector considering that businesses often prefer to maintain independence and restrict sharing proprietary information to protect their economic bottom-line and competitive advantage in the market place (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 an information network or cooperative partnership, and the expected value of a more complex, collaborative structure does not offset the greater 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).



A scenic landscape photograph showing a river valley. In the foreground, a dirt path leads up a rocky, sparsely vegetated slope. The middle ground is dominated by a dense forest of evergreen trees. A river flows through the valley, surrounded by more trees. In the background, there are high, rugged, reddish-brown rock formations under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The word "Findings" is overlaid in large white text on the left side of the image.

# Findings

Robert Warren, Crooked River



# Findings

## Making the Shift toward Coordination and Collaboration

Most of the partnerships included in this study have had a long history of successfully operating project-based cooperative partnerships that have now evolved into a broader interest in working together more formally, collaboratively, and over a longer timeframe.

*“Our partnership has evolved over time, not quite sure why it’s been successful. For some reason, we’re just better together than we are apart. The FIP process is very timely to help us work at a higher level – almost like we’ve graduated from high school, and now we get to be an adult.”*

*“It’s easy to end up in silos of excellence. We’ve had great partnerships between organizations, agencies, and the tribe, but it’s individuals working in silos. This is new that we’re all getting together and talking about the basin as a whole.”*

*“I said, ‘Hey, would everyone like to get together to form a partnership? A basin partnership would be helpful for the resource.’ They said, ‘We don’t know what it means yet, but yes, we’re interested.’”*

Looking at the events leading up to a group’s decision to shift toward collaborative work at a broader scale, several themes emerged relative to the timing and conditions or “readiness” of partners to move in this direction. This “readiness” was complemented by a good dose of serendipity such as the opportunity to leverage multiple funding sources just at the right time.

### “Readiness” to shift toward collaborative restoration:

- **A history of strong relationships among partners and local leaders**, most commonly project-based cooperation, where partners contractually agree to different tasks to complete a project, and sometimes coordination between organizations, where they align their missions and jointly agree to take on complementary roles,
- **Leadership**, most commonly one or more people who see a strong value proposition in collaboration, who can persuasively share that vision, and who have the organizational capacity and personal interest to try this new way of working,
- **Internal strategic planning** completed by partner organizations that points to broader goals than what their organization can accomplish alone and recognition of how those goals overlap strategically with other potential partners,



- Past positive **experiences with collaboration**, especially among the leadership of partner organizations who can share wisdom and provide support,
- A **personal affinity** expressed by leaders for relationship building, listening, serving as a liaison among partners, managing tough conversations, and strategic planning,
- **Foundational planning documents, watershed data, and analysis tools** that provide a launching point for more comprehensive, integrated restoration planning,
- **Unique funding opportunities** that provide flexible support for facilitation, partner capacity, and consultants as needed to work in this way, for example from OWEB, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Oregon Water Resources Department, Bonneville Power Administration, The Nature Conservancy, etc., and
- **Inspiration** from personal contact with potential funders or successful collaborative groups that planted the seed for how this approach could lead to greater funding, effectiveness, and impact.



## Value Proposition – Weighing the Benefits and Costs of Participation

As conveners brought potential partners together to envision what this new way of working together would look like and to explore the potential benefits and costs, they often used the “carrot” of attracting more, stable, long-term funding.

*“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.”*

Yet this potential for funding speaks to different partners in different ways – not all partners feel they will be able to access funds leveraged by the partnership and they feel the strength and strategic focus of the partnership may outcompete or eclipse their priorities.

*“The challenge is to create opportunity without trumping somebody’s ability to compete for funds.”*

For some, the partnership approach creates uncertainty and risk that if their organization’s mission, goals and activities do not align with the larger partnership then they may be less competitive for funding or even cut out of some opportunities like OWEB’s open solicitation grant program.

*“This partnership approach stretches people. It really does.”*

As partners considered the potential benefits and costs, people felt stretched both within their own organization and within the partnership itself. Each partner organization was stretched to understand how their internal goals aligned (or not) with the emerging focus, goals, geography and funding opportunities of the larger partnership. Organizations that had recently gone through strategic planning found it easier to demonstrate overlapping interests and alignment with the broader partnership and justify participation or even a leadership role. As the scope and focus of the partnerships evolve through the planning process, many partners struggled with where their organization fit in and how much time they should invest, especially when a partner might be involved in multiple collaborative planning efforts.

*“It is a risk how the partnership defines projects and how they are prioritized. I have to ask – Is this worth my very limited time and funding? I am not going to be able to justify being a part of this collaborative if [our geographic area] isn’t prioritized until many years later, which is hard. I totally see the value in it and the value of all of our ideas and expertise contributing to it. The reality is I don’t think that will work for [small organizations].”*

Many core partners whose organizations closely align with the partnership have found themselves investing considerable energy to engage their leadership and boards, especially over the first few years of a broader collaborative partnership. They have had to continually reassure and remind board members of the expected value and how it aligns with their internal mission and goals. They have also regularly addressed fears, such as “mission creep” and the potential for reduced funding opportunities if their organization does not align well with the partnership’s priorities or if the partnership does not attract additional funds.

To help the partners stretch into the partnership, leaders and conveners have invested considerable time to reach out to potential new partners and keep skeptics on-board. Many people described this as a cyclical process that comes in waves of doubt or fear and that requires continual patience to remind and reassure people of the added value of working together and steps taken to manage risks. People taking on this leadership role in the partnership or their organization must have the capacity to feed and nurture those relationships and align expectations.

*“We have had a lot of bumps in the road where member organizations aren’t happy about a particular decision. We have to navigate those little flare ups from time to time.”*

Participation has required an investment of time and capacity to attend meetings, follow up on action items, and review and comment on collaborative documents, which has often taken far more time and capacity than people initially realized. For organizations with limited capacity or with interests in multiple partnerships, this has meant that they may only attend meetings or track progress through email. The value they get from the partnership is limited if they do not have the capacity or technical background to review and comment on partnership documents and assert their own internal priorities. Yet without participating, they risk being left out of potential opportunities.



*“I come from a watershed council, and with a staff of one, I do everything. Taking the time to be there is really hard for me. The only reason I continue to do so is that the decisions will continue to affect me whether I am there or not, and also it’s so well run that it’s worth my time.”*

*“It would be helpful to have more funds for the councils to support their time and expenses. There may be other partners, groups that may be better able to participate if there was greater funding – in recognition of what it takes. And soon, we’ll be able to report out what it did take.”*

Some of the partnerships have actually considered whether they may eventually function as an information network at a large scale including the full range of partners, while a smaller sub-group of partners, who have more tightly aligned missions, goals, and geographical focus, may operate as a coordinated or collaborative partnership seeking out funds for focused work in a particular portion of their focus area. This speaks to the value proposition associated with a lower level of investment as an information network that can still yield significant value in terms of sharing expertise, influencing restoration approaches, and reporting on activities and effectiveness.

*“From my perspective, [the partnership] brings a lot of interest from agencies and outside that we might not have if we were just at the sub-watershed level, a lot more expertise and support. I feel like I have more people I can go to for advice. I know they are there, but being part of the group, I feel like they are more accessible to me.”*

*“Just the expertise in the room is incredibly valuable, to hear and learn about what worked and didn’t is hugely valuable. Surprisingly, we don’t have a lot of forums where we sit down and talk about those things.”*



## Trade-offs Between Efficiency and Complexity

Some partners viewed this shift toward broad-scale strategic planning as a step toward efficiency, especially those partners who had experience doing this type of planning in other geographies. However, in most cases, partnerships took on more complexity, which was beyond what they had done previously and ended up extending their timelines and budgets. This extra effort was considered reasonable as it was expected to yield results.

### Dimensions of increased complexity beyond past planning efforts:

- Expanding to include **new partners** such as additional watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, tribes, or government agencies who may see the issues and strategic focus differently,
- Broadening the focus to include **multiple fish species**,
- Broadening the focus to include **uplands in addition to in-stream habitat**,
- Focusing on **complex habitats**, such as estuaries, that require specialized technical expertise,
- **Expanding the geography** to include areas that have not been the focus of restoration activities in the recent past,
- **Combining multiple basins**, in some cases with different geology and hydrology, and
- **Expanding prioritization frameworks** to include social and economic considerations in addition to ecological factors.

## Engaging and Sustaining Core Partners

The diversity of core partners has contributed greatly to the strength and resilience of the partnerships.

*“Each partner has different strengths, different ways of doing things, and different abilities.... The partnership tries to play to everyone’s strengths.”*

Core partners have included:

- Watershed groups,
- Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs),
- State and federal agencies, including land managers, regulatory entities, researchers, and funders),
- Environmental advocacy groups,
- Tribes,
- Power utilities,
- Funders,
- Local government entities, and to a lesser degree
- Land owner associations,
- Agricultural interests, and
- Industrial forest interests.

Some patterns emerged across partnerships related to how these different types of partners participated and engaged. In general, it was difficult for partnerships to involve land owners, agricultural interests, and industrial forest interests at least during development of the strategic action plan. In a few cases, this was possible where well-organized land owner associations existed or where ranchers or farmers on Soil and Water Conservation District boards participated directly. In other cases, core partners worked diligently to reach out through personal networks to get at least high-level input from colleagues. Most partnerships anticipated more success with engaging these interest groups once planning efforts were complete and the work shifted toward implementation.

A common theme among small groups, such as watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land owner associations, and in some cases tribes, was limited capacity to participate. Modest capacity funds from the Capacity Building FIP grant were greatly appreciated and allowed these smaller groups to participate.

*“We need capacity for sure, and that’s hard to come by. It’s really been helpful that we’ve had some reimbursement for our participation, especially for a small organization like ours. More of that would be helpful.”*



In a few cases, it seemed that processing travel reimbursements and stipends might be more time-consuming than expected, which kept people from submitting invoices for various reasons. Perhaps this could be an area that partnerships could share best practices to streamline internal processes.

Agency staff took on a breadth of different roles depending on agency priorities, the longevity of specific staff in an area, and the flexibility staff had in their work schedule to dedicate to partnership activities. In some partnerships, agency staff took a lead technical role or had the longest personal experience working in a partnership. In other partnerships, agency staff only felt comfortable playing a supporting role and explicitly did not want to be a decision-maker or “member.”

Another common theme was tension between organizations with a tightly focused environmental mission and funding sources dedicated to that mission, such as environmental advocacy groups and some government agencies, and soft-money organizations with broader missions reflecting diverse constituencies, such as watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts.

*“[The SWCD] faces constant pressure to do more from others, and we are really limited on funding. We have managed to avoid being pulled into a lot of the politics, while still getting funding to do our work. It is important to not take a super hard stand on any one issue as nothing is black and white.”*

These two types of organizations often had different ideas of what they considered “strategic restoration” based on their missions, their constituencies, and their funders. Tensions, discomfort, and competitiveness came to the surface when developing a shared vision for restoration and a shared framework for prioritizing projects. To maintain a broad partnership that has the core partners needed for implementation, some partners recognized the importance of respectfully working through these differences to maintain engagement.

Most partnerships recognized stronger relationships with core partners as one of the early accomplishments of their collaborative planning efforts, in some cases yielding new joint fundraising opportunities or other near-term benefits. In other cases, core partners have felt unsure or skeptical about their future involvement, which is expected especially during this early planning phase as each partner considers their value proposition relative to the evolving scope and focus of the plan and related funding opportunities.

## Tribal Engagement

Most partnerships value tribes as strategic partners and seek their full engagement, yet most non-tribal partners experience a learning curve to working with tribes, which is why this section of the findings is expanded.

*“Historically, the tribes have not been key partners. In fact, the tribes have been so opaque to so many of us in terms of an organization and an entity to work with. Now, in the last year, there has been an incredible growth in their engagement. We have really tried to bring them in. Now all of a sudden, they are pushing from their end as well.”*

In these eight partnerships, tribes take on the full range of roles:

- A **convening or leadership role** because of the tribe’s deep interest in natural and cultural resources,
- An **intermediary role** bridging perspectives and building relationships because of their triple bottom line approach to social, environmental, and economic sustainability that resonates in different ways with conservationists, resource users, and forest industry,
- A **core partner** actively engaged, making comments, and taking on responsibilities,
- A **new or peripheral partner**, learning about the partnership, tracking progress, and waiting for opportunities where partnership activities intersect with tribal priorities and merit more involvement.

Many non-tribal partners unintentionally underestimate the sensitivities and complexities of working with tribes. However, they are open to learning and changing as they gain more appreciation, which can have a huge impact on promoting fuller engagement. Yet it can also be draining for tribal partners who are regularly placed in the role of explaining the full breadth of tribal perspectives, often in a short amount of time.

*“What I learned, in the future, we need to sit down with the tribe when we get a draft and make sure the wording and the content is going to be satisfactory so they’re not going to be surprised.”*



*“The general understanding of the partners – understanding 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.”*

Tribal partners discussed a range of complexities that are often not well-understood by non-tribal partners, but that heavily influence their interest and ability to engage in broader partnerships.

**Complexities of tribal participation not often understood by non-tribal partners:**

- The **vast geography of aboriginal territories** relative to their capacity and staffing and how that may overlap or touch on aboriginal territories or reservations of other tribes,
- **A broad range of tribal interests in natural resources** from protection of culturally important sites and restoration of fish populations to specific issues of accessing natural resources for cultural uses or managing tribal industrial forest operations,
- **Legal standing in resource management**, including concepts of treaty rights, co-management, sovereignty, and government-to-government relationships with federal entities,
- **The structure of tribal government** and the process needed to gain approval or feedback from tribal leadership, and
- **Conflicting interests between tribes**, which may complicate communications and the ability to participate together in a collaborative partnership.

The opportunity with these partnerships is to reach out genuinely to tribal partners and take the time to ask and learn about their interests.

*“We do a lot of outreach to talk about our history, who we are, our culture, and what my department does so that people really understand where we’re coming from. I think there needs to be more of an introduction like that for the partnership. Maybe it would be helpful to have set-aside time for each partner to discuss what their priorities are in general and talk about their organization. I know we say, ‘Oh we already know all of that.’ But there’s always new staff. For the tribe, it is a regular recurring problem. People don’t know what we do, where our land base is, what we care about. They just don’t get it. I just did a presentation again for the National Forest. They are a federal agency so you would think they would understand what we do, but they were so happy to have this presentation. I don’t know exactly what this would look like. It would definitely be valuable for the tribes to have that opportunity in this partnership.”*

Partners highlighted the value of getting to know other partners’ interests as a key step in the early formation of the partnership. The process of developing partnership governance documents, such as a charter or MOU, and inviting tribes to comment and sign on can be an extremely valuable opportunity to listen and reframe partner roles in ways that respect tribal culture, history, and legal standing. Defining the scope and setting goals can also be an important time to draw out those interests, for example several partnerships included lamprey when defining their scope, which is a non-listed native fish of particular cultural significance to tribes. These opportunities for learning may come up at any point in planning or implementation when key decisions are made or when new partners come to the table. By taking tribal interests seriously and incorporating them into the partnership’s activities, non-tribal partners can make great progress with tribes building trust, learning how to work together effectively, and building momentum for long-term engagement.

*“One tribe had some reps participating in our meetings, but maybe not the right ones. When they took the MOU and [partnership documents] in front of their tribal council, the council said, “What is going on?” They sent a letter with detailed questions and asked for representation from all the tribes on the steering committee. The steering committee got together in what I thought was a very thoughtful process and agreed to make those changes. Then the tribe was fine with it, and they signed the MOU. It was a very successful route to deal with those concerns.”*



On a final note, tribal and non-tribal partners reflected on the tribe's capacity to do this work. Although tribes often have multiple staff in their natural resources department, the geography and breadth of issues they cover is often far greater than that of other partner organizations and the partnership itself.

*"If I'm participating in this I can't participate in something else or do something that is maybe more culturally relevant. The mission of our department is really diverse. It includes artifact protection, cultural events, and camps. I always have to ask myself what am I gaining through this participation."*

This point is often not fully explored relative to the mismatch between the desire to have tribes fully engaged in partnerships and the capacity for them to do so. One tribal partner suggested that if OWEB was willing to extend capacity funding to tribes similar to what they do for watershed councils, they could greatly increase their ability to participate more fully in partnership activities – from commenting on planning documents to joint fundraising to getting technical training for staff to more fully participate in implementation of projects.

### Stakeholder Outreach

Most partners felt public awareness and support are important or very important to achieving restoration goals, especially on private lands and arguably less so on federal lands. Many partners commented on the risk of "surprising people down the road" referring to the fear that people will push back against the plan if the first time they hear about it is when they are faced with a project proposal that they don't like. Yet people also recognized that the planning process is too slow and detailed for most land owners and community members to participate.

*"It's really tough to engage land owners in this strategic action planning process (laughing). That's where you lose them. It's so detailed. They don't have time to come to meetings like that. Once you get past planning, that's when you get the land owners engaged. When you have some specific tangible things you can offer them, whether educational workshops or funding for projects, or getting them involved in community meetings that actually get them toward them something. In the planning process, you lose them."*

Some partnerships developed an outreach plan early in their planning process identifying the objectives, timing and approaches to engage and communicate with key audiences, while others have put more time into technical planning before getting into the details of an outreach and communications plan. In some cases, partners have conducted their own



stakeholder analysis and outreach planning, and in others, communications consultants have developed outreach plans and even facilitated some stakeholder engagement.

Some partnerships have focused first on broad education and relationship building, while others sought high-level input on the action plan from key stakeholder groups. At the time of this report, partnerships are at varying points in implementing their outreach activities.

### Planned Outreach Activities

- **Personal outreach** to individuals to let them know about the plan and get feedback,
- **Public gatherings** to get high level input on the partnership's vision,
- An open invitation for the **public to attend partnership meetings**,
- Development of **shared talking points** so that partner organizations can speak to different audiences with a coordinated message, for example in their board meetings, newsletters, county commission meetings, etc.,
- **Listening sessions** with community leaders and influencers to understand interests, potential misperceptions, and opportunities for messaging,
- **A land owner survey** to get input and inform people of the planning effort,
- **A public website** for the partnership,
- **A public campaign** including short compelling videos and information displays,
- **Science summits** open to the public,
- **Townhall meetings** to get feedback from land owners on the draft action plan, and
- **Presentations on the final plan** for the public, county commissioners, funders, etc.

The most challenging stakeholder groups for partners to engage and the ones that are most important for implementing restoration projects on private land are private business interests, such as farmers, ranchers and industrial forest operations. Several partnerships described diligent efforts to thoughtfully reach out, but still with limited success. The most promising touch points to some of these important groups include:

- Reaching the **farming and ranching community** through Soil and Water Conservation District board members,
- Reaching **private land owners** through land owner associations where they exist to address issues, such as fuels reduction, riparian restoration, and weed management,
- Reaching **rural residents** through Forest Protection Associations and the potential for generating support through local jobs created by restoration projects, and
- Reaching **industrial forestry companies** through tribal forest enterprises.





Where these personal connections exist, there is a far greater potential for engagement. However, in most cases, the value proposition for private land owners and businesses may still not be great enough to warrant their involvement in planning. Those partners emphasized that valuable input can still be gained by speaking individually with key stakeholders and bringing their interests back to the partnership.

As a final note, in many watersheds, a contentious history has created especially challenging circumstances to engage people in a collective discussion about priorities for restoration and build trust in a shared strategy. In some cases, partners at the table are currently involved in litigation, for example between tribes and agencies. People in these situations remarked that they tend to work well together at the staff level even when things are tense among upper management. In other cases, private land owners have long-standing “problems with the G word,” specifically the role of government, misperceptions about watershed councils as governmental entities, and concern about losing private property rights in the name of restoration. Some partners talked about strategies to address this “negativity” and prevent it from spilling over into the partnership’s work, including field trips to unpack assumptions about land management, personal outreach to explain and accept responsibility for projects that weren’t successful, and neighbor-to-neighbor approaches that highlight the multiple benefits possible with restoration projects developed in collaboration with private land owners. Several partners also suggested that OWEB and the state could play a larger role communicating the economic contribution of restoration, for example job creation, improvements to farms and ranches and clean water.

*“At the end of the day, we can only be successful with WILLING landowners, and there are pockets of resistance due to anti-state, anti-federal lands, and anti-conservation sentiments. If OWEB and the State could help craft better economic studies regarding the economic value of conservation and communicate those for us, that would be helpful. We need CLEAR messaging on the economic value...that's the most effective way to turn peoples' minds toward conservation.”*

## Transition from Planning to Implementation

As partnerships anticipated the transition from planning to implementation, “where the rubber meets the road,” partners described feeling nervous, awkward, and excited about implementation. A common sentiment was expressed that if planning moves too slowly or if implementation funding lags too much after the plan is complete, partners may stop showing up, and the collective effort may lose momentum. Thus, decisions about the desired complexity, scope, and level of detail in the plan are all critical considerations to increasing the chances for effective 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.”*

*“I’m excited about it. I look forward to the implementation money. Planning is tough for folks. We’ve been meeting for almost two years now. We keep going without funding. I’m looking forward to moving through to implementing projects.”*

Part of the awkwardness of transitioning to implementation is that partners are expected to “put their project ideas in the hopper” and accept that the list of prioritized projects may not include their own at the top of the list. The success of this process requires that partners buy-in to the prioritization framework, which establishes alignment and emphasizes transparency as a means to build trust. In practice, it brings competition for funding and power dynamics to the surface. Some partnerships slowed down when they got to the step of requesting project proposals for the list.

*“We’re still working on the list of projects. Yeah, that’s awkward. We work in such a crazy, weird competitive environment and in really small communities. Talking about projects and people you work with is not something we normally do a lot of for various reasons. There might be potential push-back from other organizations who think we shouldn’t receive funding because our projects don’t have enough of an environmental win – even though those are the projects that work in our area. Some of those people sit on review teams. You don’t want to have all your cards on the table in this competitive environment.”*

Many people acknowledged that it is critical to have a facilitator at this step – either an internal partner or an external consultant – someone that has the trust of all the partners and can help navigate challenging conversations and power dynamics. Some partners proudly commented on the effectiveness of their internal facilitator, while others were greatly appreciative of an outside consultant.

*“It is helpful to have a consultant work with all of us as partners because no one of us has the time or what would appear to be the objectivity. It’s good to have an outside source be able to balance the interests and feed it back to us so we can agree.”*

*“[Our internal facilitator] communicates expectations really well and follows up with people – makes us realize that our time is worth it, and we follow through. We are all incredibly busy and so contributing to this is a big deal. The way we walk through this planning exercise is really regimented and so well organized. That makes it strategic and focused. I’ve also been a part of collaboratives that have a contractor as a facilitator. It is really helpful that [our facilitator] is in the know. It’s to our advantage.”*

Many people felt this shift toward broad-scale collaboration wouldn’t have been possible without funding for facilitators who can encourage a diversity of partners to feel comfortable participating, especially smaller organizations and younger professionals who at times have felt overpowered by well-funded organizations and senior professionals.

*“[Our facilitator] pulls people back when we need to stay focused. It’s frustrating, in collaborative groups like this, to have someone not acknowledge your statements and restate them in their own words. As a young female in this field, it is hard to be taken seriously. I’ve worked really hard, and I have the experience and education to get where I am. [Our facilitator] sees that and has class in how to deal with it.”*

Other people emphasized the value of a facilitator to advance the work in between meetings by following up on action items and incorporating people’s comments into collaborative documents.

*“When you’re doing strategic planning, it’s just hard to find the time to do it in between all of the other work that has to get done.”*



It is challenging to find time to dedicate to a strategic planning effort or management change within an organization. Within a partnership, it is all the more difficult for organizations to prioritize their staff time and limited capacity to a strategic planning effort that may or may not have significant overlap with their organizational mission and goals. It is even more critical to dedicate resources to facilitation for a collaborative planning effort. This goes back to the value proposition that each partner considers as they decide the extent of their participation. Having the funds for a facilitator can provide that valuable glue to hold people together long enough to solidify the partnership's focus and commitment from partners who can then contribute more fully to effective implementation.

*“Having that person, your facilitator, hand-holding your partnership before they can walk on their own is extremely important.”*

Internal facilitators can be extremely effective, especially when they are self-aware of their role and their influence on the group. Several internal facilitators noted that a culture of professional dialog and open channels for feedback can go far in minimizing the risks associated with internal facilitation.

#### **Risks Associated with Internal Facilitation:**

- An internal facilitator could be seen as **favoring one partner or sub-set of partners** over another that could create division and strife, potentially limiting the partnership's ability to work at a broader scale,
- An internal facilitator could assert their professional expertise or knowledge of the planning tools to **steer the prioritization framework** in a certain way that aligned with their priorities but not necessarily those of other core partners, and
- An internal facilitator could facilitate a process with such a strong leadership style and vision that the process becomes **unwelcome to different points of view or new partners**, called “founder's disease” when the internal facilitator is also the group's founder, which limits the resilience of the effort after the founder can no longer play a leadership role.



In contrast, external facilitators may be more easily seen as an advocate for all partners, but they may not understand the local context or technical content as well as an internal facilitator. There are also different types of consultants that could serve different facilitation roles depending on the partnership's needs, for example, technical planners, organizational development consultants, and communications specialists. Partners described the importance of managing risks associated with an external facilitator by providing opportunities for group feedback and providing oversight and guidance through a sub-committee or leadership team that includes multiple partners with different perspectives.

### **Risks Associated with External Facilitation:**

- A partnership could **“fast track” the selection of an external facilitator** due to lack of time to research options or set up a selection process, which may lead to contracting with someone who is not a good match for the partnership's needs,
- An external facilitator could **impose their own planning tools or approaches** that may take the plan in a specific direction that does not reflect the interests or buy-in of all core partners, and
- Partners could **rely too much on an external facilitator to write the plan**, which may result in a technically sound plan that has very limited input or buy-in from partners.

Overall, partners acknowledged there is still much to learn as they proceed toward implementation. For those skeptics of the collaborative planning process, many felt the list of prioritized projects may not look that different from the projects people would have proposed without a plan. Each partnership has been navigating the challenges unique to their planning process to build that clarity, confidence and commitment among core partners and funders. Partners appreciated the opportunity to learn from each other and the partnerships awarded Implementation FIP grants so that they may better prepare to attract funding and shift toward implementing their strategic action plan.



## Centralized Resources and Coordination

Referring back to the continuum of partnership types, partnerships structured as information networks typically come together informally with limited centralized support. For cooperating partnerships, partners come together according to specific roles and responsibilities for a specific time period, for example defined contractually in terms of projects, deliverables, and timelines. In these cases, it can be fairly straightforward for one organization to take the lead convening and coordinating the effort, or even to switch off from one organization to another depending on the terms of each project. However, as partners move toward aligning their priorities and coordinating their activities over the long-term, they gradually require more centralized support, for example to manage internal and external communications, partnership governance, joint fundraising, fiscal management, and shared accountability. As partner organizations become more interdependent, centralized resources can help build transparency, coordination and trust that everyone is moving forward together and following through on what was agreed.

*“Getting projects on the ground to benefit fish is what’s most important, but everyone is going after the same small pot of money. Better oversight and coordination would be beneficial to ensure consistency and fairness.”*

For those partnerships gearing up to operate in this more coordinated or collaborative way, they found themselves faced with new decisions that represented uncharted territory. In two cases, partnerships felt caught in the transition between planning and implementation. In one case, the desire to hire a partnership coordinator was put on hold until long-term funding was secured to support that position. Despite the role that a coordinator could play to move the group closer to implementation, some partners didn’t feel comfortable hiring without first securing implementation funding. In another case, the desire to launch a partnership website to increase public awareness stalled out after initial web design. None of the partners felt comfortable, at least initially, stepping forward to invest in a multi-year domain name without long-term funding in place to support this expense. Both of these examples demonstrate the growing pains associated with this shift toward a collaborative partnership and the required investment in centralized coordination. A modest funding commitment could go far to bridge the gap between an intensive planning effort that creates the scaffolding for collaboration and the ability to attract long-term implementation funding to build out the partnership in earnest. Without capacity dedicated to coordination and external communications, fundraising at the partnership level for a collaborative effort is a heavy lift for individual partners.



Another aspect of centralized support discussed across several partnerships is the need for technical services like GIS to provide basic mapping capabilities and more sophisticated modeling, for example climate change predictions and scenarios. GIS services are difficult for small organizations and even some partnerships to provide, and consultants are expensive. Some partnerships had success with fee-for-service agreements where the services of a GIS specialist could be used by multiple partners. Some relied on federal agency partners to provide GIS services. A few partners suggested perhaps OWEB could invest in GIS services at a regional level that would be available to help small organizations and partnerships increase the analytic power of their strategic action plans.



## Governance

As partnerships transition from more autonomous to more interdependent, another common gap is a mismatch between the vision of how partners work together collaboratively and how collaboration is practiced, referring to the governance structure and culture of decision-making. The governance structure refers to how “membership” in a partnership is defined, how decisions are made, and how work gets done, for example in committees or work groups. Whatever the decision-making model that is adopted from consensus to modified consensus to majority vote, the importance lies in discussing how decisions will be made and which decisions will be made by the full partnership versus a leadership team or work group.

For groups that have a long history operating as informal networks or according to the terms in a contract, these aspects of governance may seem unnecessary, even annoying. Yet these are the democratic tools that can help diverse partners work through differences, make decisions that have broad support, and build momentum and influence for effective implementation. Without intentional conversations about decision-making and governance, a collaborative effort is far more vulnerable to destabilizing power dynamics or subtle undercurrents of resistance that lead to either missed opportunities for greater impact or problems with implementation.

*“We all come together and talk about working together, but there is no direction. I feel a lot of the shortcomings of the strategic action plan can be attributed to the fact that the ‘goals’ of the plan were not adequately resolved, especially in the context of the actual capacity of the ‘Partnership’ members to implement it. Perhaps an effort to define a vision for how the partners could actually work together as a group, a vision that would reflect the contributions and organizational needs of each, should have taken precedence over developing a plan. That way the final plan, and its goals, would be a reflection of the capacity of the partnership.”*

*“I’m not aware of any governance documents. Right now, implementation is a big black box. I don’t know what’s intended in terms of implementation. I don’t know who is going to be involved, the technical people reviewing the projects. I think we need to have those discussions about what’s coming next.”*

Despite the heaviness of skepticism in the above quotes, both indicated a desire to talk about governance and make the partnership work. These are examples of the subtle undercurrents of resistance that are common in groups when roles, responsibilities, and decision-making are not openly discussed. Yet in many cases, these concerns can be alleviated relatively quickly with productive conversations about roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

There is a learning curve to having these discussions as well as understanding the pros and cons of different approaches to structuring the group and defining decision-making. In the best cases, some partners have had experience with different collaborative decision-making models and can share experiences to help the group make an informed choice. When that is not an option, it can be useful to invite someone with experience to the group, for example peer-to-peer learning with someone from a well-established collaborative partnership or a consultant who can provide training or guidance in collaborative decision-making. Once decision-making rules are adopted, it usually takes some practice to get comfortable with them and make them a part of the partnership's culture.

*“We identified that we would use modified consensus. We didn't discuss it in much detail. It was introduced by a partner, everyone just nodded, and it got recorded as the prevailing interest of the group. No other suggested decision tool was given. It was identified with those present, but it may evolve, especially as we get into it.”*

Equally important, decision-making rules should be regularly revisited and refined. If they aren't working for a partnership, it is important to adapt them so that they do – or else the risk is sinking confidence, lack of participation, frustration, or division within the group (Hanson 2005). As an example of this, one partnership reflected on previous challenges with modified consensus and made a carefully considered decision to operate by majority vote. In general, some type of consensus is typically recommended in a diverse collaborative group that desires broad-scale impact. However, if the group decides consensus doesn't work, it is extremely valuable for partners to collectively decide what *does* work, invite feedback, and adapt as needed.



## Strategies for Success

In summary, the following are strategies highlighted by multiple partnerships as keys to success:

- **Facilitators are critical to having productive conversations.** Whether internal partners or external consultants, it is important to have resources to support good facilitation, especially in the context of goal setting, clarifying partner roles, project prioritization, and funding for implementation.
- **It is critical that leadership is seen as inclusive and fair** leading to greater trust and commitment in the partnership. Collaborative leaders communicate evenly with partners so everyone is working from the same information. They bring partners in early on collaborative funding opportunities to review applications and provide comments. Good organization, focus and follow-through build a sense of accountability, teamwork, and momentum. Effective leadership allows flexibility to discuss important topics as they come up, while managing the process to meet budget and timeline goals.
- **GIS and IT are critical technical resources.** They are the “lynchpin” that hold it all together, most importantly data analysis for planning but also creating maps for outreach. Some watersheds or organizations may not have access to GIS and IT, while others have had success sharing staff or creating a fee-for-service agreement.
- **Strengthen partner organizations.** Stronger organizations with engaged boards and empowered staff can create forward momentum, activate local organizers, and identify opportunities where the value proposition for collaboration is high. It is challenging for grant-based organizations to carve out internal time to review and comment on collaborative documents, but also critically important to represent an organization’s interests in the broader partnership. In remote, rural areas it may be challenging to develop a strong board due to lack of potential board members. In urban areas, potential board members may be too busy to commit time.
- **Create organizational commitments,** for example through governance documents, so that as individuals transition out, the partnership maintains its culture, purpose, and stability.
- **Seek anchor funding.** It is easier to attract more funding if you have a large anchor funder. Some geographic areas or habitat types may be more attractive to large funders, while other areas may have fewer options.
- **Diversify fundraising strategies** to get more capacity funding for coordination and planning. With 100% grant funded positions, common among small organizations, there is very little flexibility to invest staff time in organizational development or



partnership activities outside of implementation. Coordinated or collaborative partnerships hope to get more creative about fundraising, but there is also concern that there are only so many potential funding opportunities.

- **Receive feedback and comments with grace.** Understanding, trust, and relationships grow when challenges are handled well within the partnership and with external stakeholders. Feed and nurture relationships at all levels.
- **Partners meet in person periodically and communicate regularly through many channels.** Face-to-face meetings are still important in building trust, understanding, and relationships, but drive times make it difficult to find meeting locations that are central for everyone. Technology such as Go-To meeting and conference calling can help partners use their time more efficiently, for example meeting in person less frequently or for shorter meetings and following up with smaller work teams that are geographically closer together. However, partners from across the partnerships felt that some amount of in-person meeting time was needed, especially for important discussion topics.
- **Streamline internal processes** for managing tasks, timelines, and documents, for example using Basecamp for assigning tasks or DropBox for sharing documents. Peer-to-peer sharing creates opportunities for improvement, for example with processing stipends and travel reimbursement. A few partners expressed some potential bureaucratic hurdles to invoice capacity funds and cited the lack of time as a reason why they hadn't followed up to resolve these issues.
- **Offer tiers of participation.** Create options for organizations to participate in the partnership with less time commitment such as work groups, which give people an opportunity to focus their time on the topics or geographies where they are most interested.
- **Communicate openly and proactively with stakeholders** to avoid surprises. Interviews, listening sessions and surveys were appreciated by different partnerships as methods to better understand stakeholder interests and create opportunities to better connect with key audiences, such as land owners and community residents.
- **Track land owner contacts, projects, and outputs** to share knowledge, coordinate, and avoid redundant or duplicative work. A project tracker can be used to raise public awareness, get feedback early, and prevent surprises as one piece of a broader communications strategy.

## Influence of the Funder

As discussed relative to the shift toward collaboration, funders have played a prominent role in how partnerships come together, including the focus and scope of their work. The Capacity Building FIP grants, which supported facilitators, staff capacity, and consultants, were cited as the tipping point that made the shift toward collaboration possible in many cases. In other cases, partners leveraged funding from other “anchor funders” and were able to deliver a “higher quality, seamless product” because of the Capacity Building FIP grants. The Implementation FIP grants also had significant influence on the formation of these partnerships not because partners received funding from this program but because partners wanted to do what they could to increase their competitive edge for a future Implementation FIP grant.

Partners talked about the risk of funders setting overly prescriptive requirements that would have undue influence on the quality of the plan, potentially on the prioritization framework itself. In the context of the Capacity Building FIP grant, partners expressed universal appreciation for OWEB’s flexibility allowing modifications to the timeline, scope, and strategic action plan template relative to partner needs.

*“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.”*

Yet referring back to the value proposition for partners, the primary motivating factor for partners coming together and formalizing their work with a strategic action plan and governance documents is the expectation that they will attract greater funding. Without long-term funding for implementation, the partnership will be stuck in limbo having invested significant time in planning, yet without the resources to launch implementation or a more cohesive fundraising effort, for example hiring a coordinator, creating a partnership webpage, writing grants, and building relationships with potential funders.

*“We would definitely continue on and look for other funding if we didn’t get an Implementation FIP grant. But it would definitely help! Since we are investing a lot of our time and effort in defining what our FIP proposal would look like, it would be a shame if we didn’t get that funding source.”*

OWEB guidance encouraged partners to focus first on developing a high-quality strategic action plan, which could be used to seek grants from different funders, and then later to separately develop their Implementation FIP proposal. However, the reality for partners is that developing a high quality strategic action plan and developing a competitive Implementation FIP proposal are closely intertwined, arguably inseparable, in the value proposition of the partnership.



*“We have gotten some mixed messages about the intended scope of our plan. We have historically worked in a very large area and through this process are realizing that more focus is needed. Yet we have been highly encouraged by some OWEB staff to ‘go ahead and do it all,’ while at the same time hearing it’s up to us to decide where to take it.”*

Without a good chance for attracting significant funding, partners may have to reduce their time commitment to a partnership. For example, in some cases organizations have had the opportunity to participate in more than one partnership. When they have had limited capacity to participate in both equally, they have had to select which one to prioritize, and the likelihood of getting significant funding for implementation has weighed heavily in their decision. With this in mind, despite the flexibility of the Capacity Building FIP program, partnerships were still greatly influenced by OWEB relative to the structure, expectations, and constraints of the Implementation FIP program due to their desire to be as competitive as possible for an Implementation FIP grant.

*“I’m trying to fit what they’re asking for in the strategic action plan template. Maybe I need to let go of that and say this is what’s working for our group. I think it’s worthwhile considering what OWEB is asking for. The group is cognizant that we want to present OWEB with what they expect so that we have a better chance at Implementation FIP funding – but we also want to keep in mind there is flexibility.”*

With this in mind, many partners across the partnerships expressed frustration with the lack of clarity or guidance regarding expectations for a successful Implementation FIP application. The top concerns across partnerships related to how they would define the geography and activities in their Implementation FIP proposal to maximize the potential for impact over the six-year timeframe and minimize limitations on other funding opportunities.

*“There is some difficulty in tailoring your effort to an uncertain target.”*

The potential limitation most often discussed was OWEB’s guidance that projects included in the scope of an Implementation FIP grant would not be eligible for their open solicitation grant program. The meaning of this guidance and its implications were discussed at many partnership meetings at different points in their planning process.

The timing of the Implementation FIP application process was another common question relative to the goal of keeping up the partnership's momentum until implementation funds would be available. For many partnerships, an Implementation FIP grant provides the best chances for the partnership to fully launch into implementation and operate as a coordinated or collaborative partnership.

Although partners recognized that OWEB was still learning and developing the program and so they might not be able to provide that level of desired clarity, there was consistent feedback across the partnerships that more clarity would be better. Specific suggestions included a presentation and Q&A session from OWEB along with clearly written guidance. Without direct guidance, partners spent considerable time speculating in meetings and side conversations.

*“I think we oddly circulate lots of questions about what is a FIP and spend a lot of time rehashing, people saying ‘my experience is this’ and ‘mine is this.’ It’s possible this happened, and I just didn’t hear about it, but having some kind of really clear orientation from OWEB would be helpful. This is what a planning FIP is, and this what an implementation FIP is. I know part of the challenge is OWEB is still figuring it out. I wasn’t involved from day one. Everyone has different backgrounds and conversations with different people. It ends up being confusing and a big waste of time.”*

Some speculation and confusion is natural with any competitive funding opportunity. However, partnership comments suggest there is an opportunity for OWEB to provide more guidance to help ease those anxieties and get groups through the difficult decision points related to scope, prioritization, and positioning for future funding opportunities – whether Implementation FIP, open solicitation grants, or opportunities with other funders.

Although it will be tough news for partnerships who are not able to attract significant funding for implementation, partners have received considerable value from the Capacity Building FIP opportunity in large part due to OWEB's flexibility.

*“The Capacity Building FIP grant was the catalyst, why we took this deeper look and came up with this operational manual. It’s pretty historical for us. Hopefully, positioning us to function as a partnership will make us more efficient and effective.”*





# Topics for Discussion



OWEB, Imnaha River

## Topics for Discussion

### More Than One Way to Be Strategic in “Moving The Needle” for Restoration

OWEB’s two restoration funding programs – the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program and the open solicitation program – can be used strategically to respond to different types of opportunities. The FIP program aims to focus investments in specific geographies and restoration activities to have a greater ecological impact in a relatively short timeframe, which follows a broader trend in grantmaking, for example the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Save Our Great Lakes Program (See also the literature on collective impact, Kania and Kramer 2011, Pearson 2014). In addition to direct ecological benefits, the advantages to this approach when successful are that impacts can be demonstrated more clearly to the public, funders, and decision-makers to build further support for restoration. In contrast, flexible funding programs, such as OWEB’s open solicitation grant program, can respond to a range of opportunities as they come up and can distribute funding more evenly across the state, which is often important for public grant programs.

These two types of funding programs can be complementary, yet depending on how they are linked, or not, they can also undermine each other’s effectiveness. For example, if there are no restrictions on applying for both Implementation FIP and open solicitation programs and the Implementation FIP grantees can put together very competitive proposals for the open solicitation program, then it is possible that the open solicitation program could begin to function much like the FIP program without providing opportunities for a broader range of project types. On the other hand, if partners associated with a successful Implementation FIP are not allowed to apply for open solicitation funding, then project proposals that are not ranked high by the partnership may not be eligible for either Implementation FIP funding or open solicitation funding, again restricting the effectiveness of the open solicitation program to fund a broader range of project types.

Similarly, within partnerships there are different views about what’s most strategic to “move the needle” for watershed restoration. Partners broadly acknowledged the power of a scientifically based prioritization process to achieve ecological restoration. However, there were differences of opinion about how to integrate social and political factors into prioritization frameworks or whether it is most strategic to focus solely on ecological criteria.



Partners broadly agreed that willing land owners are necessary in the context of private land restoration. However, according to some views of strategic restoration, activities should only take place when particular areas and project proposals indicate the potential for a strong environmental win. These views were more often held by partners from national or regional environmental organizations or government programs with a strong focus on environmental protection. These approaches are typically easier to implement on public lands although when private land owners are willing, these approaches can be extremely impactful in the private lands context. Approaches that emphasize strong environmental wins are most attractive to environmental funders.

Other partners representing broader constituencies, such as watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts, tended to emphasize the strategic value of doing restoration projects that have additional social and economic benefits, for example farm improvements that also benefit aquatic habitat. These approaches may have more modest environmental wins initially, but they can build trust among potentially skeptical land owners. Through a “neighbor-to-neighbor approach,” one private land owner may turn from a restoration skeptic to a champion, and as a result, an initially modest environmental win can create positive waves of opportunity throughout a basin that can lead to increasingly strategic environmental wins over the long-term, for example as multiple land owners along a stream become receptive to restoration projects. This “restoration through relationships” approach is the approach that tends to get the most traction in landscapes managed by private land owners and potentially industrial forestry operations. Funding opportunities that blend environmental, social, and economic benefits like the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service programs are a good fit for these opportunities.

While these two strategic approaches to prioritizing restoration can be complimentary, they can also be viewed as opposites. As partnerships have put together their prioritization frameworks and proposed project lists, some have struggled with tensions between large, well-funded groups pushing for the biggest environmental win and smaller organizations with broad-based constituencies who can only operate using the “restoration through relationships” approach. Conflicting missions among partners are an inherent challenge of broad-based partnerships (Hanson 2005). Common strategies to manage these challenges are to respect differences broadly and navigate the issues as they come up to try to make decisions that everyone can support even if they do not fully agree.

The crux of the problem is that these two approaches to strategically prioritize restoration tend to align with the two different types of grant programs. Partners that push for the biggest environmental win tend to rely on a purely scientific approach to prioritization that makes a clear case for specific geographies and restoration activities, which is a good match for the FIP program. Partners that operate with a “restoration through relationships” approach, which some refer to as opportunistic, tend to fit well with the open solicitation



program. The risk that many partnerships have discussed openly is that the partnership may prioritize projects with the highest environmental win, especially if their prioritization frameworks focus strictly on ecological factors, while projects with more modest environmental wins may not rank very high on the list, potentially limiting future funding opportunities.

*“What does research tell us is most limiting? What is the data telling us what we need to do? That is the strategy to move away from opportunistic to strategic restoration. It is important to have willing landowners, but if that [stream] reach doesn’t matter, then why are we there?”*

*“There are partners around the table who all work in different ways. Coming from a watershed council, my organization is enacted by The Oregon Plan, and I report to the county commissioners and state. Our goal is to meet people in the middle and get environmental work done, while some other organizations have the luxury of choosing just environmental win projects. It has started to get to me as we start to identify project areas. I can’t be against farm practices and push full dike removals. I can convince people to breach their dike, but if that is not one of the practices that is chosen by the partnership then that is limiting – we cannot participate like that in our county with our working landscape. It will potentially push me out of getting funding for the type of work that I could get done. The understanding that we all come from different ways of working – we need to find a way to make that work, and I worry we might not find a way to make that happen.”*

The risk lies in the connection between the two funding programs. If the partnership is awarded an Implementation FIP grant and it has prioritized projects with the biggest environmental win, more modest projects in working landscapes may be excluded from both Implementation FIP and open solicitation funding because of the current limitation that projects within the scope of a funded Implementation FIP are not eligible for the open solicitation program. More discussion is needed to understand if there are other options for how the Implementation FIP and open solicitation programs are linked or not. Also, more discussion and support within the partnerships could potentially help ease these tensions and facilitate prioritization frameworks that more broadly reflect the diverse partners and constituencies represented by the strategic action plans. Some partnerships sought to bridge these different perspectives by including social and ecological factors into their articulation of goals and values, their prioritization framework, and their situational diagram or results chains. The value of respecting these differences and working to find common ground for long-term restoration cannot be underestimated.





## Communications and Outreach Investments Linked to Strategic Action Planning

Similarly, as we think about the next frontier for strategic action planning, several partners acknowledged the limitations of a highly technical plan relative to their goals for stakeholder outreach and the community support needed for project implementation.

*“The plan was basically built by scientists, but it wasn’t really built at a second level with the thought of community engagement – not to dumb it down, but to put it in a different light. Although it was created with a gee whiz of limiting factors and basin geography, it also has to be put into a different light. What’s the benefit of doing these things? What’s the need to do this? Fisheries are crashing. Forget the scientific explanation, tell us in different terms why this is important.”*

*“In general, the FIP is a tremendous opportunity for us to take funding and focus on areas with a broad partnership – we need to continue to increase our messaging and find ways to better frame the strategic process that makes sense at different scales.”*

As OWEB provided direction for this study, they were interested to understand what types of support might be helpful for partnerships to more proactively and meaningfully engage stakeholders through outreach.

### Suggestions for future investments in outreach:

- Studies on the **economic value of restoration and why it should matter** to people paired with **clear messaging in a state-level campaign** that could be tailored for local outreach efforts,
- Funds to support **more extensive land owner surveys** that could be used to gauge awareness, potential misperceptions, and opportunities for engagement, and
- **General capacity for relationship building** with local businesses, community leaders, land owners, and residents, particularly those with a history of skepticism toward government and restoration.

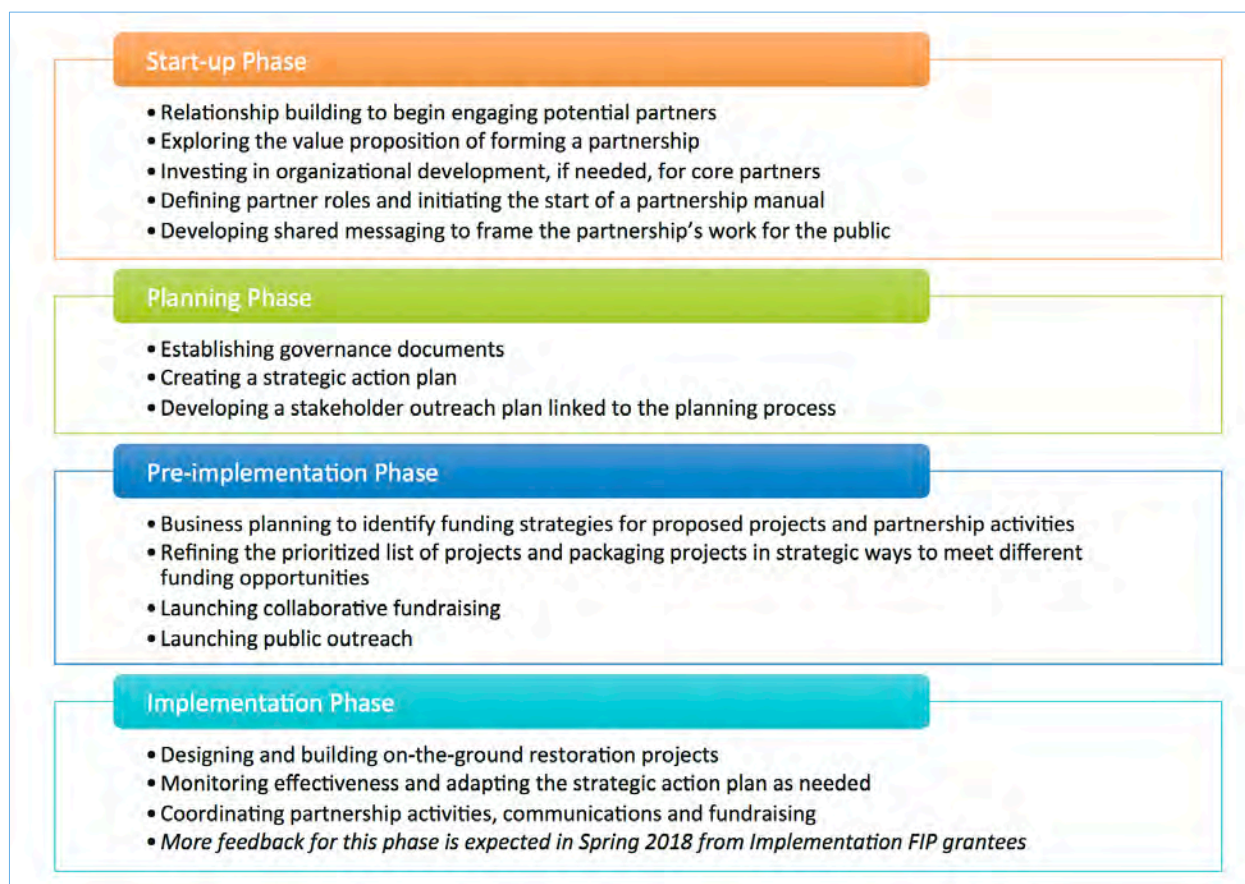
The insights, messaging tools, and relationships developed through these types of investments could help re-orient the planning framework to include social and political factors and more effectively connect the goals, prioritization framework, and monitoring methods with the interests and needs of constituents.



## What is Needed to Support Highly Performing, Resilient Watershed Partnerships?

As partners reflected on their progress with planning and looked ahead to their goals for implementation, several interesting suggestions surfaced across the partnerships that together paint the picture of how the FIP program could better support resilient partnerships through four phases of support.

### Suggested Four Phases of Partnership Support



Partner suggestions related to the need for a pre-planning phase centered around the reality that one to three years of internal organizational development work and relationship building often helps to catalyze these types of collaborative efforts before technical planning even begins. In other cases, 10 or more years of relationship building created an opportunity to put together a Capacity Building FIP application when the call for proposals went out. In some cases, this long-term relationship building was possible due to significant anchor funders. One partner raised the question, what if there is a strategically significant part of the state or a resource issue that warrants investment, but there is not a history of collaboration or partnership? Perhaps having a start-up phase of support would help groups come together and explore the potential for collaboration.

*“I’m thinking back on the process of applying – I was just so pleased, our partnership too, that we already had experience with one another and recognized our complementary roles. It would be interesting if an area needed groups to come together and they didn’t have that history. They wouldn’t have been able to pull something together. As OWEB identified the 7 focal areas, there may be an area they would like addressed, it may require some support to get a group started.”*

Relative to the planning phase, there was consistent feedback that capacity support was greatly appreciated and more support would help bring additional partners more fully to the conversation, especially watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, smaller organizations, and in some cases tribes. Support for facilitation, GIS analysis and consultants to write the plan and develop a communications and outreach plan was strongly emphasized.

The suggestion for a pre-implementation phase came from several different partnerships. People explained that from their years of experience with project management, they recognized the significant work required to take a list of projects on paper that were only roughly sketched out and develop fleshed out descriptions that could be more persuasively taken to funders.

*“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. We don’t have our plan fleshed out to the level that I would like. I would like to say, ‘We have these anchor habitats. Here’s what your money will buy you, and this is what we can do. Here is why it matters, and here are the projects you can be involved in.’”*



Along these lines, one partnership had already completed their strategic action plan prior to being awarded the Capacity Building FIP grant. Reflecting on their experience, partners explained that they used Capacity Building FIP funds to convene work groups, build out their work plans in more detail, and position themselves for stronger funding proposals. The grant funds also allowed the partnership to focus more capacity on fundraising and external communications, which has already led to near-term funding with the potential for longer term opportunities. As a result, they are gradually transitioning from planning into implementation.

*“Obviously, the FIP capacity grant was huge. It got us over the hump in terms of capacity and was instrumental to our development. We leveraged it to bring in more foundation support. We always wanted to stay lean and mean in staff, but now we’re up to 2 FTE. Now we are working on transitioning my role to champion fundraiser.”*

Most partners in this study couldn’t speak directly to suggestions about the implementation phase since they have not gotten to that point yet. This section will be further explored with Implementation FIP grantees for Part 2 of this report.

A central theme that ran throughout people’s comments was the limited capacity and limited flexibility in staff time to commit to building a resilient partnership.

*“Funding for capacity is the thing that could make or break watershed-wide efforts. We can’t ‘move the dial’ and get the right people on-board without the flexibility of staff not being attached to a certain project. 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?”*

Strategies to diversify funding were discussed by some partnerships, but many smaller organizations haven’t had the capacity to invest in fundraising beyond what they already do. The promise of a collaborative model of watershed restoration is that there would be centralized leadership and resources to do fundraising on behalf of the whole to distribute to partners. Again, this points to uncertainties, concerns, and fears about how this would affect individual fundraising by partners and how funds might be distributed.

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



In the most successful scenario, realizing this vision would take time and investment to establish a centralized structure to be effective at long-term fundraising at that scale, and depending on the value proposition for potential partners, funders, and stakeholders, that level of greater investment may not be warranted in many places. Because of the phenomenon of “anchor funders” attracting other big funders, there is the potential that funders will end up further concentrating their funds in these partnerships where centralized infrastructure exists. This topic deserves more discussion and careful consideration. Perhaps over time, if large funders continue to place emphasis on collaborative partnerships, they may create a larger gap between “haves” and “have nots” among watersheds and restoration organizations. Going back to the continuum of participation from the introduction of this document, a lower level of partnership may be more cost-effective and produce significant value. It is too easy to fall into the popular ideal that more collaboration is better. It is worth more discussion.

For capacity building grantees, perhaps there are different “on-ramps,” such that they aim for the point in the partnership continuum that they feel has the greatest value proposition for their partners and funders. What would that look like? Perhaps the start-up phase would be the broadest opportunity for many potential partnerships to explore partner roles and their value proposition for different partnership types. From there, some partnerships could operate as an information network or cooperative partnership with relatively little additional investment, while others could decide to further invest in building a strategic action plan and governance documents to move toward a collaborative partnership. As more partnerships take this step toward implementation, there is a possibility that the number of partnerships and the scale of the investment required to keep their partnership going is not feasible at the statewide scale given the general trends in environmental grantmaking.

It may be useful to map out the known funding sources, recognizing that these will change over time, to estimate roughly how many collaborative partnerships could potentially be supported in the state through various funders. This number could be used to inform how many collaborative partnerships OWEB would like to catalyze through the Capacity Building FIP program. This number could also potentially inform a more accurate value proposition for newly forming collaborative partnerships. Reflecting on the awkward transition between planning and implementation, partnerships risk falling apart if they are not able to secure relatively stable implementation funding relatively soon after completing their plan. Although partners appreciated the near-term value of relationship building and information sharing, they likely would not have chosen to invest so much time and energy in strategic planning, governance, and outreach if they did not feel they have a good chance at long-term funding.





# Appreciation for Learning



Robert Warren, Sagebrush



## Appreciation for Learning

From across the partnerships, people expressed appreciation for OWEB's investment in this project to obtain feedback early in the process to inform and adapt the Focused Investment Partnership program. Partners also appreciated the opportunity to learn across partnerships through the conference calls and informally sharing of planning tools and resources. Yet there was a touch of frustration that it was too early in their collaborative effort to have more in-depth feedback. Most partnerships expressed an interest in repeating the survey, interviews, and observations at some point in the future to see how they have progressed and what feedback they may have after more experience as a partnership. They also expressed an interest in future opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing across partnerships.

*"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. That is nice. And then there is less griping when something doesn't work. 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."*

# Conclusion



Robert Warren, Juvenile Coastal Cutthroat Trout

## Conclusion

The strategic vision of this style of focused investments is that a cohesive, strategically-oriented body of work with the buy-in of diverse partners and stakeholders will have greater impact and attract more funding. The purpose of this report was to learn from the experiences of 8 partnerships that received Capacity Building FIP grants to understand what is needed to support resilient, highly performing partnerships. Drawing from the public administration literature, it is helpful to think about partnerships on a continuum from information networks, where partners remain mostly autonomous to collaborative partnerships where partners become interdependent and oriented toward collective goals. Moving toward more collaborative partnerships requires greater investment in planning, governance, conflict management, and communication, but the promise is that this increased investment will strategically use the strengths of different partners to tackle more complex restoration goals more effectively.

Considering how partners made the shift toward working more collaboratively, several themes emerged as common to several partnerships, such as a history of positive working relationships, a personal affinity to working with groups on the part of partnership leaders and conveners, and the serendipity of multiple funding sources coming together at the right time. Although many partners approached strategic action planning with a desire to be more efficient, especially those who had past experience with planning, most groups added new layers of complexity that extended timelines and budgets, for example new partners with different views, multiple watersheds, or multiple habitat types. Several common themes emerged relative to tensions between some partners and challenges to engage others. Tribes are engaged in most partnerships, in some they take a prominent leadership role. Throughout there was recognition of the learning curve to working with tribes and the value of taking adequate time to talk about partner roles and interests, including tribes along with all other partners, for example during the development of governance documents. Although some partnerships waited to develop governance documents until after the strategic planning process, some of these partnerships experienced more difficulty getting buy-in from some skeptical partners. Stakeholder outreach was challenging for everyone, especially engaging private land owners, farmers and ranchers, and industrial forest interests. In general, partners felt outreach would be more effective once the strategic action plan was complete. However, there was still an overall interest in having more communication tools and messaging ready to communicate broadly about the partnership and the goals of the plan early in the process.

As partnerships transitioned from planning to implementation, there was a nervousness, anxiousness, and excitement. Most partnerships were focused on being as competitive as possible for Implementation FIP funding and struggled somewhat to keep up momentum





through the planning process, eager to move into implementation and more tangible results. Some partnerships also had promising leads to other funding sources. As groups anticipated implementation, they began to feel the tensions of competition rise to the surface and the influence of the funder, in this case OWEB, became stronger. Partnerships broadly praised OWEB's Capacity Building FIP program for its flexibility and its lack of restrictions. Ironically although partnerships weren't funded through the Implementation FIP program, they were greatly influenced by it because it represented for most if not all partnerships the clearest path toward somewhat stable implementation funding. The Implementation FIP structure and link to other funding opportunities, such as OWEB's open solicitation program, has created lots of concern, speculation, and to some degree perhaps unintended influence on the scope and focus of the strategic action plans. Some of this perhaps is unavoidable because of the nature of competitive grantmaking, but there appears to be an opportunity for OWEB to provide more clarity in messaging and perhaps more careful consideration of how the different grant programs are related.

Returning to the purpose of this report, it appears that four phases of support may be more appropriate – start-up, planning, pre-implementation, and implementation. The early start-up phase would allow partners the space to build relationships, explore the value proposition for working together, and begin defining partner roles early on in the process. A partnership may decide to operate at a lower level of investment, for example as an information network if that feels right for their value proposition. If partnerships felt there was value in moving toward a more collaborative partnership type, they would begin the planning phase similar to the current Capacity Building FIP program. The pre-implementation phase would provide extra support to ground-truth initial project ideas and package them more persuasively for funders. Suggestions for the implementation phase will be further developed in Part 2 of this report drawing from the experiences of Implementation FIP grantees. Overall, there was recognition that working collaboratively takes more capacity and the FIP grants provide some flexibility to support that capacity. Realistically partners reflected that it probably takes more capacity than was funded, and they can provide that retrospective information about how much it did take once their plan is complete.

Potentially refining the Capacity Building FIP program to emphasize development of a business plan could uncouple the formation of new partnerships through the Capacity Building FIP program with the expectation of implementation funds through the Implementation FIP program by providing alternative pathways to fund newly formed collaborative partnerships through a mix of private and public sources. With a roadmap of potential funding sources, a partnership could adjust their pace, shift their timeline, and set realistic expectations based on available funds.



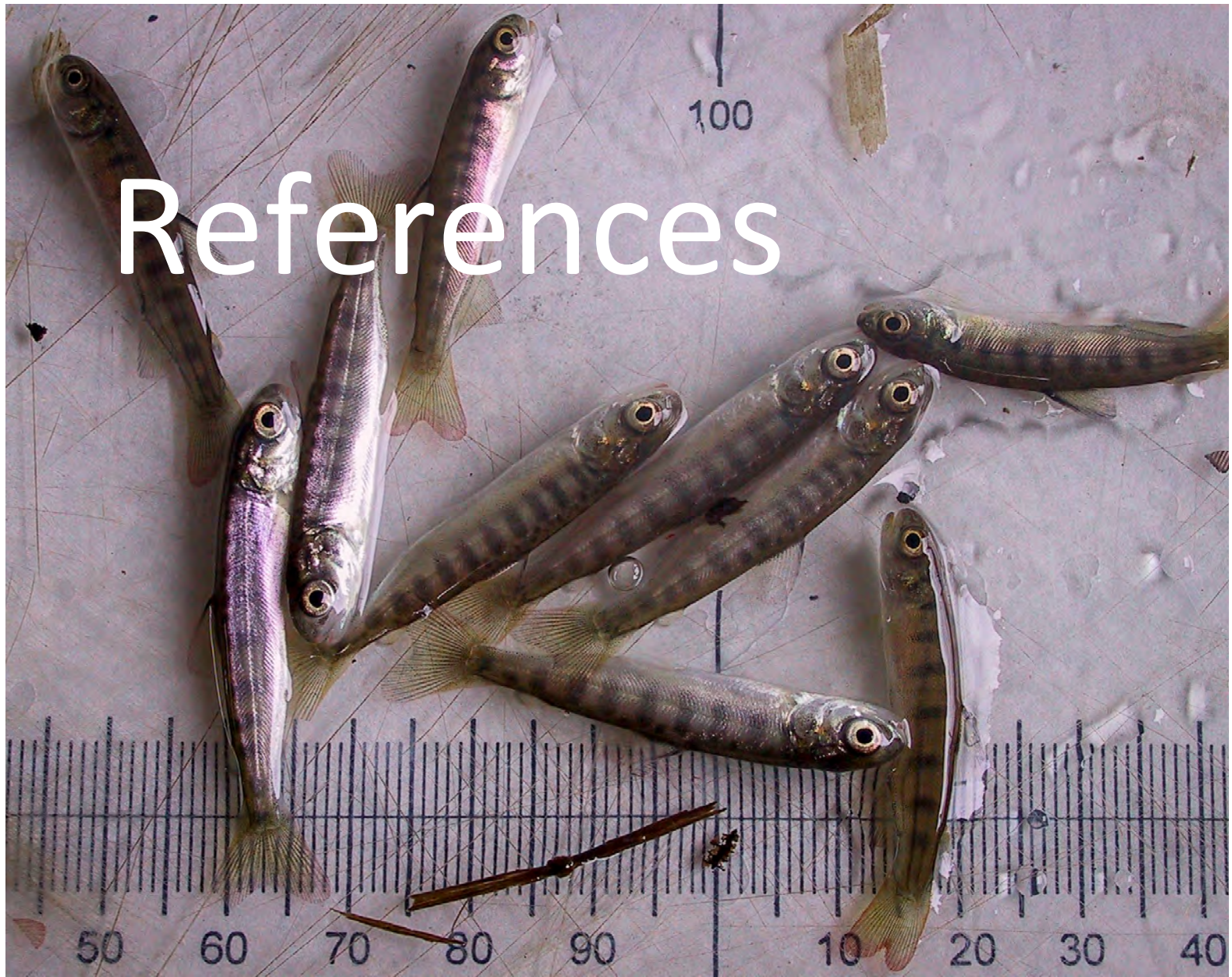
A question that requires more discussion is whether these new collaborative partnerships will attract new investment for restoration in the state – potentially yes especially if restoration goals are linked more broadly with economic development – or whether this approach will simply concentrate existing investments in more focused geographies and activities. If there is a chance that funding in the state will stay the same or decrease, a measure of caution is wise to avoid encouraging the formation of new collaborative partnerships if implementation funds are not likely.

Overall, partners greatly appreciated being a part of this exciting program and looked forward to learning from each other, current Implementation FIP grantees, and the next cycle of Capacity Building FIP grantees. They greatly appreciated OWEB’s genuine interest in getting feedback from partners in this way, and many hoped there would be an opportunity to continue learning together and providing feedback over the next few years as their work takes off.





# References



Robert Warren, Chinook and Coho Salmon Fry

## References

- Arnold, J. S. and W. Bartels. 2014. "Participatory methods for measuring and monitoring governance" Pp. 238-262 in *Adaptive Cross-scalar Governance of Natural Resources*. Eds. G. Barnes and B. Child. Routledge: New York, N.Y.
- Brouwer, H., J. Woodhill, M. Hemmati, K. Verhoosel and S. van Vugt. 2015. The MSP guide: how to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Centre for Development Innovation, part of the Dienst Landbouwkundig Onderzoek Foundation: Wageningen, Netherlands. Available online at <http://www.mspguide.org/msp-guide>.
- Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Christen, B. D. and P. T. Inzeo. 2015. Widening the view: situating collective impact among frameworks for community-led change. *Community Development* 46 (4): 420-435. Available online at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280090794\\_Widening\\_the\\_view\\_situating\\_collective\\_impact\\_among\\_frameworks\\_for\\_community-led\\_change](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280090794_Widening_the_view_situating_collective_impact_among_frameworks_for_community-led_change)
- Hanson, M. 2005. *Clues to Achieving Consensus: A Leader's Guide to Navigating Collaborative Problem Solving*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Headwaters Groups. 2013. *An Evaluation of the Save Our Great Lakes Program: A Report Prepared for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*. Available online at <http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes/Documents/sogl-eval-report.pdf>.
- Kania, M. and M. Kramer. 2011. *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Available online at [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact).
- Mandell, M. P. 2001. Collaboration through network structures for community building efforts. *National Civic Review* 90(3):279.
- Mandell, M. P. and R. Keast. 2008. Evaluating the effectiveness of interorganizational relations through networks. *Public Management Review* 10(6):715-731.
- Pearson, 2014. *Collective Impact: Venturing on an Unfamiliar Road*. *The Philanthropist* 26(1): 49-53.
- Sanginga, P. C., C. A. Chitsike, J. Njuki, S. Kaaria, and R. Kanzikwera. 2007. Enhanced learning from multi-stakeholder partnerships: Lessons from the Enabling Rural Innovation in Africa Programme. *Natural Resources Forum* 31(4):273-285.
- Warren, R. F., T. Reeve and J. S. Arnold. 2016. Reimagining watershed restoration: A call for new investment and support structures for greater resiliency and long-term impact. *WIREs Water*. Available online at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/wat2.1174/epdf>

## Appendix – Partnership Survey

### OWEB's Partnership Learning Project

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.

Contact Jennifer Arnold at [jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com](mailto:jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com) with any questions.

#### 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 at all satisfied    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 at all satisfied    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 at all satisfied    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Extremely satisfied

Any comments or suggestions to improve communications with core partners or external stakeholders? Any advice for other groups?

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 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 capacity building grant, prioritizing grant funds, or assigning project leads?

Not at all satisfied    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. Skip if you do not have governance documents.

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

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

**Value of the 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 and 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 challenges                    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?

**Feedback for OWEB**

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.





PART TWO

# Partnership Learning Project



ECO LOGICAL RESEARCH



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



PREPARED BY

**Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D.**

RECIPROCITY CONSULTING LLC

June 2018





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)*

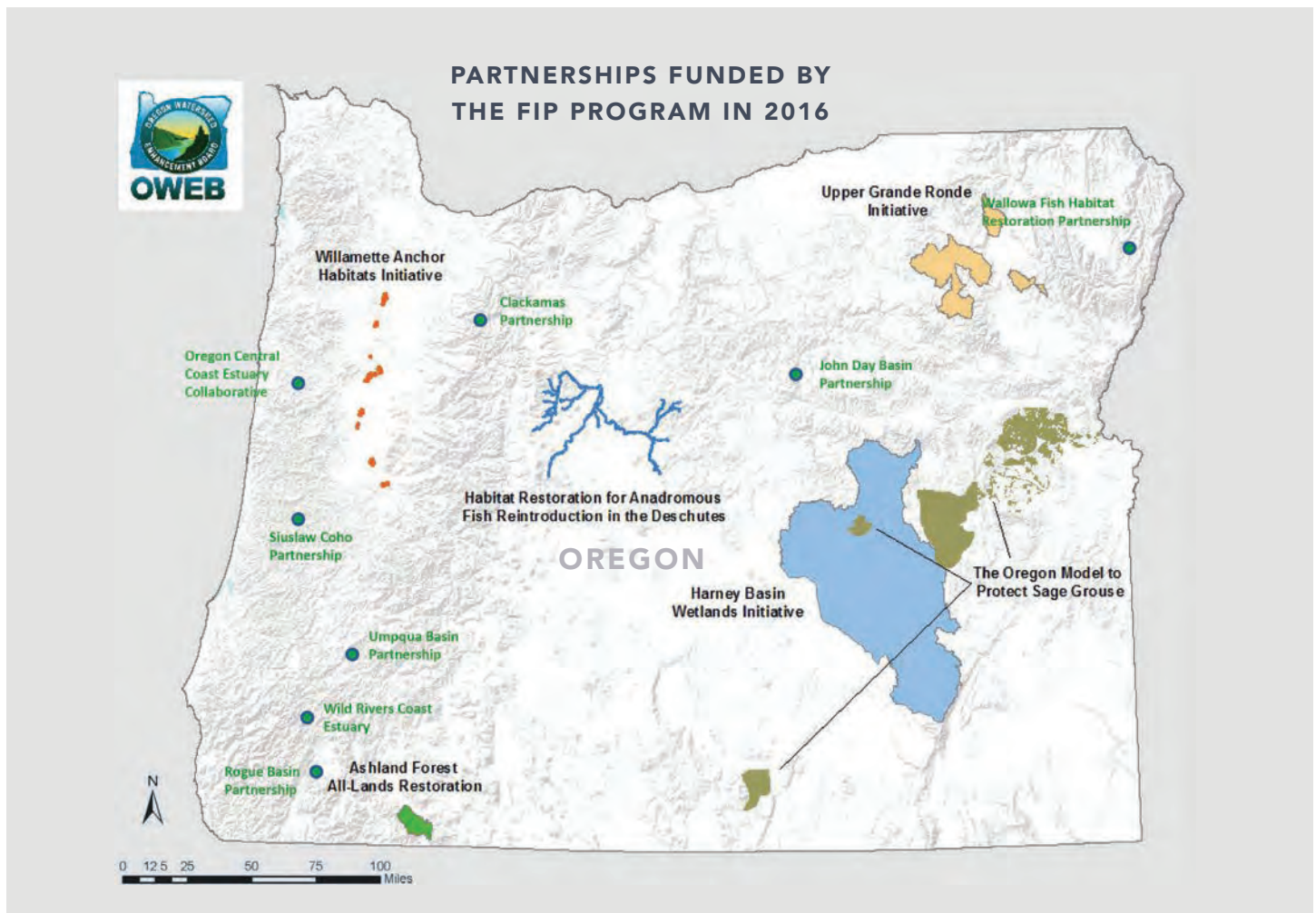
Two-year grants, which are part of OWEB's FIP Program, that are awarded to partnerships to develop a strategic action plan, governance documents and otherwise build capacity to perform at a higher level.

## 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:

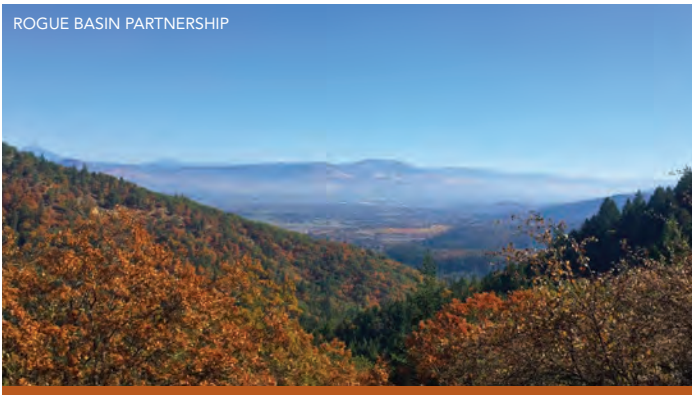
- 1 What do partnerships need to be resilient and maintain a high level of performance?
- 2 How can OWEB improve and innovate the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) program to support high-performing, resilient partnerships that can make progress toward desired ecological outcomes?

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



## 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:

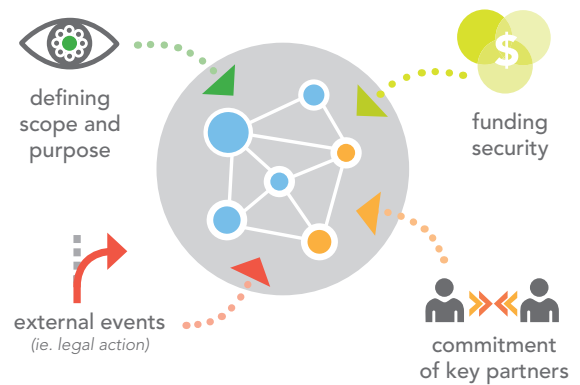
**Attended** a meeting of each of the 14 partnerships,

**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.



## 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.

### 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*

★ 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:

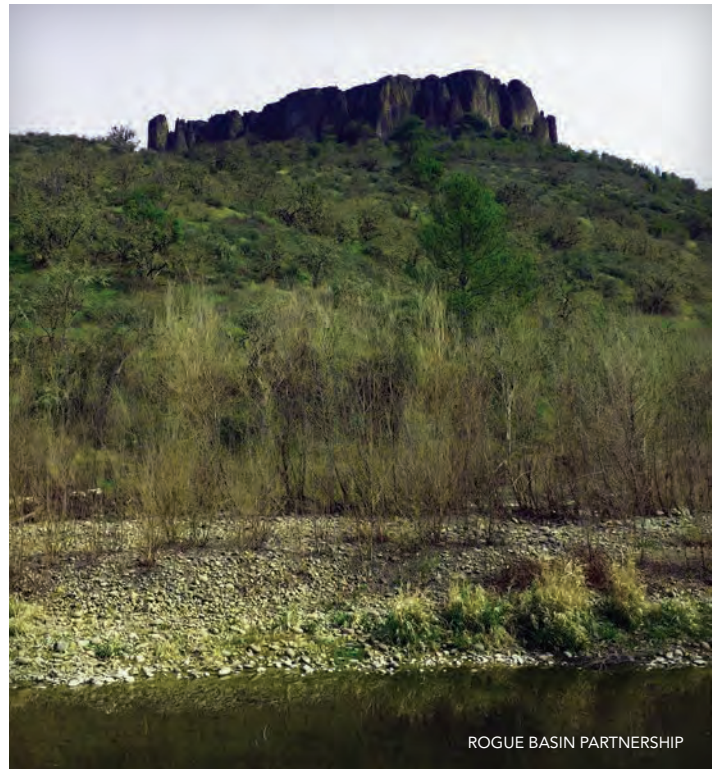
**Efforts focused on public lands** that will expand to private lands in the future or

**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.



ROGUE BASIN PARTNERSHIP

★ 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.



# Table of Contents

- i** Acknowledgments
- 2** Map
- 3** Executive Summary
- 9** Introduction
- 10** Methods
- 12** Findings
  - 13** *What do partnerships need to be resilient high-performers?*
  - 14** *Identifying the Value Proposition for Different Partnership Types*
  - 24** *A Roadmap for Partnerships with Different Funding Options*
  - 27** *How Can OWEB improve and innovate the FIP program to support high-performing resilient partnerships?*
- 35** Conclusion
- 36** Summary of Recommendations to Evolve the FIP Program
- 38** References
- 39** Appendix – Partnership Survey



# 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

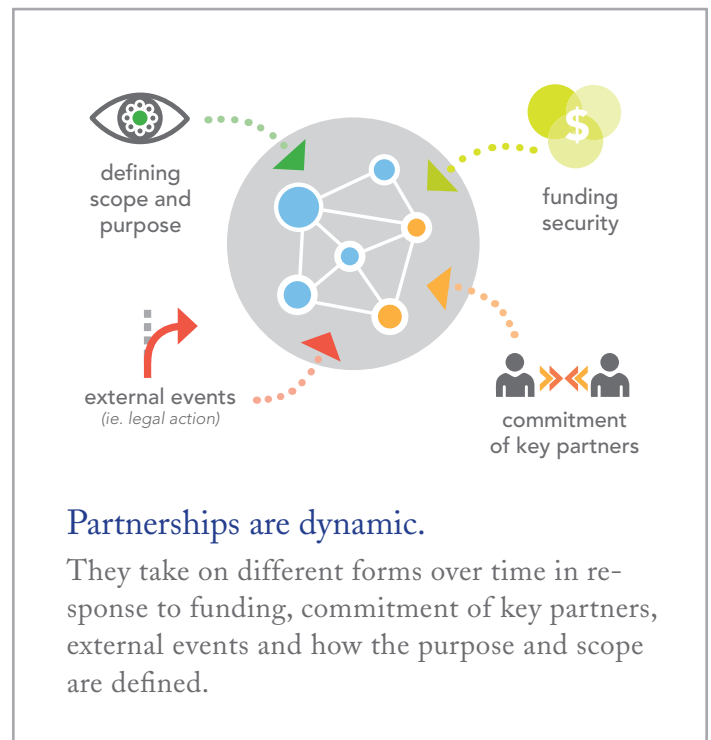
Partnerships are dynamic and may shift along this continuum over time, for example in response to changes in leadership, a crisis, or opportunity. Common challenges frequently encountered by even the most successful partnerships include:

- 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

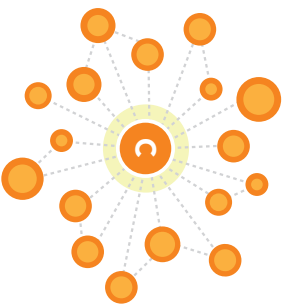
# Identifying the Value Proposition of Different Partnership Types

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.

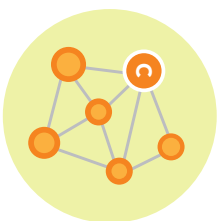
More autonomous

More interdependent

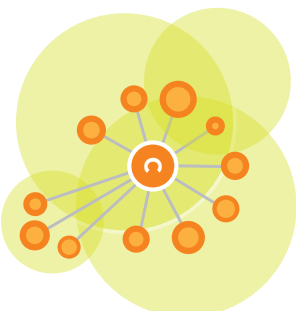
## Learning Network



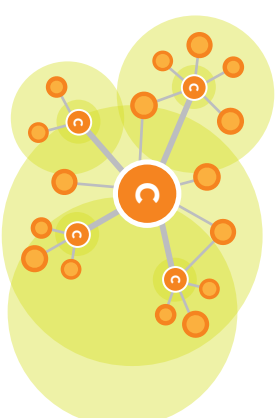
## Cooperative Partnership



## 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.



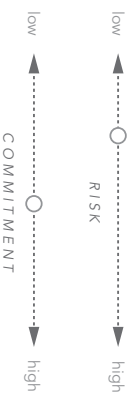
Partners are **loosely committed** to high-level strategic priorities for learning and communication.

**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

fundors. 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.

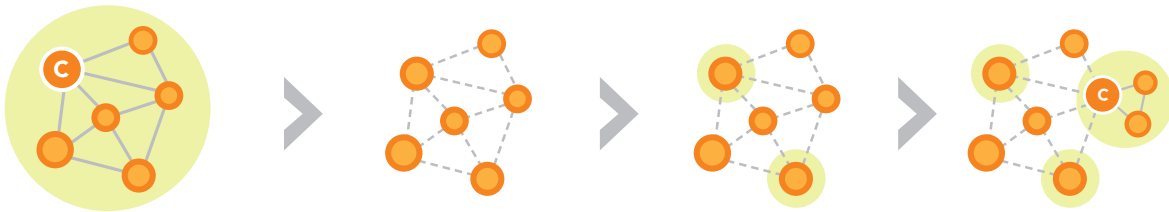


Figure 2

# A Roadmap for Partnerships with Different Funding Options



## Scenario A Investment in Accelerated Implementation

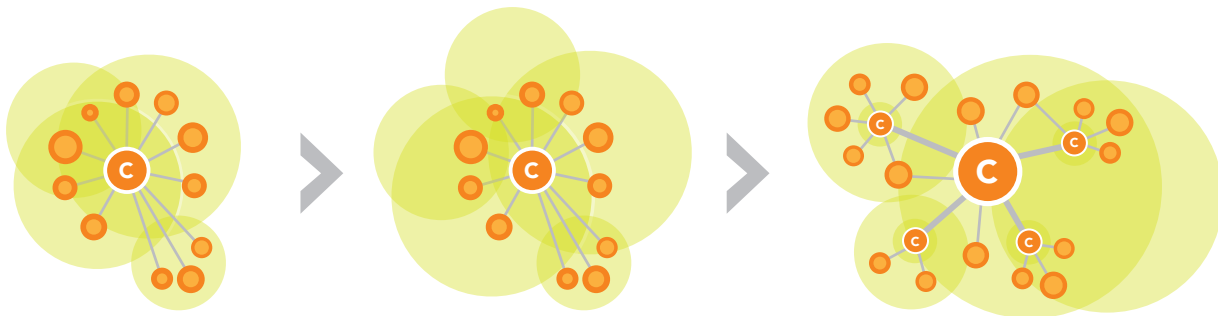


Partners develop a focused strategic action plan and raise enough funds to complete priority actions.

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

---

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

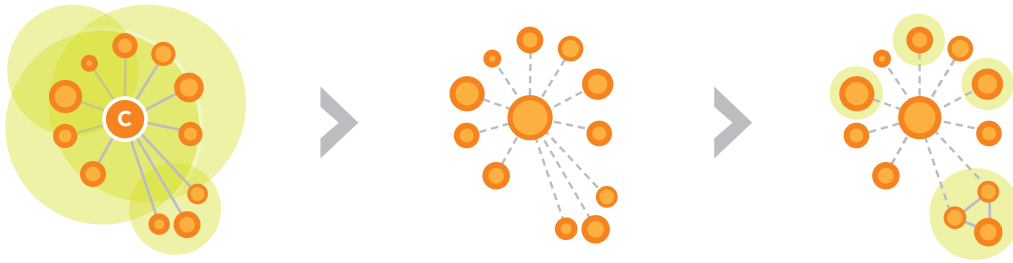


Partners create a long-term strategic action plan and secure adequate funding to support ongoing coordination and implementation of collaborative projects.

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*

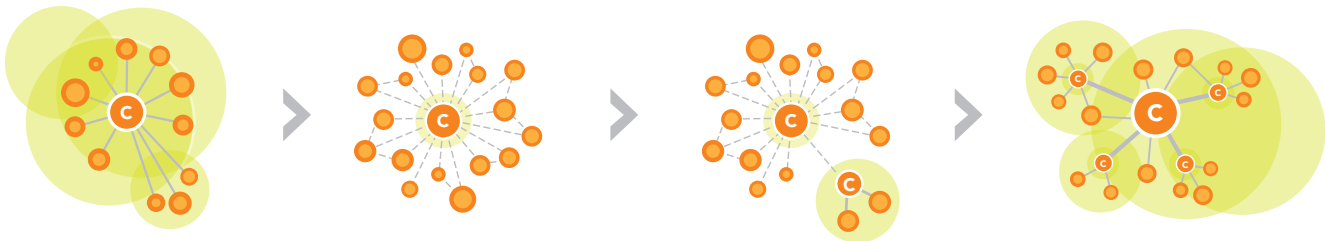


Partners create a long-term strategic action plan, but implementation funding is not secured for the partnership, only grants to individual projects.

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 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*



*“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*

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.

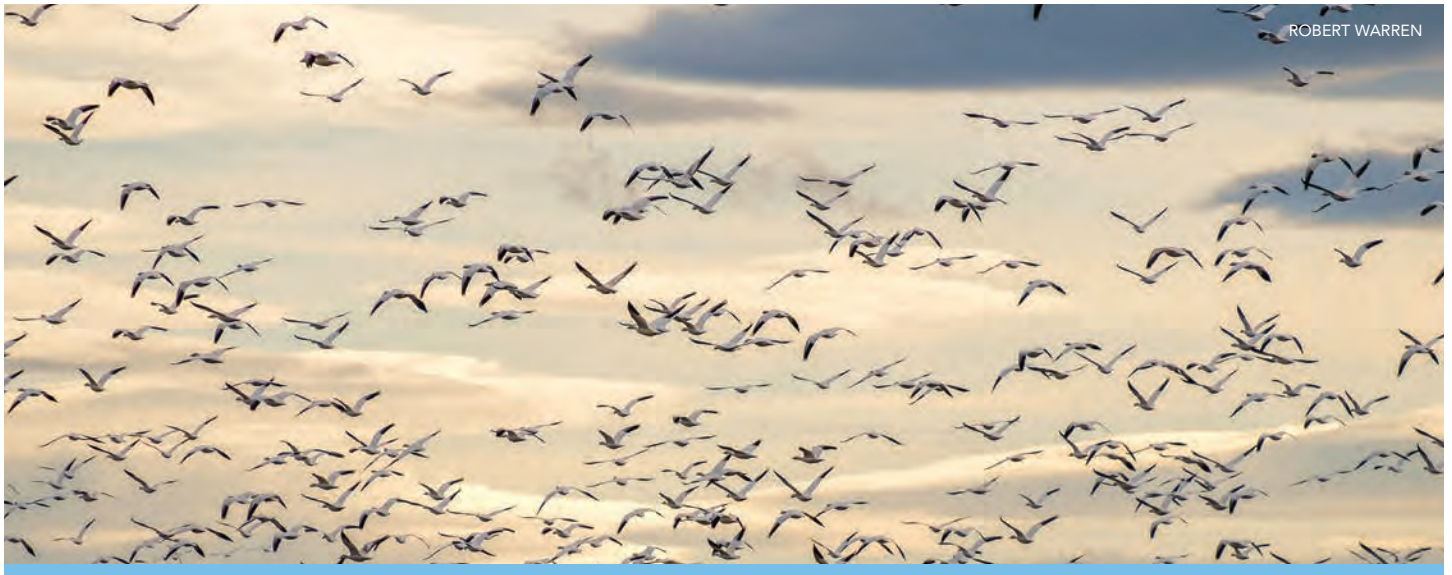
Finally, relative to assumptions about sustainability, partnerships did not want to question OWEB's optimism that they would be able to attract new funding after the end of an Implementation or Development FIP grant, yet they did have questions about where the funding would come from and what realistic 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.

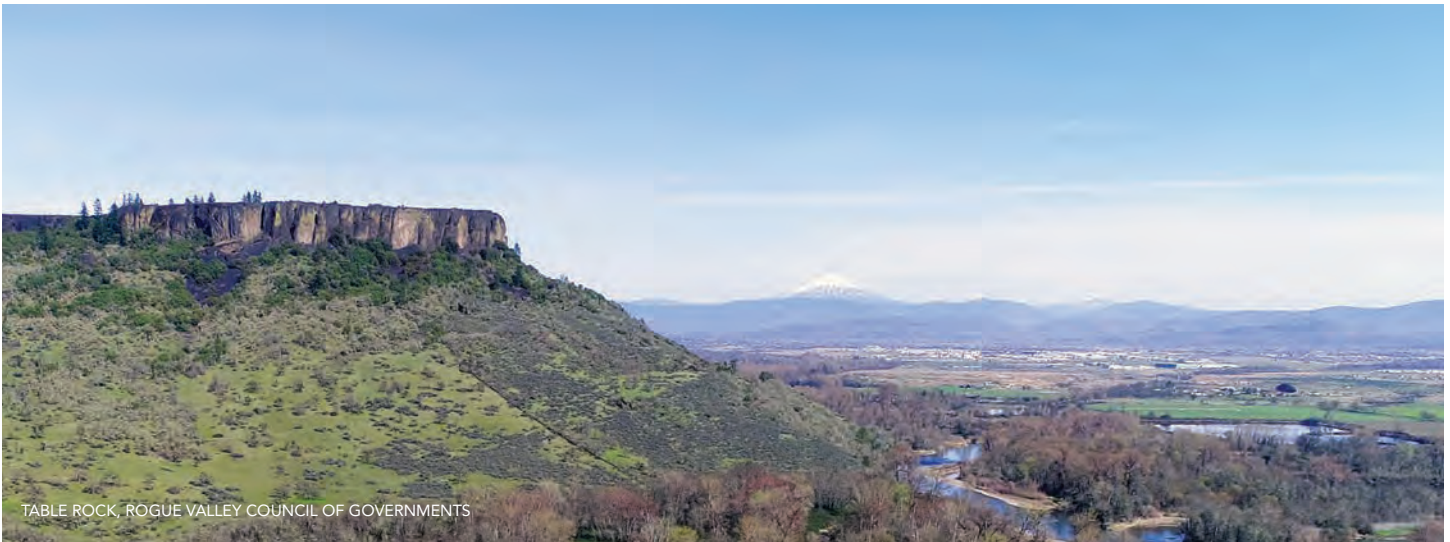
*“A heartfelt thank you for the support OWEB has given us. And I appreciate this study. It’s a good way for the funding organizations to understand what’s going on without a bunch of bias or perceived bias. I hope some of my comments have been helpful in that way.”*

*“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.



## 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.**

# References

- Arnold, J. S., M. Koro-Ljungberg, and W. Bartels. 2012. "Power and Conflict in Adaptive Management: Analyzing the Discourse of Riparian Management on Public Lands." *Ecology and Society* 17(1): 19. <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss1/art19/>
- Brouwer, H., J. Woodhill, M. Hemmati, K. Verhoosel and S. van Vugt. 2015. The MSP guide: how to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Centre for Development Innovation, part of the Dienst Landbouwkundig Onderzoek Foundation: Wageningen, Netherlands. <http://www.mspguide.org/msp-guide>.
- Brown, M., S. Gillis, T. Lord and K. Thompson. 2016. Lessons from aligning collective impact funders in Seattle. Plenary discussion from the Collective Impact Forum. June 6, Seattle, WA. <http://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/lessons-aligning-collective-impact-funders-seattle>
- Brown, M. and N. Salafsky. 2004. Learning about Learning Networks. Foundations of Success.
- Charmaz, K. 2006. Constructing grounded theory. London: Sage.
- Cigler, B. A. 1999. Pre-conditions for the emergence of multicommunity collaborative organizations. *Policy Studies Review* 16(1):86-102.
- Conservation Measures Partnership. 2013. Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, Version 3.0. April.
- Habana-Hafner, S., H. B. Reed and Associates. 1989. Partnerships for Community Development: Resources for Practitioners and Trainers. Center for Community and Organizational Development: University of Massachusetts, Amherst. [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=cie\\_communitydevelopment](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=cie_communitydevelopment)
- Kania, M. and M. Kramer. 2011. Collective Impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact).
- Mandell, M. P. 2001. Collaboration through network structures for community building efforts. *National Civic Review* 90(3):279.
- Mandell, M. P. and R. Keast. 2008. Evaluating the effectiveness of interorganizational relations through networks. *Public Management Review* 10(6):715-731.
- Sanginga, P. C., C. A. Chitsike, J. Njuki, S. Kaaria, and R. Kanzikwera. 2007. Enhanced learning from multi-stakeholder partnerships: Lessons from the Enabling Rural Innovation in Africa Programme. *Natural Resources Forum* 31(4):273-285.
- Scarlett, L. 2013. Collaborative adaptive management: challenges and opportunities. *Ecology and Society* 18(3):26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05762-180326>
- Senge, P. 2006. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday.
- Susskind, L., A. E. Camacho, and T. Schenk. 2012. A critical assessment of collaborative adaptive management in practice. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 49:47-51. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2011.02070.x>
- Thompson, K. 2014. Collective impact: Funder, heal thyself. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact\\_funder\\_heal\\_thyself](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact_funder_heal_thyself)
- Wenger, E., R. McDermott, and W. M. Snyder. 2002. *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Harvard Business School.

# 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?

Jennifer Arnold [jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com](mailto:jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com)

### 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.





ECHO LOGICAL RESEARCH



© 2018 RECIPROCITY CONSULTING LLC



# Partnership Learning Project



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

PREPARED BY

**Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D.**  
RECIPROCITY CONSULTING, LLC

October 2023

# 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, in alphabetical order:

*Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Partnership*  
*Baker Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Team*  
*Clackamas Partnership*  
*Deschutes Basin Partnership*  
*East Cascades Oak Partnership*  
*Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership*  
*Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative*  
*Hood River Basin Partnership*  
*John Day Basin Partnership*  
*Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network*  
*Oregon Central Coast Estuary Collaborative*  
*Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse*  
*Partners of the North Santiam*  
*Pure Water Partners*  
*Rogue Basin Partnership*  
*Rogue Forest Partners*  
*Salmon SuperHwy*  
*Siskiyou Coast Estuaries Partnership, formerly*  
*Wild Coast Estuaries Partnership*  
*Siuslaw Coho Partnership*  
*Upper Willamette Stewardship Network*  
*Umpqua Basin Partnership*  
*Wallowa Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership*  
*Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership*  
*Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group*

Thank you to everyone who shared your experiences and insights. We hope this report will support your continued success. We will recognize you in any publications resulting from this work.

**FRONT COVER** Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group. Early winter weather adds frost to the project at Green Island.  
STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

**BACK COVER** Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group. An aerial view of the FIP III project at Green Island.  
STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

**REPORT DESIGN & GRAPHICS** CASEY DAVIS

Ongoing dialogue with OWEB staff was foundational to this project. The following staff took findings to heart, reflected on their own learning and pushed forward meaningful program changes, even over the course of this study (in alphabetical order):

*Lisa Charpilloz Hanson, Executive Director*  
*Ken Fetcho, Effectiveness Monitoring Coordinator*  
*Miriam Forney, Land Acquisitions Coordinator*  
*Eric Hartstein, Board and Legislative Policy Coordinator*  
*Audrey Hatch, Conservation Outcomes Coordinator*  
*Denise Hoffert, Partnership Coordinator*  
*Jillian McCarthy, Partnership Coordinator*  
*Stephanie Page, Deputy Director*  
*Courtney Schaff, Monitoring and Reporting Manager*  
*Eric Williams, Grant Programs Manager*

We also honor the late **Andrew Dutterer**, former OWEB Partnership Coordinator, who was a champion of OWEB's partnership-focused investments throughout the early years of the program.

The recommendations in this report were refined through collaboration with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation team, including two subconsultants, who collectively have been working with OWEB over the past seven years to support the evolution of the FIP program, including direct support to many of the FIP partnerships:

*Robert Warren, Bonneville Environmental Foundation*  
*Lauren Mork, Upper Deschutes Watershed Council and*  
*Ann Moote, Mamut Consulting, LLC*



## ABOUT RECIPROCITY CONSULTING

Reciprocity Consulting, LLC is a women-owned small business based in Tacoma, Washington that provides customized support to strengthen organizations, engage communities and build resilient, collaborative partnerships emphasizing equity, diversity and inclusion.

Founder Jennifer S. Arnold, Ph.D. has over 20 years of experience in research, facilitation, and training focused on engaging diverse people in collaborative learning and decision-making to have lasting positive impacts in our communities and our environment.

# Partnership Learning Project

## A THREE-PART REPORT

- 1 PART ONE** explores what it takes to initiate or formalize a partnership and work through the growing pains of planning and governance, synthesizing learning from eight partnerships that received P-TA grants.
- 2 PART TWO** explores the dynamic nature of partnerships and the resources, support and guidance from funders that can build resiliency and boost impact, synthesizing learning from six partnerships that received FIP grants.
- 3 PART THREE** develops a refined framework to understand partnership performance and resilience and examines four specific strategies to enhance performance, synthesizing learning from twenty-four partnerships that received FIP and/or P-TA grants.



# Common Terms in OWEB Programs

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) 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) Grant** is a six-year OWEB grant of up to \$12 million that is awarded to high-performing partnerships with a strategic action plan and a formalized decision-making process to implement on-the-ground restoration projects addressing ecological priorities, which are defined by the OWEB Board. Although the goal is to allocate all funding within the six-year timeframe, most partnerships will take longer to implement the funded projects.

**A FIP Restoration Initiative** refers to the work that will be completed with the FIP grant.

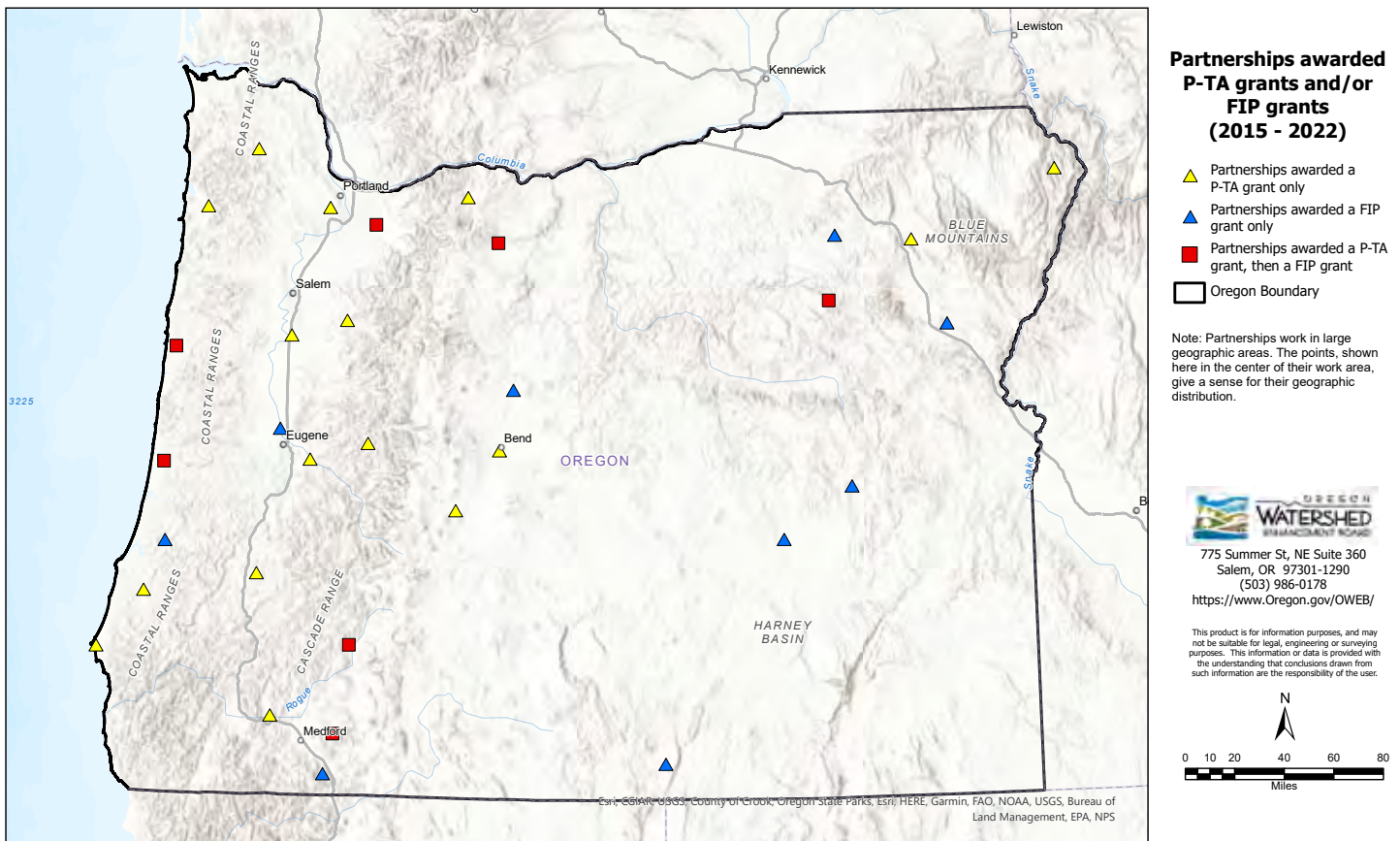
## Board-identified Priorities for FIP Investments

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

**FIP funding categories** include partnership coordination, stakeholder engagement, technical assistance, restoration, land and water acquisition and monitoring. Partnerships awarded a FIP grant submit project-level grant applications in these categories at least once a biennium.

**For the FIP Project-Level Technical Review**, OWEB facilitates a team of technical experts to review project applications with the goal of fine-tuning project design. Because the FIP grants include a list of approved projects for six years, reviewers are not asked to approve or reject projects, but if significant changes are needed, reviewers can ask applicants to make revisions and resubmit.

**A Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA) Grant** is an OWEB grant of up to \$150,000 for up to three years that is awarded to partnerships to i) develop or update a strategic action plan, ii) strengthen their governance and decision-making and/or iii) support ongoing coordination of a partnership. This was formerly called a Capacity Building FIP grant and a Development FIP grant.



# Common Terms Found in this Report

**Accountability** refers to a shared responsibility to check-in on performance or follow-through with respect to informal or formal agreements.

**Capacity** refers to the time, energy, resources and/or skills needed to undertake an action or activity. In the context of funders and non-profit organizations, capacity often refers to the funding needed for to pay for people's time to do work.

**Expanding the circle** refers to the intentional effort of including new people, organizations, government agencies and/or tribes in some aspect of a partnership's work, sometimes with a focus on including new partners.

**A partnership** refers to two or more organizations voluntarily working together to advance goals that cannot be accomplished independently. Non-voluntary partnerships, created through statute, have different structures and mechanisms of accountability and are not the focus of this study.

**Performance** refers to the ability of a partnership to achieve their goals and make an impact.

**Resilience** refers to the capacity of a partnership to withstand stressors and undergo change, while maintaining the integrity of the partnership's vision, identity and focus (adapted for partnerships from Walker et al. 2004).

**A theory of change** describes the rationale and underlying assumptions for how strategies and actions are expected to lead to short-term, intermediate and long-term goals.

**Underrepresented groups** refers to demographic groups or types of organizations that are have less involvement or influence than you would expect given their presence in an area. Special considerations are given to groups potentially impacted or able to contribute to an effort. Groups can be underrepresented because of historical patterns that restrict their power and influence – or because their interests do not easily align or overlap with the effort among other reasons.





**OWEB** aims to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration across the state by investing in and supporting **high-performing partnerships**.

**A Partnership** refers to two or more organizations voluntarily working together to advance goals that cannot be accomplished independently.

## Why partnerships?

**High-performing partnerships** bring together the skills, capacities, perspectives and relationships from different organizations and individuals. Partners learn together, plan together and in many contexts act together to advance ecological restoration at larger scales and in more complex landscapes.

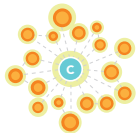
# OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD'S THEORY of CHANGE for PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENTS

## Building up Partnerships

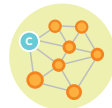
## Impact of Partnerships

### Partnerships across Oregon

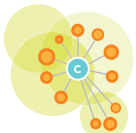
- Partnerships across the state work together to **plan for and implement restoration** at different scales, geographies and focus areas.
- Each has a unique structure and function, which may change over time as their work evolves and as they respond to changes in leadership, funding, policies and external events.



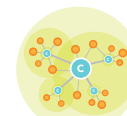
Learning-oriented



Project-oriented



Planning-oriented



Systems-oriented

(see OWEB's Partnership Types document to learn more)

### OWEB Investments in Partnerships

OWEB invests in the following **resources and funding opportunities** to boost partnership performance and resilience alongside ecological and social benefits:

#### Resource Guides

Self-guided resources accessible to all partnerships:

- Strategic Action Planning
- Monitoring
- Adaptive Management
- Partnership Governance

#### Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA) grants

- Competitive grants open to all partnerships across the state
- Funding to support planning, improved governance and/or coordination of a partnership

#### Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grants

- Highly competitive grants open to partnerships that address ecological priorities identified by the OWEB board (see list below)
- Multi-million dollar funding over a longer time frame to implement projects and accelerate restoration

#### Grantee forums for peer learning, training and networking

#### FIP Ecological Priorities

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

### Increased Partnership Performance & Resilience

- With these investments, partnerships will attract new funders, compete well for grants and secure funds over the timescales needed to achieve restoration goals.

We expect partnerships will be:

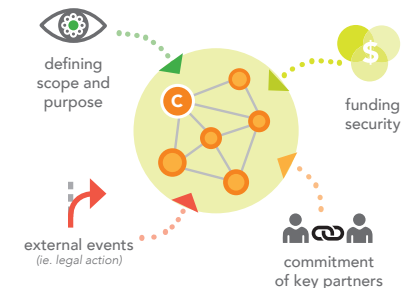
- Better **coordinated**, drawing on partners' strengths and reducing duplication
- Better able to **engage diverse constituencies**
- Better able to **work through challenges**, including scaling up and working in complex landscapes
- Better able to **secure resources**
- Better able to **incorporate best available science** and collective learning, and
- More likely to **achieve their goals and sustain their impact**.

### Ecological & Social Benefits

- High performing partnerships working across the state are able to **advance restoration at larger scales and sustain benefits** in terms of:
  - Healthy, resilient watersheds** (*Ecological*)
  - Healthy people and communities** (*Quality of Life*)
  - Knowledge of how to restore watersheds** (*Learning*)
  - Broad care and stewardship of watersheds by Oregonians** (*Social*)
  - Adaptive capacity of communities to support their watersheds** (*Community*)
  - Strengthened economies emerging from healthy watersheds** (*Economic*)

### 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.



# Table of Contents

Common Terms  
Map of Funded Partnerships  
Theory of Change

---

- 1** Executive Summary
- 8** Introduction
- 11** Guiding Questions
- 12** Methods
- 13** Findings
  - 14** Partnership Types
  - 27** Partnership Resilience
  - 40** High-Performing Partnerships
  - 43** Strategies to Enhance Performance and Accountability
    - 44** 1. *Trust among partners to ask challenging questions*
    - 49** 2. *External technical review for FIP projects*
    - 53** 3. *Expanding the circle*
    - 64** 4. *Tracking progress and telling the story of impact*
- 72** Synthesis: Partnership Types, Performance and Resilience
- 75** Synthesis: OWEB's Role in Supporting Partnership Performance and Resilience
- 76** Conclusion
- 77** References
- 79** Appendix A – Partnerships Awarded FIP and/or P-TA grants 2015-2022
- 80** Appendix B – Survey questions

# Key Graphics

- 10** Timeline of OWEB Grant Awards
- 16** A Typology of Partnership Types
- 33** Threads of Partnership Resilience
- 41** A Framework for Understanding High-Performing Partnerships





Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group – CFWWC Projects Manager repairing Western Bluebird Boxes at Native Oaks Ridge.

PHOTO / COAST FORK WILLAMETTE WATERSHED COUNCIL

## Executive Summary

When OWEB first started their partnership-focused investments in the 2015-17 biennium, they recognized that they needed to learn more about how partnerships functioned and how OWEB, as a funder, could best support partnership success and the likelihood for impact.

OWEB contracted with independent social scientist Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. for the Partnership Learning Project Parts 1 and 2 to confidentially hear from grantees and understand what it takes to initiate a partnership and how funders can support performance and resilience. OWEB took those lessons learned to evolve the program. Now five years later, they initiated Part 3 to develop a refined framework for understanding partnership resilience and performance.

### OWEB's partnership-focused investments:

#### P-TA

#### Partnership Technical Assistance grants<sup>1</sup>

support planning and coordination for up to three years

#### FIP

#### Focused Investment Partnership grants<sup>2</sup>

focus on implementing strategic actions to address a Board-identified ecological priority over a six-year timeframe.

<sup>1</sup> P-TA grants were formerly called Development FIP and Capacity Building FIP grants and originally provided funding for up to two years.

<sup>2</sup> Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grants were formerly called Implementation FIP grants.

# Guiding Questions

Working closely with OWEB, we developed the following guiding questions to more deeply explore partnership structure, resilience and four specific aspects of performance:

★ **Partnership types**

What aspects of partnership structure, function and context promote greater understanding and clearer expectations for performance among partners and funders?

★ **Partnership Resilience**

What elements of resilience help partnerships withstand changes, such as changes in funding, changes in leadership and other disruptive events?

★ **Partnership Performance**

What does high performance look like for partnerships?

★ **Strategies to Enhance Accountability and Performance**

How do partnerships maintain accountability and a high level of performance?

*Specifically looking at:*

- 1 Trust among partners to work through challenging questions together
- 2 External technical review at the project level for FIP grantees
- 3 Expanding the circle of people involved in a partnership’s work, and
- 4 Tracking progress and telling the story of impact.



Deschutes Basin Partnership PHOTO / CROOKED RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

## Methods

In October 2022, Jennifer reached out to 31 funded partnerships inviting participation through confidential interviews, group discussions and an online survey emphasizing that this was a voluntary study and not a requirement or expectation associated with grant funding. Partnerships with at least two people participating received a \$250 stipend.

Between October 2022 and June 2023, 72 people representing 24 partnerships participated in the survey, individual interviews and/or group discussions, including 21 partnerships that provided enough detail to estimate their partnership type.

The data were analyzed using a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Charmaz 2006) to identify patterns relevant to the guiding questions. Findings were further developed with iterative rounds of feedback and opportunities for dialogue with partnerships and separately with OWEB staff. Findings from partnerships are paired alongside insights and reflections from OWEB, shown as green speech bubbles throughout.



Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse – Working with landowners.

PHOTO / LAKE COUNTY SWCD

# Findings

Reflecting on the foundational assumptions of OWEB’s partnership-focused investments, this study found many examples of partnerships accomplishing more complex restoration work and at larger scales than would be possible with organizations working independently.

## Partnership types as a tool for setting expectations

As people in this study more deeply considered the structure and function of the partnerships they participated in, their reflections informed a revised typology, or description of [partnership types](#). Partnerships embraced the value of this tool for reflection and setting expectations internally and with funders. Some partnerships could clearly trace their evolution from one partnership type to another, while other partnerships described different layers to their

partnership’s work seeing themselves simultaneously operating as multiple partnership types.

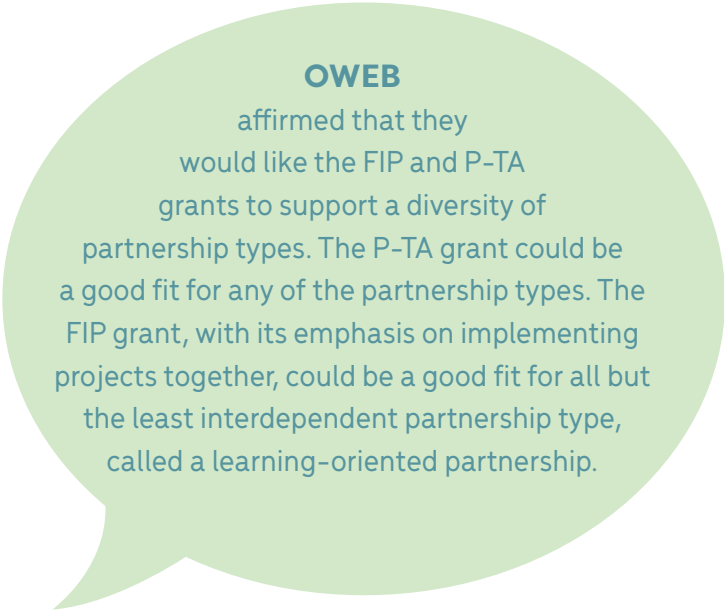
## Partnership resilience

Echoing findings from Part 2, funding was found to be a consistent driver of partnership commitment and performance. When other aspects of performance were going well and partners wanted to work more collaboratively, more funding enabled them to prioritize shared work, solidify their commitments and boost their collective performance. The FIP grant was like “rocket fuel” in the words of one partnership. In that sense, there was consistent evidence that the FIP program boosted partnership resilience, as expected in OWEB’s theory of change.

Partnerships that were not able to secure funding to operate their partnership as planned were found to follow a few trajectories:

- Maintain their structure for a period of time with lower levels of activity,
- Shift to a less resource-intensive structure,
- Reorganize as a new partnership with a shifted scope, geography and/or core partners, or
- Dissolve fairly quickly with partners advancing their work independently.

Many partnerships described overcoming severe stressors, most commonly loss of a key leader or coordinator, and emerging with a greater sense of trust and pride in shared accomplishments. In a few cases, the stressors led to instability and a reorganization or dissolution of the partnership.



*“Funding has driven change. A lack of funding for a long time meant that we were [only] able to accomplish goals that had funding associated with them, or were directed by funders. Now that the partnership has received a FIP, I’m hopeful that we will be able to properly staff and support the partnership to achieve the lofty goals laid out in our Strategic Action Plan.”*



Several elements or ‘threads’ of partnership resilience emerged from this study that individually or collectively contribute to a partnership’s ability to withstand stressors and maintain its integrity and focus:

- **Camaraderie** among partners
- **Success** that creates opportunities for more success
- **Formalized commitments** in the form of plans, agreements and governance documents
- **Consistent funding** especially for coordination
- **Organizational anchors** that provide stability for the partnership and mentoring for smaller organizations
- **Shared leadership** that represents the partnership over individual interests
- **Openness** to learning and change, and
- **External relationships** with people and organizations who can introduce new perspectives and resources.

Greater awareness and focus on these elements will help partnerships prepare for and navigate the challenges that come up.



Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership – A partnership meeting at the Honey Creek Town Diversion. PHOTO / GRACE HASKINS

## High-performing partnerships

Considering what it takes to perform well, four categories of performance emerged from the data: 1) Clarity and Direction, 2) Action, 3) Learning and 4) Alignment. Clarity and Direction were important to all partnership types, while the other categories were more or less important for a particular partnership type to perform well overall.

Defining performance in this way relative to partnership types provides a tool for partnerships and funders to have deeper conversations about how a partnership is structured and why – along with realistic expectations for performance and funding associated with a particular structure. These conceptual tools are designed to be used in dialogue to help set expectations together, rather than as a formula for partnerships to follow.

## Strategies to enhance performance and accountability

Fundamental to OWEB’s theory of change is that the FIP and P-TA programs are structured in ways that boost partnership performance and accountability.

For this study with a focus on continuous improvement, OWEB was particularly interested in:

- 1 trust among partners** to ask challenging questions,
- 2 external technical review** of FIP projects,
- 3 expanding the circle** of people involved in a partnership and
- 4 tracking progress** and telling the story of impact.

The survey questions and interview guides ([See Appendix](#)) were structured to illicit partnerships’ experiences and suggestions for OWEB in these areas. Detailed findings for each of these sections are included in the full report, including steps OWEB is already taking to implement recommendations.



## Synthesis - OWEB's Role in Supporting Partnership Performance and Resilience

Partnerships have been eager to participate in the FIP program because the scale of funding over six years allows them to tackle more ambitious projects over larger landscapes. However, there was evidence that this hard push for implementation has sometimes kept them from pausing to check-in on trust, reflect on whether projects are meeting strategic priorities and consider opportunities to expand their circle. Yet, there were also many examples of partnerships effectively scaling up their work, while still dedicating time to reflection and strategic thinking. Overall, there is evidence that the supportive culture within OWEB mitigates for this tension to perform at an accelerated pace and that benefits for performance and resilience outweigh the costs and stressors.

Overall, OWEB's investments in partnership planning, governance, coordination, project implementation and monitoring have been found to be well-positioned to support high performance and resilience. This study finds that the biggest near-term change that OWEB could make to support partnership resilience would be streamlining administrative burdens from the FIP program so that partnerships could dedicate more of their time to the operation of their partnership – specifically, streamlining project applications, technical review, reporting guidelines for monitoring and use of the online application portal and grants database. OWEB is working on integrating some of the recommendations from this study, while others like the database are not possible at this time.

Further investments in institutional support for monitoring, such as near-term investments in peer learning opportunities and training workshops, were also identified as a high priority for investment to support resilience. Monitoring is especially important since partnerships who can learn from their efforts and tell the story of their success have been better positioned for success and additional funding. OWEB holds a gathering for FIP and/or P-TA grantees every biennium, and OWEB staff are interested in more frequent peer learning or peer mentoring opportunities. However, they are considering what is possible given their staff capacity. Over the long-term, support for partnerships to expand their circle, including an emphasis on underrepresented groups, has the potential to boost resilience by tapping into the creative potential of broader constituencies and more diverse funding sources.



OWEB-BEF retreat, January 2023. PHOTO / JENNIFER ARNOLD

## Conclusion

Overall, most of the assumptions of OWEB’s partnership-focused investments have held true with some fine-tuning of assumptions about performance and resilience. OWEB’s effort is striking in its long-term commitment to invest in a breadth of partnerships working in different ecosystems across the state, its openness to learn alongside partners and its commitment to continually evolve the program to have the greatest impact possible.

However, program innovations must fit within the funding OWEB has for staff and infrastructure such as the online application portal and grants database – funding which is decided through the legislative budget process and relatively modest compared with their large funding portfolio. Program innovations must also fit within the statutes that govern the use of lottery funds for the benefit of water quality, watershed function, native fish, wildlife, plants and ecosystems. As OWEB continues to clarify their values and commitment to

equity and environmental justice and as they learn from ongoing innovation led by partnerships and tribes, the interpretation of these statutes may play a key role in the future evolution of their partnership-focused investments.

OWEB’s focused commitment to learning and adaptation in support of high performing partnerships has yielded many insights and practical tools that will be of use to partnerships and funders working in restoration and across sectors.



Salmon SuperHwy – Fish salvage for Clear Creek with multiple partners present: ODFW, USFS, Tillamook County Public Works. PHOTO / JUSTIN BAILIE





John Day Basin Partnership - Members and agency partners tour a process-based restoration project funded by the FIP in the Thirtymile Watershed, May 2023.  
PHOTO / HERB WINTERS





Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership – ODFW Fish Biologist Justin Miles doing fish salvage before Relict Diversion Construction. PHOTO / BRANDI NEIDER

## Introduction

In the 2015-2017 biennium, the OWEB Board dedicated a portion of their spending plan to invest in restoration work carried out by high-performing partnerships with the belief that partnerships can work at a larger scale and more effectively tackle complex restoration challenges than individual organizations. They created two grant offerings: a multi-million dollar Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant focused on implementing their strategic action plan in a specific geography over a six-year grant period and a Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA)<sup>3</sup> grant for partnerships to develop a strategic action plan or improve their governance.

When the first grants were awarded, OWEB recognized that this was a new area for their grantmaking and they wanted to learn more to inform the evolution of their programs. Their organizational culture is marked by openness to learning, responsiveness to feedback, commitment to continuous improvement and care for the relationships they have with partners and grantees throughout the state. They have an impressive funding portfolio with long-term dedicated funds from Measure 76 state lottery revenue, which gives them financial stability from which to evolve their programs. And yet their staffing and infrastructure is funded through the state legislative budgeting process, which is modest compared with the size of their funding portfolio. The evolution of their grant programs must also fit within the Oregon statutes that define how lottery funds can be spent for the benefit of water quality, watershed function, native fish, wildlife, plants and ecosystems.

---

<sup>3</sup> Formerly called a Development FIP grant and a Capacity Building FIP grant.



# Background

In 2017 and 2018, OWEB contracted with independent social scientist Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. of Reciprocity Consulting, LLC to conduct the Partnership Learning Project Parts I and II with the guiding questions:

- ★ What do partnerships need to be resilient and maintain a high level of performance?
- ★ How can OWEB improve and innovate their partnership-focused investments to support high-performing, resilient partnerships that can make progress toward desired ecological outcomes?

From Fall 2016 to Spring 2018, findings were developed from meetings with 14 funded partnerships, interviews with 47 individual partners and survey responses from 137 partners. Findings helped define the diversity of partnership types and the support they need to establish and evolve. The study also illuminated misconceptions about the two granting programs among other feedback.

OWEB applied findings from this project to acknowledge that their partnership-focused investments are intended to serve a range of partnership types and that partnerships are not expected to fit just one model of success. OWEB clarified that the P-TA planning grant was not intended to directly lead to a FIP grant. They made the following program changes to differentiate the two grant programs:

- Renamed the planning grant from a Capacity Building FIP grant to a Development FIP grant to a Partnership Technical Assistance grant, now completely removing FIP from the name.
- Moved the P-TA grant administratively to a different program, and
- Expanded eligibility requirements for P-TA applicants so that they do not have to focus on a Board-identified ecological priority, which is a requirement of FIP applicants.



Siuslaw Coho Partnership - Partners gather on Waite Ranch in preparation for implementing a large-scale restoration project. PHOTO / ELIZABETH GOWARD



Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse – Completed juniper and fencing projects. PHOTO / LAKE COUNTY SWCD

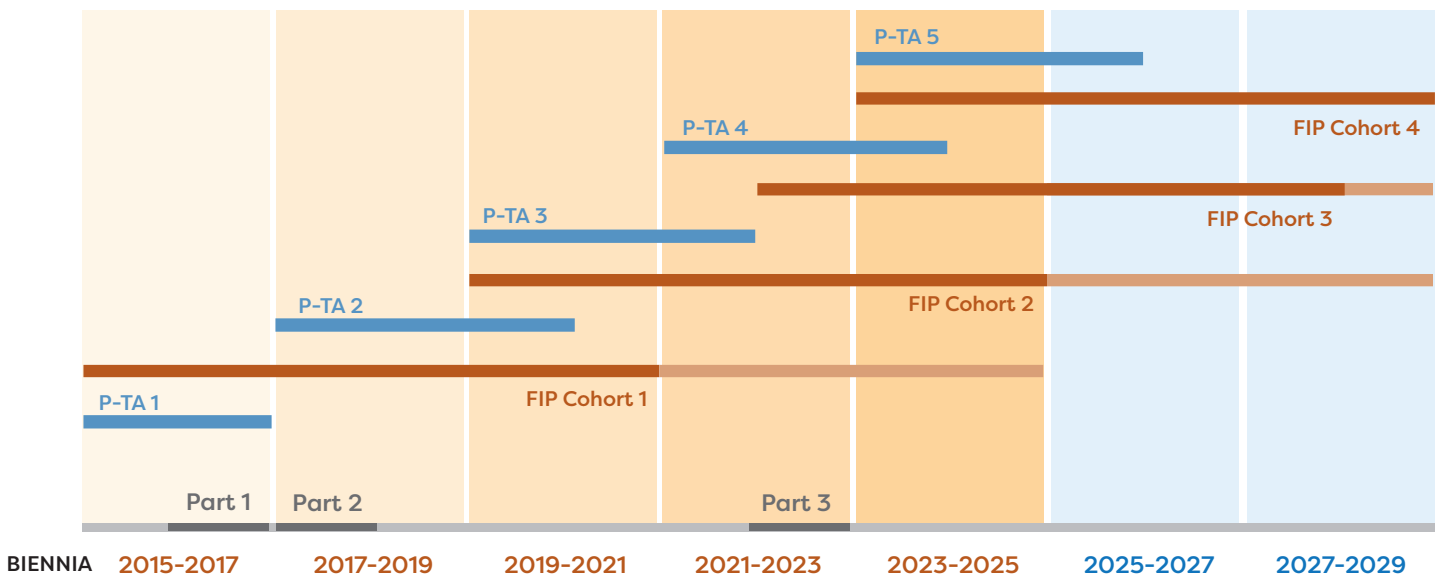
In response to the finding that capacity funding to coordinate a partnership was not covered by most funding sources, OWEB also added a new funding category to the P-TA grant offering called “partnership capacity” which could be used to fund a facilitator and/or staff time for coordination. They also allowed partnerships to apply for a P-TA grant for partnership capacity funding only, whereas previously P-TA funding needed to be used for strategic planning and/or strengthening a partnership’s governance. OWEB emphasized that partnerships finishing a FIP grant could apply for a P-TA grant for partnership coordination only or to update their strategic action plan and governance documents.

In all, the Partnership Learning Project Parts I and II helped clarify program goals and assumptions, which OWEB used to provide clearer guidance for grantees and prospective applicants.

Now, more than six years after the first grants were awarded and just as the first cohort of FIP grantees are working to complete their final round of funded projects, OWEB initiated the Partnership Learning Project Part 3, again contracting with Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D., to more deeply understand partnership performance and resilience in specific areas defined by the guiding questions below. This research study was implemented with iterative cycles of reflection and feedback throughout to promote collaborative learning and growth for the benefit of both OWEB and the partnerships.

### Timeline of OWEB Grant Awards with Partnership Learning Project Parts 1, 2 and 3

The dark orange line indicates the duration of a FIP grant award, but projects can take another 2-4 years after funding is awarded to complete, indicated with the lighter orange line. This means the work of a FIP initiative could extend 8-10 years in total.



# Guiding Questions

- ★ **What aspects of partnership structure, function and context are most relevant to the goals of the P-TA and FIP grant offerings?**

*What tools support greater understanding and clarity among partners and funders?*

- ★ **How do partnerships build resilience to withstand changes, such as changes in funding, changes in leadership and other disruptive events?**

**Partnership dynamics:** *How do partnerships respond to sudden changes in funding or leadership? How do partnerships anticipate their structure, funding or focus may change after the current OWEB grant is complete?*

**Threads of resilience:** *What are threads, or elements, that individually or together allow a partnership to more effectively respond to changes and maintain their focus?*

**Barriers to increasing resilience:** *What barriers do partnerships face in building resilience? How can the P-TA and FIP grants support greater resilience?*

- ★ **What does high performance look like for partnerships?**

*Are there differences by partnership type?*

*What tools support greater understanding among partners and funders?*

- ★ **How do partnerships maintain a high level of performance and accountability?**

- 1 Trust to ask challenging questions:** *How do partnerships build the capacity to ask challenging questions of each other and direct their collective work where it is most likely to have the greatest impact?*
- 2 External technical review:** *Within the FIP Program, in what ways does OWEB's technical review process add value and support high performance? What are areas for improvement?*
- 3 Expanding their circle:** *To what extent are partnerships working to expand their circle to enhance their accountability, relevance and ability to implement their theory of change? Expanding the circle refers to including new partners and/or expanding the circle of people who contribute to their work or benefit from it.*
- 4 Tracking progress and telling the story of impact:** *To what extent are partnerships able to track progress toward their goals by measuring long-term ecological outcomes and tell the story of their impact? What successes and challenges have they experienced? What adaptations or recommendations emerge?*



# Methods

To guarantee confidentiality and encourage candid feedback, OWEB contracted with independent social scientist Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. of Reciprocity Consulting, LLC.

Coordinating with OWEB staff, we sent out an email to the coordinators of 31 partnerships who received either a P-TA grant or a FIP grant. We excluded partnerships in the third cohort of FIP recipients who did not receive a P-TA grant since they had little interaction with the grant programs at the time the study began.

Partnership coordinators were asked to encourage everyone from their partnership to participate in whichever method they preferred: an online survey, a virtual individual conversation and/or a virtual group discussion. OWEB directly communicated with partnerships that participation was not a requirement of their grant and that whatever they shared would be confidential and not linked to their name or their partnership. All partnerships who had at least two people participating received a stipend of \$250 to demonstrate appreciation for their time and energy. Reminder emails were sent to encourage participation, including personal outreach to individuals suggested by other participants.

Altogether, 73 people representing 26 partnerships participated with some individuals representing more than one partnership. Twenty one partnerships provided enough detail to understand the structure and function of their partnership and estimate their partnership type, including how it has changed over time and how it relates to their performance and accomplishments.

The data were analyzed using a 'grounded theory' approach (Charmaz 2006) to identify patterns relevant to the guiding questions and develop theories about partnerships inductively from the data. Findings were further developed with iterative rounds of feedback and opportunities for dialogue with partnerships and separately with OWEB staff. Findings from partnerships



Deschutes Basin Partnership - Three Sisters Irrigation District Manager Marc Thalacker oversees canal piping, enabling flow restoration in the Creek.  
PHOTO / DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY

are paired alongside insights and reflections from OWEB relative to these findings, shown as green speech bubbles throughout. OWEB has begun making some improvements even during the course of this study.

Select quotes are shown throughout the text to highlight key findings. They represent individual perspectives that are meaningful to the larger picture, but may not be representative of all partnerships. [Brackets] indicate text added or modified for clarity or to protect confidentiality and ellipses ... indicate text omitted for brevity.

Some quantitative survey data are also presented throughout; however, these only represent a subset of the responses. Seven partnerships chose to participate in interviews and groups discussions only, including 29 people total. Their responses are not included in quantitative survey data, but their responses were not markedly different from the survey responses.

Preliminary findings were shared with OWEB at a January 2023 retreat focused on the evolution of the FIP and P-TA Programs in addition to discussions of findings and recommendations monthly throughout the spring and summer. Partnerships and OWEB staff had a chance to review the draft report and provide feedback, which has been incorporated into the final report.



# Findings

Reflecting on the foundational assumptions of OWEB’s partnership-focused investments, this study found many examples of partnerships accomplishing more complex restoration work and at larger scales than would be possible with individual organizations working independently.

*“Our initial hope was that the partnership would result in a much more cost-effective program implementation for our needs. As information evolved on the required costs of implementation, it is difficult to say if cost-effectiveness was an end-result, but we know we are getting a much better product for the community and the environment. And we have program strength in having so many partners committed to the same goals and project successes than if we had gone it alone. For that, it is well worth it and we will be at the table for a long time.”*



Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse – Landowner collaboration. PHOTO / LAKE COUNTY SWCD

# Partnership Types as a Tool for Setting Expectations

A typology, or description, of different partnership types was developed to promote dialogue about realistic expectations for partnership structure and function, not as a prescription for partnerships to follow.

This typology has its origins in the Public Administration literature (Mandel and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999), but was further developed using a 'grounded theory' analysis of the data from this study. As part of the Partnership Learning Project Parts 1 and 2, a typology of partnerships from the Public Administration literature was used that describes partnership types on a continuum from more autonomous to more interdependent (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999). The relative autonomy or interdependence influences the structure and function of the partnership and the level of funding needed to support operations and performance.

With greater independence and alignment, greater funding is needed to work through differences and hold each other accountable. In the Partnership Learning Project Parts 1 and 2, we developed the continuum adding details that emerged from a comparison of the data, for example describing differences in the partnership's purpose, role of the coordinator and funding needed to sustain specific parts of the structure and function (Arnold 2018).

**OWEB** said this description of partnership types resonated with them and they used it subsequently to talk with partnerships interested in the FIP and P-TA grants. However, OWEB shared feedback that the continuum, as a linear graphic with greater autonomy on the left and greater independence on the right, gave the impression that grantees should aspire to the partnership type on the right with the highest degree of collaboration and interdependency. However, this is not what they intended. **OWEB wants to support whatever type of partnership is best suited to advance their restoration goals.**



Pure Water Partners - Partners work to replant the Blue River Park as a part of ongoing fire response work in the McKenzie River valley. PHOTO / ELIZABETH GOWARD





Siuslaw Coho Partnership - Restoration Project Managers Kyle Terry (CTCLUSI) and Nathan LeClear (MRT) prepare to break ground at Waite Ranch, July 2023.  
PHOTO / ELIZABETH GOWARD

We also received consistent feedback that the partnership type names from the literature were confusing: Cooperative, coordinating and collaborative partnerships were too similar to easily remember. Also, although partnership types were described as a gradient, people often misinterpreted them as discrete types.

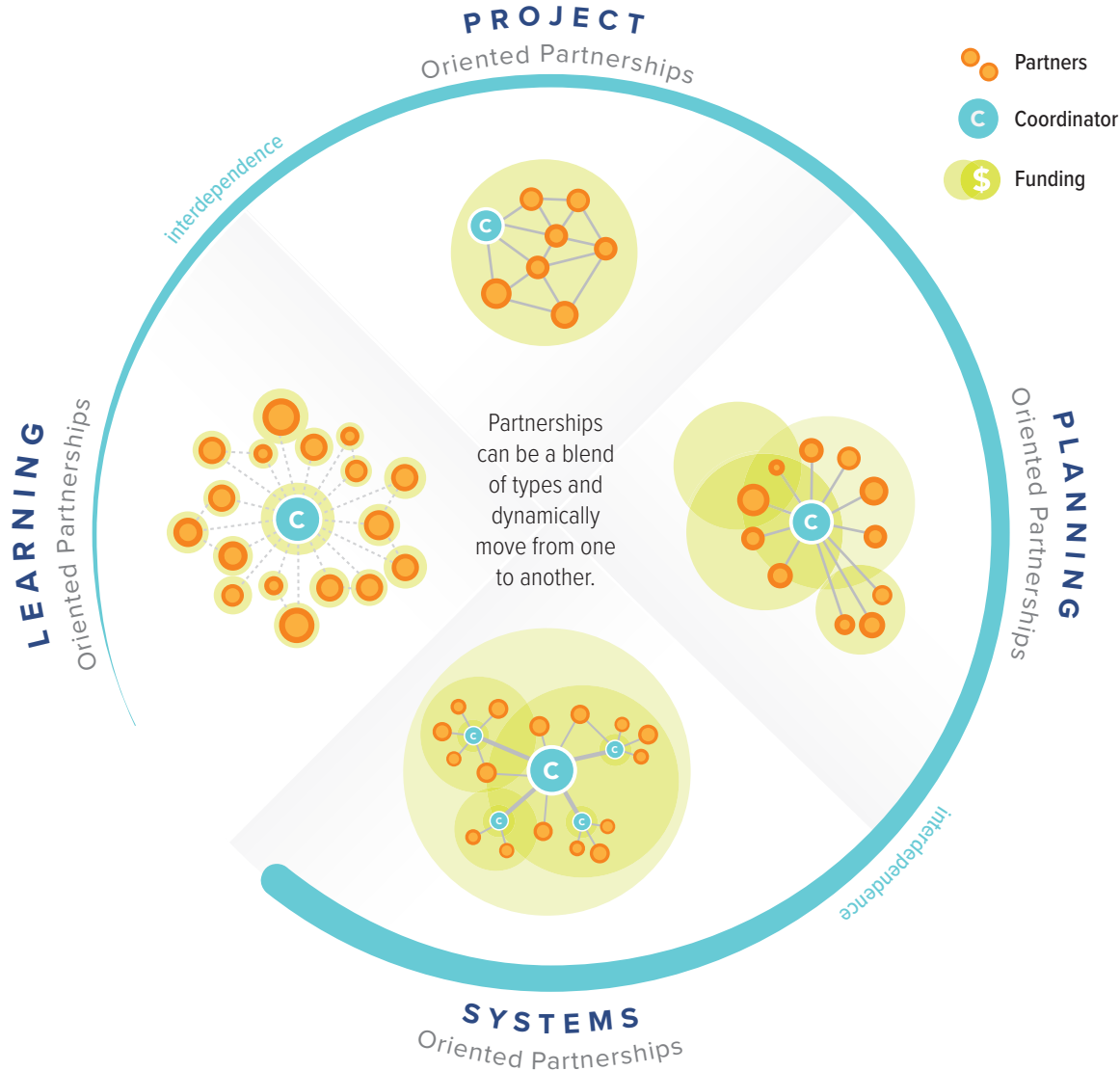
Incorporating this feedback, the partnership types are now described as a circular continuum with no assumed endpoint or preferred type. The types were also re-named – learning-oriented partnerships, project-oriented partnerships, planning-oriented partnerships and systems-oriented partnerships – to emphasize the focus of the collaborative work, which is correlated with the level of interdependence. Partnerships can still do various types of work, but they are named for the focus of their collaborative energy. For example, all partnership types may implement projects. A project-oriented partnership will focus their collaborative energy on coordinating and implementing projects, while a planning-oriented partnership will focus their collaborative energy achieving the goals of a long-term strategic action plan, which would include project implementation but also collaboration

in fundraising, monitoring and ongoing updates to their plan. A project-oriented partnership typically engages in planning at the beginning of their collaborative work together as they define priority actions and secure funding, but partners might not be committed to working together on an ongoing basis to reach long term goals.

To maintain confidentiality and minimize the influence on any future funding decisions, partnership types are not described with reference to specific partnerships, but rather fictionalized descriptions of each type were created by merging details from different partnerships that best fit each type. Some of the details from these descriptions may not match a particular partnership, even if it fits well within that type, because there is natural variation in how partnerships operate, even within a given type.

It is important to note that some partnerships may be a blend of different partnership types and others may not fit well into any partnership type if they do not have a well-defined focus or structure or if they are struggling to operate as intended.

The partnership types below are defined by the relative autonomy or interdependence of partners. This originates from the Public Administration literature (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999) and was further developed inductively through ‘grounded theory’ analysis of data from the partnerships in this study.



OWEB’s Partnership Technical Assistance grants would be suitable for any partnership type. OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership grants, with their focus on implementation, would be suitable for project-oriented, planning-oriented or systems-oriented partnerships.

# A TYPOLOGY OF Partnership Types

\$ Funding for Coordination    🔗 Interdependence among partners

## Learning-Oriented

Partners are **fully autonomous** with **little interdependence**.

Partners come together to tackle shared questions to improve strategies, practices or policies. Partners independently apply their learning. A coordinator serves as convener.



## Project-Oriented

Partners are **mostly autonomous** with **some interdependence**.

Partners go through an initial period of collaborative planning and commit to a set of shared actions. Their main focus is coordinating implementation, often with each partner leading their own projects. After projects are complete, the partnership may dissolve or reorganize around a new focus. A coordinator serves as a project manager, a role which may be rotated among partners.



## Planning-Oriented

Partners are **moderately interdependent**.

Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and work together to implement shared priorities. Individual partner organizations may have to shift how they operate to align with the partnership overall. A coordinator serves as a facilitator, planning coach and project manager, a role which is usually held by a partner organization who may also contract with an independent facilitator.



## Systems-Oriented

Partners are **greatly interdependent**.

Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and establish shared standards, practices and systems to hold each other accountable to systems change. They work through differences, achieve alignment and coordinate for implementation. A coordinator serves as collaborative leader, facilitator and project manager, a role which may be held by a partner or host organization who may also contract with independent facilitators.



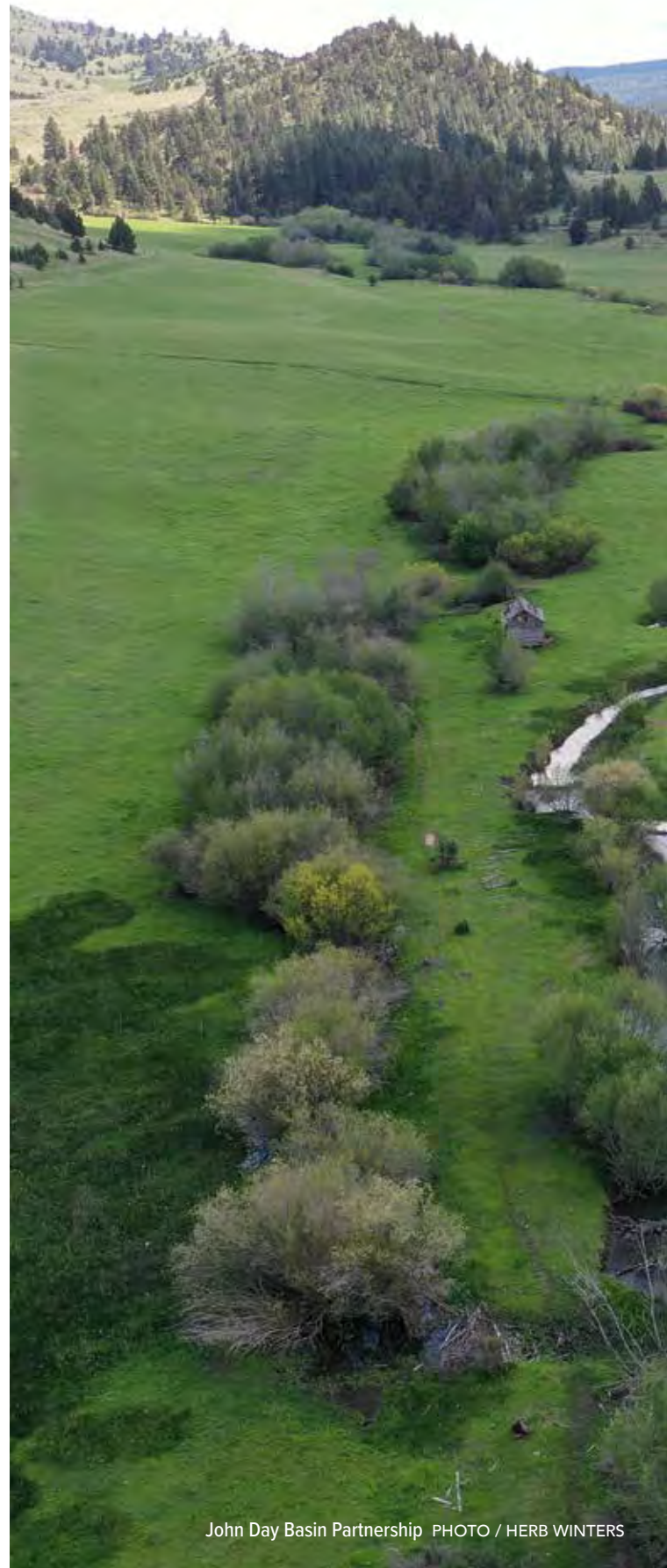


## Learning-oriented partnerships

Partners are fully autonomous. They come together to tackle shared questions to improve strategies, practice or policies. Partners independently apply their learning, or in some cases collaborate with one or a few other partners. A coordinator serves as an a convener. A partner organization may serve this role.

### A hypothetical learning-oriented partnership

- **Initiation** – A partnership forms around the desire to learn together and improve the use of a particular restoration treatment.
- **Structure** – The convener and leadership team frame up the issues, develop a schedule for regular meetings and organize workshops, conferences or trainings that may include experts and peer learning. They secure funding for the gatherings, communicate with partners about opportunities to participate and disseminate new learning.
- **High performance** – The partnership performs well when partners ask hard questions, integrate the latest science and engage in dialogue. When learning is salient to their work, individual partners apply what they learn to their individual projects. If the learning is salient to a broader policy context, partners might coordinate to share their findings with policymakers or advocacy organizations, individually advocating for a policy change that they developed collaboratively.
- **Potential evolution** – If a subset of partners find synergies in how they want to apply their learning, they might develop a project together, secure funding and implement it together, forming a project-oriented partnership within the larger partnership.
- **Potential evolution** – If partners want to work more closely together over a longer timeframe and they develop enough interest from funders and/or political officials, the partnership can secure funding to transition to a structure with greater interdependence, potentially any one of the other three partnership types.
- **Low performance** – A learning-oriented partnership that is not performing well might be reduced to a series of meetings where partners report what they are doing, which typically does not provide enough value to stimulate learning or improvement. Learning-oriented partnerships that are not effective lag in participation and dissolve or pause until there is new energy and direction.



John Day Basin Partnership PHOTO / HERB WINTERS



John Day Basin Partnership PHOTO / HERB WINTERS

## Project-oriented partnerships

**Partners are somewhat interdependent.** They go through an initial period of collaborative planning and commit to a set of shared goals and actions. Their main focus is coordinating implementation to maximize impact and efficiency, often with each partner leading their own projects. After projects are complete, the partnership may go through another period of planning to secure funding to work together again, they may dissolve, or they may reorganize around a new focus. A coordinator serves as a project manager, a role which may be rotated among partners.

### A hypothetical project-oriented partnership

- **Initiation** – A group of partners starts with a regional restoration plan to identify a set of actions and a theory of change that they are well positioned to implement. They draw from the regional plan to develop a strategic action plan and work plan, agree on the terms of their partnership, secure funding and implement the work plan together.
- **Structure** – The partnership meets regularly to coordinate and streamline implementation. They work together to develop a database to track implementation.
- **High performance** – They trust each other that each partner is following through on the tasks they agree to. They address questions as they come up. If problems arise, they work to quickly resolve the issue, typically through compromise, so they can resume their focus on implementation.
- **Potential evolution** – After they complete their funded projects, they might seek out additional funding to continue working together or they might transition to focus on implementing projects individually. If they do not find funding to implement projects together, they are unlikely to stay together. However, they may find value in maintaining relationships and informally sharing updates.
- **Low performance** – If project partners do not communicate openly about their activities and progress with implementation, they may start to form negative judgments about each other's performance. Once mistrust flares up, partners are less likely to share information or ask questions as issues come up, which leads to more problems with implementation and coordination. The ability for the partnership to deliver on their work plan can suffer overall even though some partners are still performing well individually. With low performance, partners tend to stay together to satisfy the terms of their funded work and then part ways.

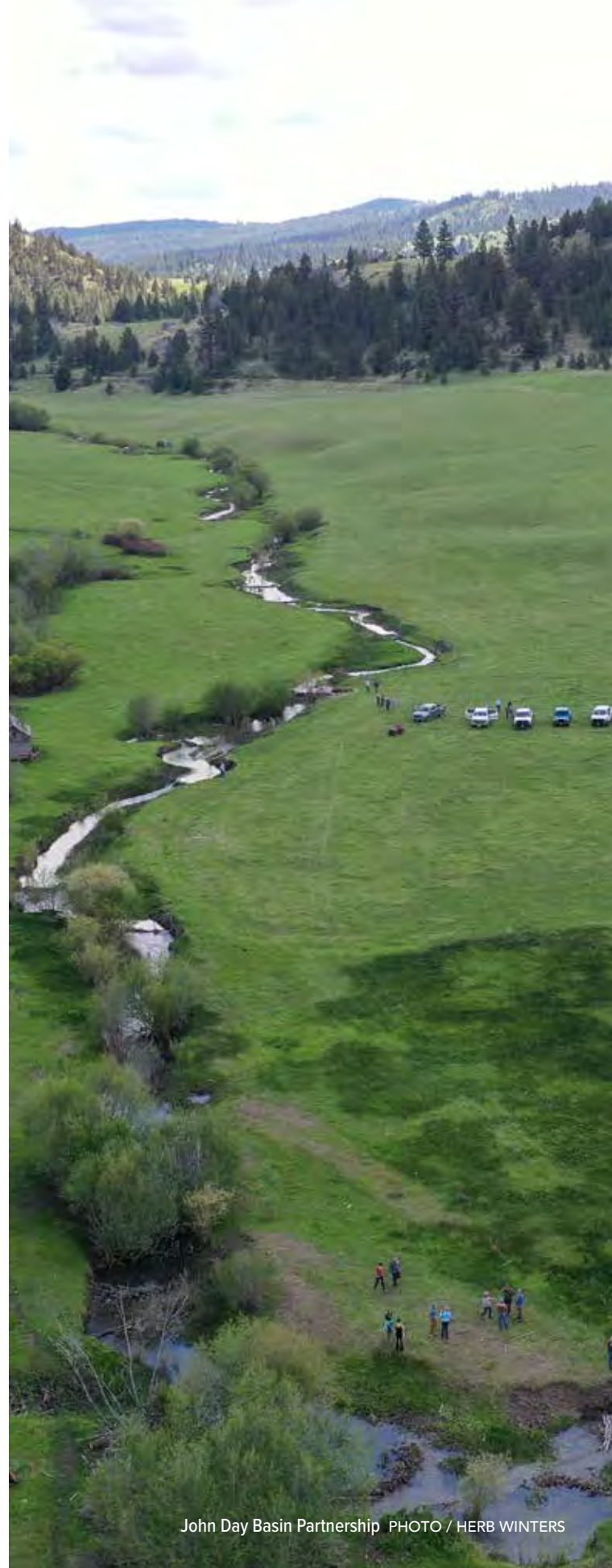


## Planning-oriented partnerships

**Partners are moderately interdependent.** They engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and establish work together to implement shared priorities. Individual partner organizations may have to shift how they operate to align with the partnership overall. A coordinator typically serves as facilitator, planning coach and project manager, roles which may be shared among partners or covered by a team of staff from a sponsoring organization, sometimes also contracting with independent consultants.

### A hypothetical planning-oriented partnership

- **Initiation** – A group of partners come together to systematically work through a planning process, create a partnership structure and launch fundraising efforts to implement their plan. Partners identify key questions and uncertainties and a monitoring plan to track progress of the initiative overall.
- **Structure** – They establish a partnership structure, including some kind of steering committee with representatives who are asked to make decisions in the partnership's best interest, not the interest of their individual organizations. Steering committee members rotate every few years. They raise funds to hire staff, such as a partnership coordinator, a communications lead and a monitoring coordinator.
- **High performance** – Different partners take the lead on securing funds to implement different parts of the plan, and they coordinate to ensure that work from different funding sources is aligned with the plan they collaboratively developed. Partners periodically reflect on their progress overall and what they are learning from implementation and monitoring so that they can update their plan and adjust their priority actions.
- **Potential evolution** – Their work typically spans more than a decade so they develop their partnership structure and governance practices to be resilient in the face of staff turnover, changes in funding and new learning. Their structure shifts over the years, but they can continue to operate in a similar form for many years.
- **Low performance** – A planning-oriented partnership that is not able to secure funding may stay together with low level activity implementing the plan they developed together. People's commitment may lag, and it may be difficult to follow the governance practices and maintain the structure. It may be difficult to convene partners to regroup and adjust.



John Day Basin Partnership PHOTO / HERB WINTERS

## Systems-oriented partnerships

**Partners are highly interdependent.** Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative, long-term planning and establish shared standards, practices and systems to hold each other accountable to long-term change. They work through differences, achieve alignment and coordinate for implementation. The complexity of their work may require committees. A coordinator typically serves as a collaborative leader, facilitator, planning coach and project manager. A partner organization may take on these roles, often hiring staff and contracting with facilitators.

### *A hypothetical systems-oriented partnership*

- **Initiation** – A group of partners is highly motivated by the potential for coordinated learning, action and systems change. They have the support of funders and/or elected officials that gives them confidence that they can invest in the infrastructure to support a more interdependent model of collaboration over a longer time frame.
- **Initiation** – As they collaboratively develop a strategic action plan, partners consolidate the latest science and best practices and develop standardized protocols and procedures for all partners to follow. They also frame up key questions and uncertainties, which they use to develop a monitoring plan to track progress.
- **Structure** – The partnership is governed by a steering committee that includes representatives from partner organizations and external members including tribes and neighboring communities. They have various committees that oversee implementation of different parts of their work, but all of the committees gather and engage in learning together once to twice a year.
- **Structure** – The partnership has centralized staff housed in one of the partner organizations that includes a partnership coordinator, a tribal liaison, a community outreach coordinator, a monitoring coordinator and part-time leads for each of the committees that serve as project managers for that section of the work plan.
- **High performance** – Centralized staff work with restoration leads, monitoring leads and researchers to track progress, tell the story of their cumulative impact and apply findings to adaptively manage their future approaches and actions.
- **Potential evolution** – As the partnership evolves, their initial investment in the partnership infrastructure pays off in terms of well-coordinated implementation of complex projects across a large geography. They build relationships with university and agency researchers to focus research on high priority questions. They secure long-term consistent funding, including congressional appropriations and/or a local bond.
- **Low performance** – Despite high initial investment in partnership infrastructure, if a partnership is overly ambitious with their goals or the complexity of their work, they may not be able to show progress with implementation fast enough to secure enough additional funding to keep the partnership operating. Because it is so expensive to operate a highly interdependent partnership, it is likely that partners will not be able to maintain the structure or processes they built. The partnership is likely to dissolve or refocus on less complex projects at a smaller scale.



John Day Basin Partnership  
PHOTO / HERB WINTERS



## Partnership focus and context

To clarify, all partnership types may implement projects or focus on learning, but the type is determined based on where the primary focus of collaborative work lies, which is closely correlated with the degree of autonomy or interdependence partners have as they work together. If a partnership's primary focus is learning, the structure, function and level of interdependence among partners will be very different from a partnership who holds annual meetings for reflection and learning but whose primary focus is working together on strategies to reach their long-term vision of restoration.

Partnership type is influenced by who is motivated and invited to join, how partners define their vision, the leadership style of core partners and the level of commitment and resources partners are willing to dedicate.

The context of a partnership's work can also shape the partnership type and what performance looks like. Partnerships working in social-ecological systems that are well-understood with well-established best practices are more often structured as project- or planning-oriented partnerships with more focus on the efficiency and

coordination of actions. Partnerships working in social-ecological systems with many unknowns and little to no research to draw from require a focus on learning, which means they are more often structured as learning-oriented or systems-oriented partnerships, sometimes planning-oriented partnerships if there is a moderate level of understanding of the system.

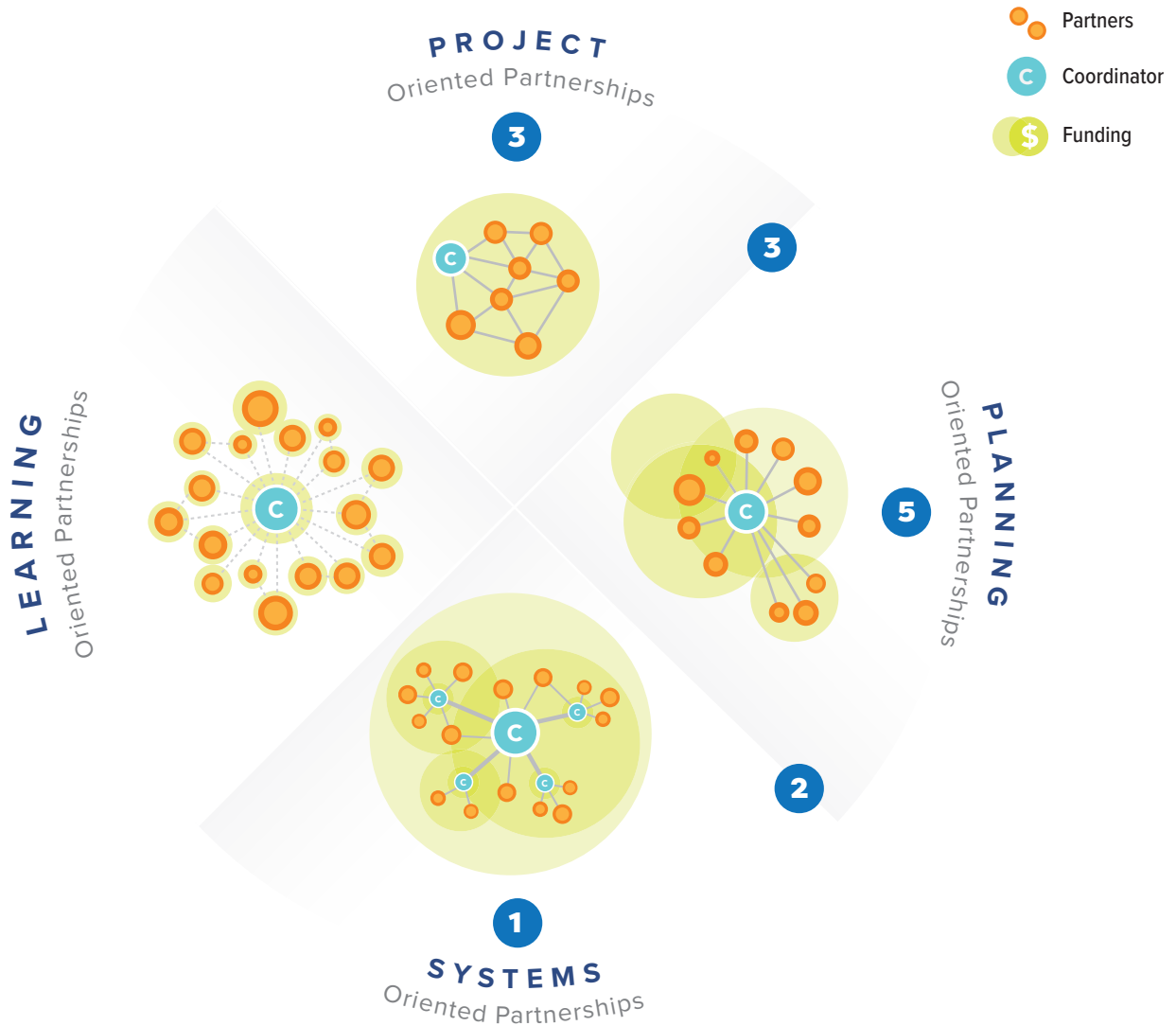
In situations when the system is not well-understood but funders or political leaders put great importance on the issue or problem, a partnership is more likely to attract the funding and commitment needed for a systems-oriented partnership to focus resources on learning alongside action and systems of accountability. However, there is greater risk for individual partners in these situations that it may take substantial time to build the learning and capacity to determine the best course of action and then more time before results are seen. If funders or political leaders do not see progress quickly enough and reduce funding prematurely, the value in ramping up the infrastructure needed for a systems-oriented partnership may be lost if they need to transition to a lower level of commitment and infrastructure, such as a project- or learning-oriented partnership.



John Day Basin Partnership - Members and agency partners tour a process-based restoration project funded by the FIP in the Thirtymile Watershed, May 2023. PHOTO / HERB WINTERS

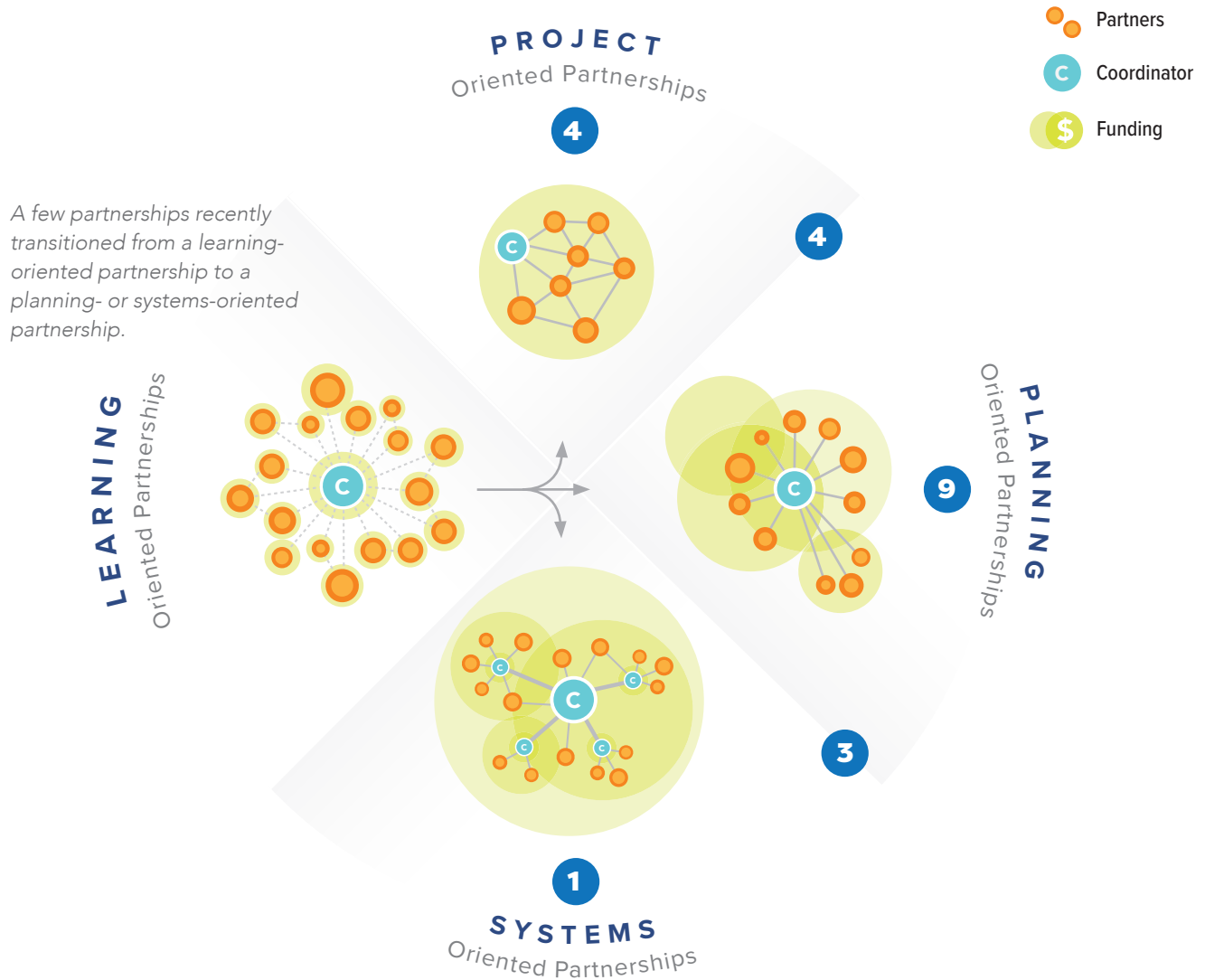
## Estimation of partnership types for funded partnerships

Based on the 14 FIP partnerships that provided enough detail to estimate partnership type, FIP partnerships were mostly in the range of project-oriented to planning-oriented partnerships with a few leaning toward systems-oriented partnerships. None of the FIP partnerships fully operated as a systems-oriented partnership, and none were structured as a learning-oriented partnership.



Numbers above indicate the number of FIP partnerships associated with each partnership type or the gradient between types.

Looking at all 21 partnerships that received a FIP and/or P-TA grant and provided enough detail to estimate partnership type, they followed a similar pattern. None of the partnerships who responded are currently structured as a learning network, but several clearly had been functioning that way in the past, including two learning-oriented partnerships who later became FIP grantees operating in the range of planning-oriented to systems-oriented partnerships.



Numbers above indicate the number of FIP and/or P-TA partnerships associated with each partnership type or the gradient between types.

## Reflections on partnership types

During this study, partnerships were asked to reflect which partnership type best describes how their partnership operates now, in the past and where they would like to be in the future. Many partnerships felt that this reflective exercise was helpful, especially as a group reflection.

*“[The partnership types] were really helpful and eye opening for describing and thinking about our partnership.*

*I think this partnership will never be a systems partnership. I mean there are just too many distinctly different missions of the various partner organizations, which gives it huge strength. A huge part of the strength of the partnership is that it is so diverse [and] able to accomplish so much, [plus] the fact that the trust has been built and we have [farmers] involved so strongly.”*

When discussed as a group, new partners expressed how helpful and interesting it was to hear more senior members describe their partnership’s history and current context. Some partners shared it with new colleagues to orient them to their partnership’s context. This type of reflective activity, in which partners collectively reflect on their past, present and future, is a well-established practice for building group cohesion and revisiting governance practices (Arnold and Bartels 2014). Incorporating this tool into a reflective exercise can help support clarity in structure, function and expectations among partners and funders.

Many people responded that they could see themselves in multiple partnership types depending on which projects or activities were going on. For example, if they had a series of learning-focused meetings, a few large project-focused grants and ongoing work with their strategic

action plan, they wanted to respond that they were a learning-oriented, project-oriented and planning-oriented partnership. However, with encouragement to identify which one was the focus of their collaborative energy, people were able to choose one type or a blend of different types.

*“Initially, when I looked at this, I jumped right to the project-oriented partnership... [since] for the most part, we’re all kind of working off that one funding pool, and individually, we all kind of have our own different opportunities for funding as well.*

*But the more I looked into this, I would agree that I think we’re a systems-oriented partnership with a little bit of all these other partnership types tied in. There’s a learning-oriented piece to our partnership with our [annual meetings, which is a] big effort to merge research and management and revisit [our strategic action plan] as information comes in.... So yeah, we’ve got an interesting dynamic with our partnership. Half of our programs are supported in a large way by [a couple of funding programs] and then the other half of our partnership is funded through other avenues – but what really brings us together are our common goals and objectives. That is kind of an interesting dynamic.”*



*“I think the partners have gotten more committed over the years as the [partnership] has achieved a track record of success in securing funding and project implementation. There were initially some doubts from local partners about whether to join in the effort, or whether it would impact their own strategic priorities and funding opportunities.”*

**A few findings emerged from people’s reflections on partnership types:**

- Project-oriented partnerships described going through an intensive period of collaborative planning after which they remained fairly autonomous, coordinating and tracking progress in an agreed upon format as they independently implemented projects described in their plan.
- Any partnership type may have a subgroup of partners who form a smaller project-oriented partnership, typically in response to a funding opportunity with specific tasks and timelines that are consistent with and nested within the larger partnership structure and focus.
- All partnership types may have peripheral partners who are tracking but not directly participating in partnership activities. These peripheral partners may have a very different view of the function and structure of the partnership from core partners, who are in a better position to understand and accurately describe how their partnership operates. If core partners do not see the

partnership similarly, then this is an area that likely could use improvement for greater clarity and cohesion.

- As partnerships evolved toward increased interdependency, several described perceptions of increased risk and the opportunity costs associated with greater commitment. Perceptions of risk and benefits go into the internal calculations for each partner’s desired level of commitment and collective negotiations to decide the structure and function of the partnership.

As an example of what this risk might look like, one partnership, during a group interview, described a somewhat intense negotiation process among partners. They were deciding which grant proposals would lead with the branding and logo of the partnership instead of a collection of logos from different partners, which had been their usual practice. One partner pointedly talked about the risk that this posed to their organization.

*“We are many organizations [that make up this] partnership. As a non-profit organization, I’ll speak [from my organization’s] point of view, and this comes from a lot of experience. [Our organization] works in partnership with just about everything we do. It’s very rare that we’ve got something that isn’t involving some other organization or agency. We’ve got decades of experience with that. It is always a risk when you are working in a partnership that starts to take on its own identity, its own branding, that you suddenly get lost. As a nonprofit, who’s trying to survive in this world and raise funds and be recognized, that’s a risk. That can be detrimental.*

*For example, when people in [this area], which is the heart of our home, don’t start recognizing [our organization, but] they recognize [the partnership instead], what does that mean for us? That’s something that we have to constantly make sure that we’re keeping in balance as we move forward in partnership.”*



Pure Water Partners - Volunteers work to replant a restoration area on the McKenzie River. PHOTO / BRETT ROSS

The acute pinch-point described here was most clearly felt by partnerships with a high degree of interdependence leaning toward a systems-oriented partnership type. However, these tensions may be felt for any partnership type. Some partners from different project-oriented partnerships described tensions when one or more partners shifted the energy and focus of the partnership in seemingly subtle ways that ended up causing a shift in outcomes and a reduction in the predicted benefits for one or more partners. In these situations, when these tensions were openly discussed and negotiated, the partnership maintained high levels of trust and buy-in. When the affected partners had relatively less influence within the partnership and were not able to have open conversations about their concerns and the direction of the partnership, those partners described lingering mistrust, even resentment when questions raised had no response. This type of mistrust can build up over time and impact the cohesiveness of a partnership.

Reflecting on these findings, **OWEB** felt this was an accurate description of the breadth of partnership types. They also felt that any partnership type except for the learning-oriented partnership should be eligible for the FIP grant and all partnership types should be eligible for the P-TA grant.

Currently, partnerships must have a strategic action plan or be developing one to be eligible for a P-TA grant. However, reflecting on the partnership types, **OWEB** wondered if perhaps a learning-oriented partnership did not need a fully developed strategic action plan and would be better served by some other type of planning document more appropriate to their focus and low level of interdependence.

**OWEB** also reflected that perhaps some of their expectations for FIP grantees may be based on unconscious assumptions that they should be operating as systems-oriented partnerships. **However, OWEB affirmed that they would like the FIP and P-TA grants to support a diversity of partnership types.** They will continue to consider these findings relative to their expectations of grantees and applicants.

## Partnership Resilience to Withstand Stressors and Change

Resilience refers to the capacity of a partnership to withstand stressors and undergo change, while maintaining the integrity of the partnership's vision, identity and focus (adapted for partnerships from Walker et al. 2004). While there are many types of stressors, funding has a strong influence on the commitment of core partners and the ability to maintain the integrity of the partnership, referring to the integrity of the vision and scope even if the structure changes.

### *Resilience in the context of OWEB's theory of change*

Referring back to OWEB's theory of change for partnership-focused investments, OWEB expected that P-TA grants would boost partnership performance and resilience by developing clarity around a partnership's theory of change, priority actions and governance to coordinate implementation. They expected some P-TA grantees would go on to become FIP grantees, but that most P-TA grantees, now highly competitive with their strategic action plans and strengthened governance, would find funding for implementation elsewhere, including OWEB's Open Solicitation program and other state, federal and private sources. To ensure that P-TA grantees



Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership - Sheep Creek, upstream mainstem near meadow. PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

got the most from this opportunity and developed strong plans and governance, OWEB developed [resource guides](#) on Strategic Action Planning, Monitoring, Adaptive Management and Partnership Governance, also publicly available for any partnership (referenced in [OWEB's theory of change](#)).

Most partnerships who received P-TA grants did describe this grant opportunity as a way to increase their readiness to do more complex work and position themselves to secure competitive funding.

*“Our partners are invested in [our shared] goal, and it is helpful that one organization is coordinating the effort. The track record of success has built momentum, and partner commitments are likely to keep things moving. The [P-TA] funding from OWEB that enabled us to develop our [charter], strategic action plan, financial plan and communications plan has been important in building resilience. The process, though sometimes a bit painful, helped resolve many lingering disagreements or issues and got everyone on the same page. Now we have those documents to refer to and guide us.”*

*- Quote from a P-TA grantee*



As for the FIP grants, OWEB expected that dedicated implementation funding for six years would boost the performance of grantees accelerating progress toward their restoration goals, while also showcasing their successes making them highly competitive for other funding sources. OWEB never intended to fund individual partnerships on a long-term basis, but rather to invest in their performance for six years with the expectation that FIP grants would be a catalyst for greater investment and

impact beyond that timeframe. Funding partnerships for six years also allows OWEB to fund different types of partnerships over time, focused on different ecological priorities in different parts of the state.

Partnerships consistently described the value of the FIP grant in terms of boosting performance like 'rocket fuel' and supporting resilience.

Several partnerships that received the FIP grant were explicit that the FIP grant didn't make or break them, but accelerated the work they were already doing. While other partnerships identified the FIP grant, and in some cases even the P-TA grant, as a primary driver of their forward momentum.

### OWEB

reflected that providing funding for more than six years would stretch partnerships to try to propose on-the-ground projects beyond a realistic planning horizon. Costs beyond that timeframe are also difficult to predict due to fluctuating material and labor costs, which have been especially challenging in the last few years. In OWEB's experience, some FIP partnerships struggled to put together strong project proposals in their last biennium of funding due to changing conditions and new information since they developed their FIP application. They also found it can take partnerships 2-4 years to implement projects, which means up to 8-10 years to complete all funded projects.

*"The FIP funding has been a wonderful come-alongside for our partnership; our partnership does not exist because of it."*

*"[After the FIP funding,] we may just go our different ways unless we find another funder to keep it going."*

*"When our partnership was first founded, we were trying to grapple with all of the threats to [the species] and their habitat and figure out how pooling our knowledge, resources and projects could move the needle. After a number of discussions, we realized we needed a formalized [strategic action plan], which two very smart partners authored for the group. We next explored how to take action on [the plan], and one of our partners encouraged the group to apply for a FIP grant. We tried it, and I don't know how to describe what a tremendous difference it has made for our partnership to be able to fund the work we knew needed to be done - and utilize FIP grant funds to leverage other funds, expand impact with other projects, and encourage private landowners to get involved. It was like adding rocket fuel to our plan.*

*In all, our partnership structure, function and partner composition hasn't changed much over time, but our impact has grown so much farther than we could have done without OWEB coming alongside our vision. The funding through OWEB has allowed us to address many urgencies, and we are in place as a partnership where we are able to step back and start thinking more deeply about our next steps in order maximize investment of time and resources on a scale we couldn't imagine being at prior to the FIP grant."*



## Partnership dynamics after the end of a P-TA or FIP grant

As of 2022, seven out of 25 P-TA grantees went on to receive a FIP award. These partnerships reflected on the power of receiving both grants, one after another.



OWEB-BEF retreat, January 2023. PHOTO / JENNIFER ARNOLD

*“In [our watershed], partnerships have been occurring for 10-20 years, but on a smaller scale than today. Once [this partnership was] formally created, the group was awarded a [P-TA grant] that led to the creation of [governance documents] and a steering committee, [which] were critical to our success. Then the hard work began to develop a strategic action plan that brought everyone to the table to start looking at the long-term planning and prioritization in the basin. [We created our plan, which] remains the backbone of the partnership’s vision. A successful FIP proposal shifted the focus to project implementation with a smaller focus on planning. ... There have been small hiccups along the way, but generally, the partnership has remained cohesive and highly functioning. Some key steering committee members with institutional knowledge of the effort have moved on, but these positions were quickly filled with ambitious individuals that kept the momentum going. Recently, the steering committee has begun discussing more long-term initiatives, but this is still being evaluated.”*

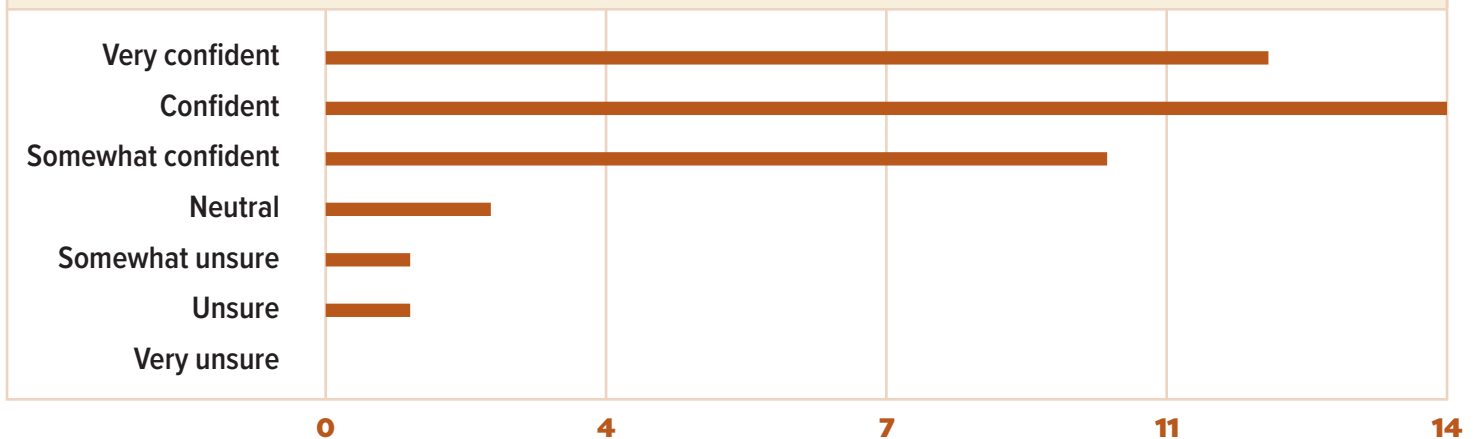
Several other P-TA grantees, who applied for a FIP but were not selected, also reported that they have been highly successful securing other funds, including OWEB’s Open Solicitation grant, state, federal and local funding sources. One partnership reported that they have been so successful in raising funds that they recently declined a large federal award that had too many administrative strings attached. They were able to make this choice because they had other large grants.

When asked about their future outlook, many partnerships felt confident that they would be able to sustain their partnership’s work as different funding opportunities come and go. Several partnerships expressed confidence based on their history of securing tens of millions of dollars in federal funds and/or hundreds of thousands of dollars in private funds. Two partnerships developed a steady source of funding from rate-payer fees to balance out the ups and downs of funding from grants.

### Resilience to Funding Changes

To what extent do you feel confident that your partnership will be resilient and sustain its work as different funding opportunities come and go?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.



A few of the FIP grantees anticipated that they might have to scale back their work after the FIP was over and/or rely more on federal resources, while a few considered potentially restructuring the partnership, merging with another or splitting off to focus on a different issue or geography, potentially applying for another P-TA or FIP grant. A few other partners anticipated a state of flux and uncertainty after their FIP or P-TA grants.



Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse - Installing sage grouse fence markers.  
PHOTO / LAKE COUNTY SWCD

*“We have a diverse funding pool at this time. However, the funding commitments are linked to the timeframe of the FIP - 6 years. [We are] uncertain if funders will continue to invest after that timeframe.”*

*“I’m confident in our [partnership] and the existing OWEB FIP support. What might come next for [us] after the FIP funding is over? I suspect that partners will lean heavily on funded government agencies to continue the work with limited and less formal wider collaboration.”*

However, not all P-TA grantees went on to implement the strategic action plans they developed with their P-TA funding. After the end of the P-TA grant, three partnerships described their partnership as somewhat or completely dormant until they can secure additional funds and/or re-energize a potentially new configuration of partners, which likely would also require an updated planning effort. Those partnerships that have been able to hang on until more funding is secured often rely on one or more partners who are fiscally and organizationally well-established and/or private funding sources to keep at least a minimum of communication and coordination. One partnership described a series of work groups within the partnership that “dissolved overnight” as soon as private funding for the work group coordinators ended.

One partnership described a process of dissolving a previous partnership structure and reorganizing around a new focus, after which they described being ready to respond to emergent funding opportunities. This newly structured partnership quickly launched into implementation with a sudden large funding opportunity, gaining new energy and momentum.

*“[Our partnership] began largely as a group of organizations with similar goals and overlapping geography to prioritize planning and actions that worked in tandem and leveraged one another. As we worked together, we coalesced around the notion of a [partnership fund] through which partners would pool resources and facilitate partner-approved projects and priorities. As we further developed [governance documents] for working together, we focused more on the roles and strengths that each organization brings to the table in terms of Coordinator, Funder, Implementer, etc. The partnership framework paid dividends in being nimble and ready to respond to [needs that emerged suddenly in the region] and to best execute the various landowner, implementation, and oversight [tasks required with the large amounts of funding available].”*

## Partnership dynamics in response to other stressors

Besides changes in funding, another prominent stressor that was mentioned by at least 12 of the 26 partnerships we heard from was the loss of a coordinator and/or key leaders in the partnership. Several partnerships described the process as challenging but ultimately rewarding and positive as partners pitched in during the transition and onboarding process. Several FIP grantees reflected that it can be hard to retain a highly skilled coordinator or leader as they may be actively seeking opportunities to advance their career before the end of a big grant. This may be especially true in rural areas as hiring and retaining employees and board members overall is a challenge given smaller local populations to recruit from and limited housing for people moving to the area.

*“Turnover among leaders at participating organizations has both delayed some actions and changed the nature of conversations as well as the focus - or what is considered the work that needs attention.”*

*“Following the emergency response phase, the partnership is now trying to transition away from a task force incident command operation with its top down decision-making to collaborative system-oriented decision making - while we are still working at a pace that is not sustainable (we have not slowed down and are still running as if we are in emergency in some respects), and we are trying to scale up. [There are] a lot of inefficiencies due to growth of organizations (onboarding new people quickly), expansion of the type of work we are doing, and scaling up work with the influx of funding.”*



Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse – Spring development trough with wildlife ramp. PHOTO / LAKE COUNTY SWCD

One partnership also discussed a natural disaster in their area as a stressor that ended up reshaping the partnership and refining their theory of change, integrating a focus on human health and wellbeing. In this case, the stressor ended up bringing more resources and activating the partnership more than ever. However, the stressor also created a partnership structure modeled after a hierarchical emergency response incident command system, and now after the emergency has passed, the partnership has had to work through tensions associated with that structure to evolve to be more transparent and collaborative. The pressures they describe from quickly ramping up their pace and scale alongside the need to take care of staff and evolve their partnership is perhaps not as intensely felt in other partnerships, but definitely a common theme when large amounts of implementation funding are suddenly available.



## Threads or elements of resilience

Throughout as partners reflected on what helped get them through various stressors, several threads or elements of resilience emerged as important across partnerships and partnership types. The analogy of thread is used with the idea that each thread helps hold the integrity and focus of a partnership, and together multiple threads reinforce each other, as in strands of twine, for even greater resilience.

**1 Camaraderie** – People like each other and are willing to go above and beyond to help each other when there is a need or crisis, which develops a sense of pride and care for each other. They enjoy their time together and feel energized working on shared passions and interests. This was frequently highlighted by partners when asked what inspired them to invest their time and energy into the partnership.

**2 Success** – Success breeds more success. Demonstrated success leads to a feeling of pride and shared accomplishment which then leads to more confidence and often more opportunities and more success. Referring specifically to success with funding, several people used a variation of a common phrase: Funding begets more funding. However, people also referred to smaller successes such as an inspiring meeting that catalyzed deeper engagement and commitment.

**3 Formalized Commitment** – Partners document agreements and plans. Partners unite around a common vision, partnership structure and a set of strategies and practices to get there, which is collaboratively developed. They formalized it into a plan and charter with partners as signatories. The level of commitment, complexity of the partnership structure and detail needed in the plan are dependent on the partnership type and the focus and context of their work.

**4 Consistent Funding** – Partnership coordination is consistently funded. Dedicated, consistent, flexible funding or in-kind support helps fulfill critical needs for coordination and also grant writing that keep partners together. Consistent flexible funding can also take care of unexpected needs. Even a small amount of consistent flexible funding can contribute greatly to resilience.



Rogue Basin Partnership – First annual Network of Networks gathering, May 2023.

**5 Shared leadership** – Partners work together to share responsibilities and decision-making to shape the vision and direction of the partnership. When shared leadership is a part of a partnership's culture and institutionalized in their structure and processes, they are better able to transition through staff changes, promote innovation and draw on the diverse strengths of partners to respond to challenges.

**6 Openness** – Leaders and partners are open to learning and change. They are able to reflect on the whys behind strong opinions, consider other views and recognize unknowns in the work. This gives them space to incorporate new learning and bring in people who have different perspectives.

**7 Organizational anchors** – Fiscally strong partner organizations add stability and capacity. Partners draw from the leadership, stability and in-kind support of financially strong organizational partners to get through challenges. Strong organizational partners may lend particular expertise and experience that open up new opportunities and promote innovation. When strong organizational partners mentor and support other partners to build skills and capacity, the overall partnership becomes stronger and more resilient.

**8 External Relationships** – Partners have relationships with people and organizations external to the partnership who may introduce new perspectives, serve as a sounding board or help secure resources to extend the capacity, relevance and influence of a partnership.



As partnerships experience stressors, they may change from one partnership type to another while maintaining their clarity of purpose and core members - or they may dissolve, merge with another partnership or shift in purpose, scope and structure to form a new partnership.

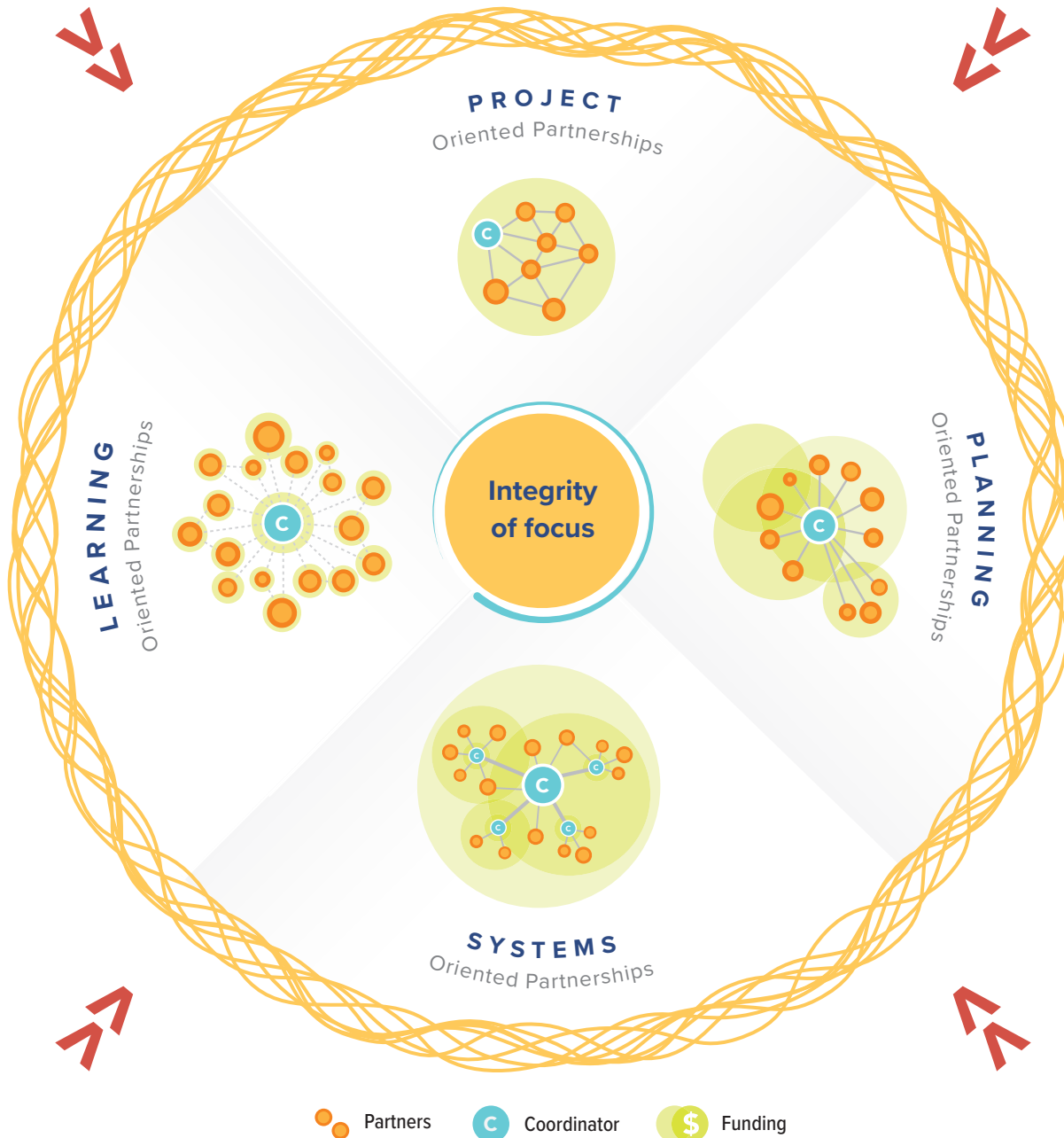
**Examples of stressors:**

- >> Loss of a coordinator and/or key leaders
- >> Catastrophic events like fire or drought
- >> Loss or gain of substantial funding
- >> Inaccurate assumptions in the theory of change
- >> Strong critiques and/or opposition

# THREADS OF Partnership Resilience

**Resilience** refers to the ability to withstand changes and stressors and still maintain the integrity of a partnership.

The following threads, or elements, contribute to a partnership’s resilience with multiple threads reinforcing each other.



- Camaraderie**  
Partners like each other and pitch in to help
- Success**  
Success creates more opportunities for success
- Formalized commitments**  
Partners document agreements and plans
- Consistent funding**  
Partnership coordination is consistently funded
- Organizational anchors**  
Fiscally strong partner organizations add stability and capacity
- Shared leadership**  
Leadership is shared among partners, both structurally and in the culture of how partners work together.
- Openness**  
Leaders and partners are open to learning and change
- External relationships**  
Partners connect with individuals and organizations who can be a source for new ideas and resources



## Quotes describing threads of resilience

### ***Camaraderie and organizational anchor***

*“It feels like a family at this point, and seeing the scale of projects increase significantly is particularly rewarding. The additional security added to the smaller organizations in the partnership is also appreciated.”*

---

### ***Camaraderie***

*“When we face difficulties, we face them as a team instead of pointing fingers. I think we were all worried when our coordinator left, but members, myself included, were happy to take on the tasks to ensure that the [partnership] continued to operate smoothly until the position could be filled. Our new coordinator hit the ground running through the support/assistance of members and [the outgoing coordinator] and the transition has been relatively smooth. Our group is made up of individuals who want to get things done and are happy to help others (even if is outside of their duties) when needed in order to get something done.”*

---

### ***Shared leadership***

*“The relationships that have developed over time have made our partnership more resilient to changes in funding. The steering committee, outreach committee, and fundraising committee have established the structure to find additional funding through long-range planning.”*

---

### ***Shared leadership, formalized commitment, success and openness***

*“I feel [our partnership] has always focused on creating diversified funding sources that are more stable and predictable, moving away from living grant to grant... I think once we complete our transition ... to collaborative governance with the tools built to support the larger more complex partnership [goals and functions from operations to prioritization and equity to database upgrade, monitoring and reporting], the collaborative will become highly functioning and will attract funding over time...plus current large funding is over 5 years. We have seen that success breeds more investment and success. Adaptive management has been the cornerstone of [our partnership] over the last 2-3 years.”*

---

### ***Formalized commitment and consistent funding***

*“Our partnership built relationships over time with stable funding sources. The structure and agreements in place provide stability from several sustainable sources... The partner composition includes sources with large funding reserves dedicated to the partnership.”*

---

### ***Consistent funding***

*“What’s helped with the resilience for our partnership? Funding. Just even the \$10,000 level of regular, consistent, very flexible funding has been instrumental.”*



## Openness

*“In the short time I have been working with these partners, I do believe we have something different here. Along with increased community engagement, the understanding of the ecological science of [this region and ecosystem] continues to grow. I have held past positions where collaboration was not a part of the problem solving process. And because of that, projects lost momentum, partners lost their passion and frustrations grew amongst colleagues. Progress stalled. I came to [this partnership] because I wanted something different and to be a part of something that can make a difference.”*

---

## Openness

*“I’m incredibly proud to be part of a group who is motivated and optimistic over the years. We don’t dwell on failures, instead we try to learn from them and move on in a productive manner. We celebrate our achievements, but always realize there’s more to do. We continually communicate and ask questions to make sure we are moving forward in the best way possible and assessing any mistakes we may have made. It’s an honest group where egos and emotions get checked at the door. It’s allowed us to focus on what needs to be done and we are lucky enough to have accomplished quite a bit because of that.”*

---

## Organizational anchors

*“Individual organizational financial strength is a big one. Financially stronger organizations frequently carry the day on partnership work. Individual leadership abilities and availability (time) also play a role.”*

---

## Organizational anchors

*“Commitment to the outcome. Our partnership came together and began the work with no external resources (just what our collective agencies already had) and we will continue to do the work we can, as we can, regardless of how the partnership is funded. Obviously, we will get much more done with funding, but the partnership will not dissolve without it.”*

---

## Organizational anchors

*“There has been a lot of turn over at the local levels. One watershed council has completely disbanded with no staff for about five years. [Another] watershed council is on its fourth coordinator since the inception of this partnership. The [partnership] has also had complete turnover with four staff having left over time, and all of the current staff are brand new to the watershed. [One organizational partner] has been the single binding thread at the local level to maintain continuity. Having their national program strength and expertise has been very important, and they’ve expanded to having two staff, now potentially moving to three. However, the imminent departure of their coordinator will be a big setback to keeping momentum. More structurally sound local capacity and a stronger local central coordinating body are big missing pieces for long-term success for restoration in general in this basin.”*



Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership -  
Dry Creek Aiwahi Restoration Project  
Complete, 2022. PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE  
MODEL WATERSHED

### **Relationships, success and openness**

*“I think having a long history of working in a basin, building trust with community members and consistently performing good work while adapting and incorporating new findings, all help to add to our resilience. Our board members are a big part of providing credibility to the work we do within the community and supporting our staff. Our reputation helps us leverage and strengthen partnerships and apply to funding sources.”*



Rogue Basin Partnership – First annual Network of Networks gathering, May 2023.

### **External relationships**

*“Having these relationships just really helps move the needle forward on all of our projects. I guess you could say we all know who to pick up the phone and call for what issue and what geography because we have this partnership. And it definitely helps us just strengthen our abilities across the board.”*

### **External relationships**

*“The breadth of the partnership provides many avenues to funding from federal, state and private funding.”*

### **Barriers and gaps to increasing partnership resilience**

Considering their resilience and long term outlook, partnerships reflected on barriers or gaps that OWEB and other funders could potentially address.

Not surprisingly given the focus of this study, a strong theme was the need for long-term consistent funding that includes partnership coordination, capacity funding for partners, implementation funding and notably also funding for monitoring, including coordination of monitoring efforts. Some people suggested that partnership coordination funding as part of the P-TA grant should be extended to five or ten years.

*“Funding for partnership coordination or facilitation is very important, as the coordinator can be the ‘glue’ that keeps things cohesive.”*

Partnerships completing their FIP appreciated the opportunity to apply for a P-TA grant to support ongoing partnership coordination and/or refine their strategic action plan.

*“Aside from the large consistent funding [from the FIP], I think what OWEB has done with providing some smaller grant opportunities to bridge the gap [after a FIP is very helpful]. It allows a bit of an update to our restoration plan and [for us to] spend some time really thinking about what we’ve accomplished and where our next highest priorities are in the basin. Having some of those other smaller funding opportunities allows the partnership to go through those cycles, while we still continue to implement a bunch of projects. Yeah, that’s been really helpful, and hopefully our partnership can get there.”*



Partnerships awarded FIPs frequently commented that the time needed to administer their grants was considerable and aspects of the program were described as time-consuming, repetitive, clunky and frustrating that took energy away from their partnership operations and project implementation. In contrast, partnerships awarded P-TA grants regularly appreciated the flexibility, support and efficient administration of P-TA grants. There were many specific suggestions for ways to streamline the FIP programs, described in the recommendations below. (See also *Findings: External Technical Review, Findings: Tracking Progress and Telling the Story*)

*“In my experience with the [P-TA] grants, OWEB was very flexible. It felt like there was trust and professional credibility, and the administration of those grants was efficient and straightforward. That was all really appreciated. With other grant programs in OWEB [including FIP], people have had different experiences, and it can be a burden - to the point that we have some partners who just won't apply for OWEB funding.”*



Salmon SuperHwy – This new bridge on Peterson Creek restored access to over 6.2 miles of upstream habitat to ESA listed Coho Salmon as well as Chinook Salmon, Chum Salmon, Steelhead, and Cutthroat Trout. Fish were documented spawning upstream of the bridge within weeks of project completion. PHOTO / JUSTIN BAILIE

Partnerships emphasized that monitoring was central to their resilience since it helped them both understand the effectiveness of their actions and tell the story of their progress to secure funding for ongoing implementation. Several partnerships also suggested that it would be helpful if OWEB can help communicate the value of a partnership approach to restoration to amplify their own communications efforts.

As funding was identified as a prominent driver of commitment and performance, partnerships had several suggestions for how OWEB could support, including looking for opportunities for greater alignment among funders and directly linking partnerships to funders.

Partnerships applauded OWEB for the FIP and P-TA programs, which in many ways addressed the gaps they identified, while also making suggestions for further ways that OWEB can support their resilience.

*“Courtney [administered our P-TA grant, and she] is a great touchstone person [for all our partners.] There have been moments [in our planning process when we] just called her up and said, “Oh, my gosh, what is going on?” ... Because [OWEB is] so dialed in with all of the other groups throughout the state, for me anyway, it really provided this sense of perspective, kind of like, “You’re not alone. It’s okay. Other folks are dealing with it. [Your partnership] is doing amazing work, and your reputation is still fine. This is normal.” And I could go back and put one foot in front of the other again. [That support has been] important!”*



Salmon SuperHwy – A new bridge over Clear Creek, a tributary to the Nestucca River, and streambed reconstruction opened the watershed up for native fish use and natural stream function. Salmon were observed upstream of the bridge weeks after project completion. PHOTO / BRETT ROSS

### *Recommendations for OWEB to continue*

- **A culture of openness and flexibility in grant administration** where grantees feel supported to share questions, challenges and new learning.
- **FIP grants with funding for six years of implementation**, including a breadth of funding categories that can be flexibly used: partnership coordination, stakeholder engagement, restoration, land and water acquisition, monitoring and technical assistance.
- **P-TA grants with up to three years of funding** for strategic action planning, strengthening governance and/or partnership coordination, including the streamlined and flexible administration of these grants.
- **Capacity funding for partnership coordination** as part of the P-TA and FIP grants, including the option for partnerships to apply for a P-TA grant after completing a FIP.
- **Clarify that capacity funding can be used for a monitoring coordinator position**, not to collect data, but for the coordination, synthesis and flow of information, including facilitation to interpret monitoring results together.
- **Learning opportunities for FIP and P-TA grantees** to support skill-building, peer learning and networking, especially in the areas of: monitoring, tribal relations, equity and inclusion, partnership coordination, fundraising and restoration strategies.



## Recommendations for OWEB for further support

- A clearer articulation of what OWEB considers successful performance, especially with the FIP program.
- More streamlined FIP grant administration to minimize the time spent on administrative tasks so that more time can be dedicated to the partnership and its work, specifically in the areas of:
  - Clear expectations of what is required with the FIP grant explaining everything that OWEB will ask for over the course of the grant so partnerships can plan for the staff time needed,
  - Shorter, more concise FIP project applications and ideally ways to reduce the number of project applications to reduce redundancy with information explained in the strategic action plan and reduce time spent managing so many separate grants,
  - More user-friendly online application portal and grants database to to reduce the time spent with a clunky application and reporting interface (See Findings: External Technical Review)
  - Clearer guidance for partnerships and technical reviewers to address the concern that some revisions are time-consuming and do not change project design or outcomes (See Findings: External Technical Review), and
  - Clearer expectations for reporting on monitoring projects to reduce time spent with revisions. (See Findings: Tracking Progress)
- Introducing partnerships to other funders in federal and state agencies to minimize the time for each partnership to track down contacts for each funding program and potentially create a mechanism to share funding opportunities.
- Alignment among funders, especially around goals, timing, grant requirements and reporting, for example with the Oregon Water Resources Department's Place-Based Planning Grants, but also coordinating with other state agencies to collectively lobby for federal funding and make a strong business case for increased investment, for example with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- Communicating the value and uniqueness of this partnership approach to increase the visibility of partnership work across the state, which partnerships can use to amplify their own messages.



South Coast. PHOTO / OWEB

# Understanding High-Performing Partnerships

One of the goals OWEB had for this study was to develop a framework for understand high-performing partnerships and better articulate what success looks like in the FIP and P-TA programs.

Performance refers to the ability of a partnership to achieve their goals and make progress toward their vision and desired impact.

*“This partnership took a ‘good idea’ that was extremely ambitious and turned it into an on the ground, verifiable, actual success. What this partnership has achieved, at halfway to our goal, has been monumental.”*

Comparing across partnerships and inductively looking for patterns, it became clear that high performance looked different for different partnership types. Several categories of partnership performance emerged - **Clarity and Direction, Action, Learning and Alignment.**

**Clarity and Direction**, which included strengths related to mobilizing people and resources and securing commitment to advance the work, was needed for all partnership types to perform well. Performance in the categories of **Action, Learning and Alignment** were more or less important depending on the partnership type. Performance overall for a particular partnership type was driven by one or more categories of performance. Other categories could be beneficial but were not necessary for high performance.

If the partnership type is not considered when evaluating performance, the performance of learning-oriented or project-oriented partnerships may be underestimated due widely-held assumptions that more collaboration is better (Christen and Inzeo 2015).

The categories of performance are show on the next page and described in some detail here.

## Clarity and direction

### Leadership, dedicated partners and funding

Leaders mobilize knowledgeable people and organizational partners with diverse skills and perspectives who understand the issues and can advance the work. Partners have good relationships with each other and people outside of the partnership that can make things happen. Together, they secure funding that crystalizes people’s commitment of time and energy toward a common purpose.

### Clear purpose and scope

Partners are clear about the reason they are coming together, including the scope and focus of their work, which is realistic given the people and resources they have dedicated to the work.

### Clear roles and decision-making

Partners clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of themselves and others, including how someone can join the partnership, if applicable. The structure of any steering committees or technical work groups is clear, including how people are chosen for those roles. For planning-oriented or systems-oriented partnerships, partners in leadership positions make the best decisions for the partnership and not necessarily their organization. Decision-making rules are clearly written, openly discussed and shared with everyone, including attention to the details that matter most to partners.

### Effective communication and coordination

Partners share information with each other and engage in dialogue and problem-solving to build the understanding and relationships needed to advance the work. They coordinate so that their individual contributions effectively contribute to the overall goals and vision, avoid unnecessary duplication and minimize conflicts and inefficiencies. Partners who represent an organization maintain two-way communication between their organization and the partnership so that their organization’s leadership is engaged and authentically supportive.

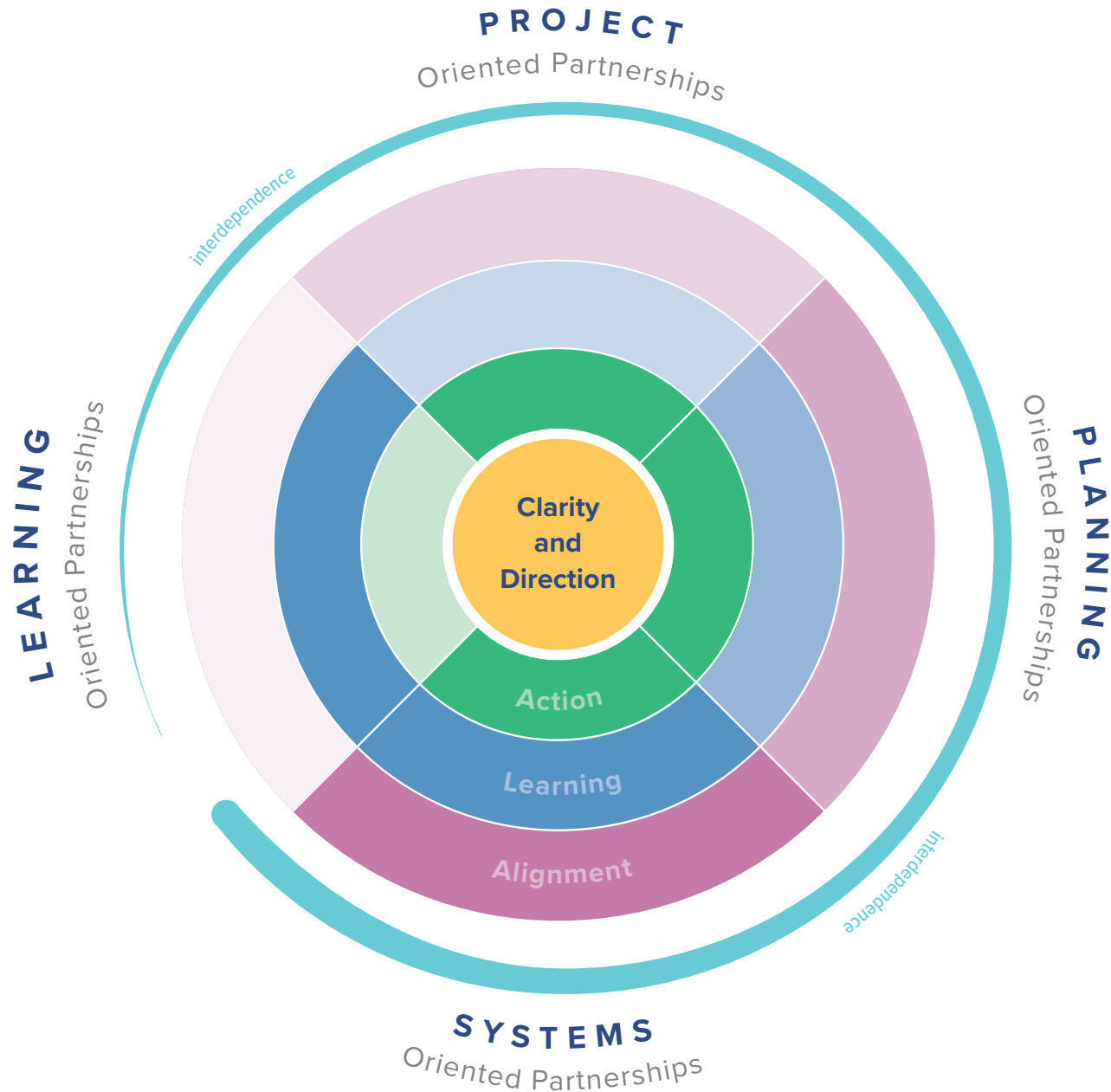
*“[Our] partnership has significantly increased communication and collaboration among our local restoration partners. Due to this increased communication conveyed via email or during monthly meetings and/or site visits hosted by the lead coordinator, there has been more efficient evaluation, ranking, and prioritization of projects, as well as overall information dissemination and partner collaboration since 2016.”*



**Performance** refers to the ability of a partnership to achieve their goals and make an impact.



**High performance** looks different for different partnership types. Greater color intensity below denotes categories of performance that are highly important for overall performance for each partnership type.



## UNDERSTANDING High-Performing Partnerships

The following categories of performance were inductively developed from the data.

- **Clarity and Direction**
  - Leadership, dedicated partners, and funding
  - Clear purpose and scope
  - Clear roles and decision-making
  - Effective communication and coordination
- **Action**
  - Strategic plan with prioritized actions
  - Well-executed actions
  - Ability to track progress and make improvements
- **Learning**
  - Trust to work through hard questions
  - Incorporation of new learning and latest science
  - Dissemination of learning
- **Alignment**
  - Standardized practices and norms
  - Systems for feedback and accountability
  - Ability to tell the story of learning and impact

**Clarity and Direction** are important for all partnership types to perform well, while other categories may be more or less important for overall performance depending on the partnership type ([See Partnership Types](#)). Partnerships can be a blend of different types and dynamically move from one to another.

## Action

### A strategic action plan with prioritized actions

Partnership actions are directed by a strategic action plan that explains the partnership's vision, long-term goals and context alongside strategies and prioritized actions. They have a clear theory of change that explains how their work is expected to lead to desired impacts over a specified timeframe.

- Project-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on prioritizing actions in a specific geography and timeframe after an initial planning effort, often based on an existing regional plan
- Planning-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on collaboratively developing a strategic action plan and prioritized actions and updating it together periodically
- Systems-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on identifying questions and uncertainties together as the strategic action plan is developed, implementing actions to test questions, reflecting on outcomes and incorporating learning into plan updates

### Well-executed actions

Partnerships have a track record of well-executed actions with evidence that outcomes will be reached in time.

- Project-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on efficiency, scaling up and/or proof of concept
- Planning-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on implementation of a sequence of actions that together will yield a cumulative impact greater than individual actions
- Systems-oriented partnerships: Emphasis on learning so that well-executed actions lead to improved understanding of the system and standardization of strategies and practices that have the greatest likelihood for impact

### Ability to track progress and make improvements

Partners have a framework for tracking progress based on their theory of change. They are able to collect data or evidence to learn from mistakes and improve as they plan future projects.

- Project-oriented partnerships: Often increasing the efficiency or effectiveness of projects
- Planning-oriented partnerships: Often increasing efficiency or effectiveness and/or re-prioritizing actions as conditions change or new learning emerges to have a greater chance of impact
- Systems-oriented partnerships: Often increasing efficiency or effectiveness and developing best practices, reprioritizing actions and/or revising the theory of change, sometimes restructuring the partnership with new committees to address new learning

## Learning

### Trust to work through hard questions

Partners bring up questions or suggestions that could increase the likelihood for impact, even when it may include uncomfortable or surprising feedback for others. Partners demonstrate respect for each other and work through discomfort to promote learning and improvement. Partnerships using skilled facilitation are able to discern which hard questions or topics will move them toward their goals and which may be distracting or unhelpful.

### Incorporation of new learning and latest science

Partners create forums to deepen learning, share latest science and help people incorporate it into their work.

### Dissemination of learning

Partners find creative ways to articulate what they are learning and share it with others.



PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

## Alignment

### Standardized practices and norms

Partners work together to standardize best practices and norms, for example related to partnership culture, conservation practices, landowner outreach and engagement, monitoring and commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. Systems-oriented partnerships may also align themselves in fundraising approaches, for example using the partnership's branding rather than individual branding.

### Systems for feedback and accountability

Partnerships institutionalize processes and structures for feedback and accountability, for example technical review, post-implementation field site review and more formally adaptive management. These processes and structures create time and space for partners to ask questions of each other, reflect on progress, invite constructive criticism and commit to changes that have a greater likelihood for impact. Systems-oriented partnerships tend to be able to justify more detailed, time-intensive processes like formal adaptive management and more explicit mechanisms for accountability among partners.

### Ability to tell the story of learning and impact

Partners are able to take all the project-level success stories and tell the larger story of what they are learning together and the cumulative impact of their work over time.

*“We have a circular image of our process as a feedback loop. It basically has our prioritization in one corner, our implementation in another corner and then the other half is research, monitoring and evaluation, and then we have a shortcut in the middle, and that’s [our annual meeting to look at the most recent science and data], [which leads to] ultimately adaptive management.*

*And [at our annual meeting] this past week, we hit that diagram on the head. It was awesome, and the reason why is because, better than we have ever before, we really looked at the data that we have and the data that was new, and we asked ourselves, “How does this change what we are going to do?” and we documented it.”*



PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

## Four Strategies to Enhance Performance and Accountability

OWEB wanted to better understand several specific dimensions of performance and accountability with respect to what they can expect from partners and how they can best support, focusing on the following four topics with findings described in the following sections:

- 1 Trust among partners to ask challenging questions** to maximize the likelihood for impact, for example during the development of budgets, prioritization of projects, internal technical review or implementation
- 2 External technical review of FIP projects**
- 3 Expanding the circle** of people involved either as core partners or some other role, including consideration of underrepresented groups, and
- 4 Tracking progress** toward goals by measuring ecological outcomes and telling the story of impact





PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

Performance within any organization or team is linked to systems of accountability or checks and balances. People with relevant knowledge, expertise or perspectives are positioned to review work, provide feedback, ask questions, and provide support for resolution or improvement where needed.

Voluntary partnerships like those in this study, which do not have formal lines of authority typical of hierarchical organizations, must rely on trust to develop and enforce internal processes of accountability. External accountability in this context is shaped by funders, technical reviewers and broader constituencies.

Many FIP grantees expressed recognition that with greater investment comes a greater sense of responsibility to use the resources well and have the greatest impact.

*“As [we] build all this momentum, I want to make sure it is in service to conservation outcomes and we remain responsive to partner interests and needs. It just feels like with more investment, we have got to make this matter.”*

*“The process that we went through in the development of the FIP grant was super helpful. There was sort of this desire to see success in delivering the best possible proposal that we knew how, and in doing that it meant asking hard questions of all of our projects – and to me that’s a fantastic learning benefit of the partnership.”*

## 1 Trust among partners to ask challenging questions

From Part 2 of this study, many partnerships felt that relationships were somewhat fragile. Some people described how their partners tip-toed or shied away from bringing up challenging questions about performance and how to best target their efforts for the most impact. Partnerships emphasized that building trust at this level requires substantial investment in relationships along with skilled facilitation to create the space to listen to each other and make decisions together. Some partners felt that they had the facilitation capacity and relationships to do this, while others could see what they were lacking, often without knowing how to improve. In some cases, they requested more training and support for facilitation and consensus building.

In this study, partnerships again echoed the importance of relationship building, and many partnerships described success in regularly working through challenging discussions.

With the FIP and P-TA grant programs, **OWEB** has emphasized the value of governance documents and planning tools to structure collaborative work in ways that can support trust among partners. However, they also recognize that investments in relationships building, such as spending time together at site visits, are vital to working through challenging questions and directing work toward the greatest likelihood for impact.

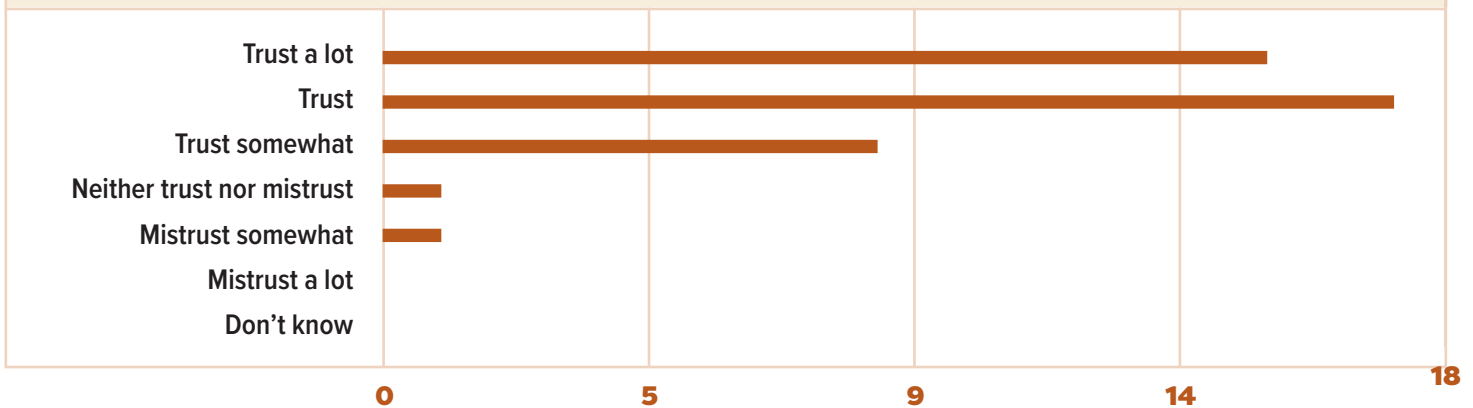
“I think the challenging questions are asked at every single internal project review meeting, and there are no hard feelings when the group is split on a decision to fund. The partners have made really great changes and clarifications to their project in response to the group’s questions and sometimes criticisms of the project. The group is always careful to make it about the project, not the presenter, which helps keep trust high.”



### Current Trust Levels

To what extent do you currently trust your partnership to ask hard questions of each other so that collective decisions and actions have the greatest chance for impact?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.



The literature on trust describes different sources of trust: i) dispositional trust, which refers to innate tendencies to trust that are shaped by a person’s disposition, life history, cultural norms and social context, ii) relational trust, which refers to the investment in relationship building where people get to know and appreciate each other’s strengths, weaknesses and unique characteristics, iii) rational trust, which refers to an intentional process of creating a clear track record showing follow-through on commitments

and responsiveness to feedback, and iv) systems-based trust, which refers to setting up systems, procedures or rules for accountability (Robbins 2016; Stern and Baird 2015). Additionally, historical and sociopolitical forces that privilege some groups over others influence the potential for trust and power dynamics among partners (Wollenberg et al. 2005; Brouwer et al 2015). The context and these different sources of trust together shape what is possible within a partnership.



PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

*“Our partnership has been one of the highest functioning teams I’ve ever had the pleasure of being a part of, and I believe that is due to a high personal and organizational commitment to [restoration goals] in our specific area.”*

*“The collective trust has increased through time, as the partnership has had lots of stability and chances for many partners to support each other through key processes.”*

### Generally Increasing Trust

Reflecting on years of working together, most partners expressed trust in their current partnership and growing trust over time, which was often linked to collective pride in their accomplishments. Pride was described in terms of what they accomplished with their P-TA and/or FIP grants and in getting through difficult situations, for example partners going beyond their normal duties to collaboratively respond to leadership changes or natural disasters.

### Sources of Trust

People from many partnerships expressed liking the people in their partnership and being inspired by their work together addressing issues they are passionate about.

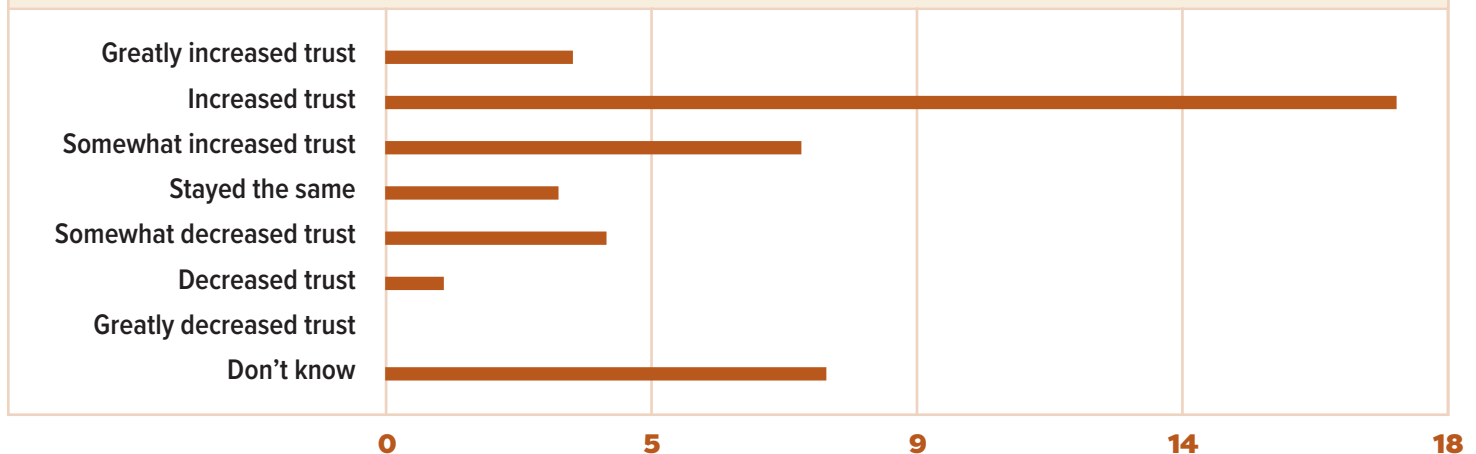
Several partnerships specifically referenced aspects of their governance, such as regular check-ins, an internal review process and a steering committee with representatives from different partnerships, that contributed to greater trust and performance.

Spending time together was highlighted frequently. One partnership reflected that sharing an office built foundational relationships that made deeper collaboration possible.

## Changes in Trust

To what extent do you think that trust among partners has changed over the years, thinking about the trust needed to ask hard questions and make planning and budget decisions together to hold the bar high for performance and impact?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.







Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership, Hall Ranch OSU Visit, 2015.  
PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

People from some of the rural partnerships reflected on how intertwined their professional and personal lives are. Several other partnerships reflected on the value of field trips for building trust, allowing people to talk about questions naturally as they come up and see connections between different projects.

People newer to a partnership with less understanding of its history tended to be trusting and optimistic about partnership performance. At the same time, many long-time partners who had personally experienced the ups and downs were also very trusting of their partners and some of the biggest champions of the value of their partnership.

One partnership directly referenced their culture of openness as a strength that has contributed to trust – for example openly discussing assumptions from their theory of change and recognizing when they were wrong about initial assumptions. They also appreciated that they could

talk openly and honestly about their learning with OWEB, which reinforced trust in their approach.

*“I think that’s one of the strengths of what we’ve all learned together – admitting [when we got something wrong]. Celebrating successes also, but [admitting] maybe we should do it another way.”*

OWEB has long been recognized by grantees for their open, supportive and responsive culture. Specifically, partnerships expressed gratitude to Courtney Schaff, Andrew Dutterer, Ken Fetcho, former OWEB Director Meta Loftsgaarden and former Deputy Director Renée Davis.

*“Yeah, it’s kind of fun to look back and joke with [each other] that we used to snorkel together all the time. Yeah, there are handful of us that have been around. And because we are rural and a smaller community, the connections outside of work are big. We connect on many, many levels, which is a good thing.”*

## Challenges related to trust

While trust is a good thing for partnerships, sometimes high levels of trust can create a sense of inflated confidence, where partners assume things will go well and place less attention on tracking each other's performance. Several partnerships described this pattern, including some which had been operating as a planning-oriented partnership but evolved into a project-oriented partnership, which makes sense since they are structured to allow each partner autonomy to accomplish their tasks with less investment in centralized processes for accountability. One partner, who shared a long list of accomplishments and examples of pulling through difficulties together, reflected that people in their partnership trust each other so much that they haven't set up a mechanism to check-in with each other. The partnership realized that regular check-ins would have been helpful when one partner experienced challenges with monitoring and it took a while for other partners to find out and offer support.

Strong opinions can also create challenges in a partnership and lead to reduced trust to ask questions for fear of strong responses. Two partnerships described experiences where key people with strong opinions closed down opportunities to work through challenging questions together. They found this inhibited trust and affected performance, where people avoided speaking up for fear of being attacked or blamed. In both cases, the strong opinions and division among partners reflected larger patterns of political divisions in the region. In both situations, things improved after the person with strong opinions left and partners made an intentional effort to improve communication and relationships. In one situation, the partnership structure remained intact, while in the other, relationships remained strained and partners openly talked about restructuring.

Lack of time and energy dedicated to reflection and open discussion was a common theme among partnerships who felt that trust has eroded somewhat, particularly those

## Suggestions for partnerships

Even when performance is strong and trust is high, it is still recommended to put at least simple accountability measures in place to regularly check-in on performance. Reflective time to check-in on strategic direction is also recommended periodically to maintain partnership performance and resilience.

partnerships focused on implementation with ambitious goals and work plans. One partner reflected that despite all that they have accomplished as a partnership, some partners still do not share data freely, even when asked. Another partnership reflected that they used to have big heated discussions that everyone contributed to, but now over time, there are so many different funded projects that each person is more focused on their own and not as engaged in other projects or the big picture. With both of these partnerships, they described their current meetings as update round tables with little discussion.

## Recommendations for OWEB on trust

- **Continue to nurture a culture of learning**, where partnerships are encouraged to ask questions, work through challenges and celebrate new learning with each other and OWEB.
- **Encourage partnerships to use their funds for professional facilitation and/or build their own facilitation skills** to work through challenging topics, for example facilitating consensus, team building and agenda design.
- **If partners with strong opinions are impacting trust, encourage partnerships to seek professional facilitation or mediation support** to better understand and mitigate the situation.

*“Larger projects have brought a much greater pressure and doubling down on getting the work done with less time to reflect and discuss. With several organizations involved in the same kind of work, there are more meetings, responsibilities and tracking responsibilities.”*





Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership, Sheep Creek culvert before bridge construction, May 2018. PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

## 2 External technical review of FIP projects

FIP applicants go through an initiative level technical review as part of the selection and award process. When a partnership is awarded a FIP grant, they technically have an approved list of projects for the next six years; however, each project still needs to go through a more detailed project review to ensure that public funds are spent on well designed projects with the likelihood for impact. OWEB conducts external technical review at the project-level for FIP grantees at least once a biennium.

With this study, **OWEB** prioritized this topic to inform ongoing improvements in FIP project-level technical review. Their goal is to encourage challenging questions that keep the bar high for strong projects, while also respecting that projects have already been vetted through the FIP selection process and with some partnerships an internal technical review process.

### Strengths

Overall, most partnerships felt that the FIP project-level technical review process plays an important role in developing good projects, recognizing project strengths and weaknesses and supporting stronger partnerships. Even partnerships who had their own internal technical review valued the added layer of OWEB's external technical review.

*"I would say the presence of the technical review has been important. We've built more robust proposals because we knew they weren't just going to be taken carte blanche. It is important to have that technical review there as a motivator. And they do ask good questions."*

Partnerships consistently valued technical review for two reasons:

- Good questions that led to stronger projects and
- Transparency in how public funds are spent.

*"I think the value is partly to improve outcomes but it also has value because it provides transparency and understanding among stakeholders."*



## Important design features

Overall, partnerships consistently mentioned two important design features that made the review process meaningful:

- Local reviewers who understand local geography, local issues, project proponents and the partnership's history and track record, and
- The opportunity to discuss proposals with reviewers, in some cases even visiting field sites together.

*"I appreciate that [the FIP technical review process] is more of a back and forth meeting to get questions answered, less formality. I also appreciate that we can suggest technical experts for the review. [It is] still kind of clunky but much better than how it started."*

Several partnerships reflected that the FIP technical review is a stark contrast to OWEB's Open Solicitation technical review process, where regional reviewers are often not familiar with local issues and where there is no opportunity to interact. One partnership described their transition from the FIP program back into the Open Solicitation review process and noted a drastic contrast in reviewers' understanding of the context of their proposals. With the FIP project-level technical review, reviewers asked better questions because they understood the context of the strategic action plan and connections to other projects.



Siuslaw Coho Partnership - Partners gather on Waite Ranch in preparation for implementing a large-scale restoration project, 2022.

PHOTO / ELIZABETH GOWARD

## Areas for improvement

The most commonly discussed area for improvement was the tedious work of filling out long project applications with repetitive questions to prepare for project-level technical review. A few people from different partnerships expressed frustration that FIP reviewers didn't always review their materials or understand the context, which they felt was related to the length of application materials. Many partnerships suggested that OWEB could do more to streamline application materials and be clearer with reviewers about their expectations. One partnership perceived that FIP staff were inconsistent in their guidance for what could and could not be included in a project application based on conversations with another FIP partnership.

Some partnerships were frustrated with the time it took to respond to minor questions that didn't change the projects or potential outcomes. Several partnerships commented that the online application portal was clunky and difficult to use. One partnership found it tedious to edit a project application to incorporate changes from multiple partners as part of the technical review process. (Currently, only one person can edit a project application at a time, and they asked OWEB if the online application portal can be changed to allow for multiple editors.)

**OWEB** responded that they know there are challenges associated with the online application portal and are working to streamline and update it as resources allow. They recommended that partnerships download the application template into a program that allows group editing and then, when ready, insert those responses into the online application.

Two people from one partnership described their challenges as a new OWEB grantee trying to navigate complicated rules for each of the FIP funding categories and prepare their applications with the appropriate level of detail for technical review. They described struggling to figure out what OWEB and external reviewers were

looking for. They strongly suggested that OWEB provide orientation to new FIP grantees – or even FIP applicants – so they would know what to expect with project applications and project review. They strongly encouraged new FIP applicants to read through the detailed rules for each grant type to inform how partnerships put together the projects in their FIP application. Although these challenges were more prominently felt and openly expressed by this new FIP grantee, other FIP partnerships expressed similar comments that it took them time to figure out how to fit their work into project applications and the appropriate level of detail needed.

Another theme from the data was the emotional nature of some technical review discussions. A couple of individuals from different partnerships expressed concern that some reviewers' comments reflected personal bias or preference more than science, requesting that OWEB could play a role more effectively facilitating these situations so that reviewers explain the reasons for their concerns.

Several partnerships discussed the potential value of moving OWEB's technical review earlier in the design process – or using a two-phased review – so reviewers could comment on preliminary design ideas and have more of a chance to influence the final design. Otherwise, if significant changes were needed and only discovered later in the design process, applicants would have to make changes and resubmit in the next review cycle.

There were a few people who were skeptical about the value of the FIP project-level technical review process

because they already had their own internal review process. One person felt it was sufficient that projects were already vetted through the FIP initiative level review process as part of the FIP selection process. However, the number of partnerships who valued OWEB's FIP technical review process far outweighed the few people who doubted its value.

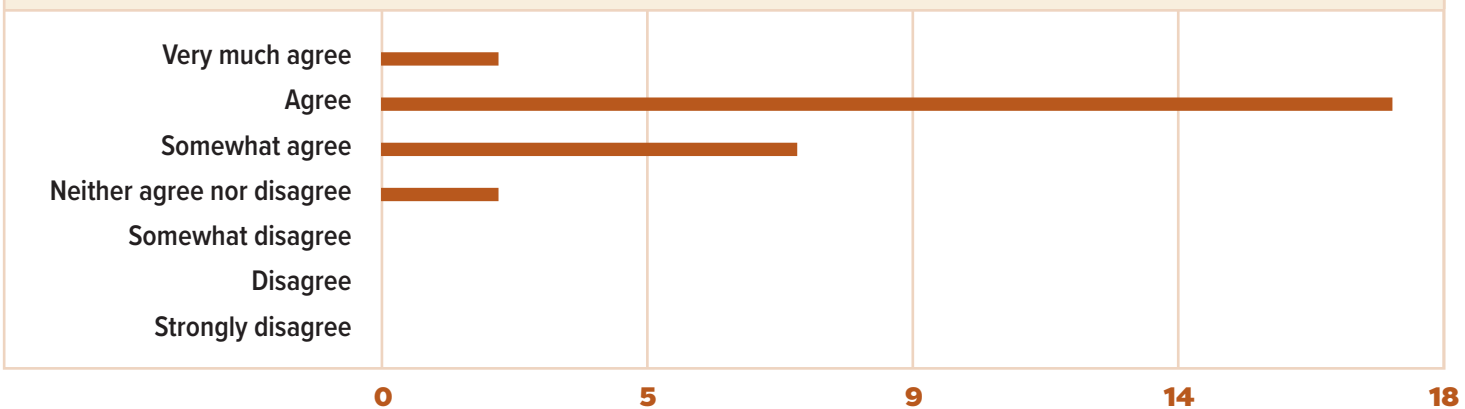
There were also concerns from two partners who valued the process and wanted it to be more comprehensive. Two people from different partnerships expressed disappointment that they felt their internal project-level review was not comprehensive enough. They wanted a strategic review to evaluate project proposals against the partnership's strategic action plan, theory of change and priority actions so that they could draw attention to projects that aren't being proposed. They expressed a desire for the OWEB's project-level technical review to make up for this strategic review that they felt was lacking in their partnership.

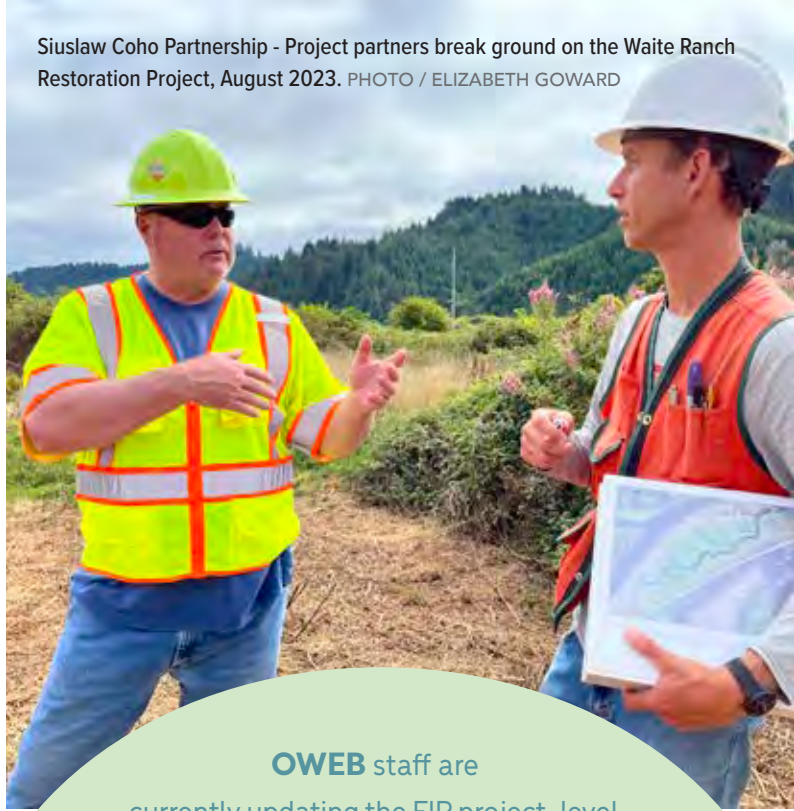
**OWEB** reflected that this more comprehensive strategic review is something that they would hope high-performing partnerships are doing. Once a FIP is awarded with its list of prioritized projects, their due diligence is clearly focused on technical review to ensure those projects, or alternates, are well-designed and likely to have the desired impact.

### Value of OWEB's Technical Review

To what extent do you think OWEB's role in technical review has led to a better outcome for implementation and greater likelihood for impact?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.





## Recommendations for OWEB's technical review

- **Retain the FIP project-level technical review**, including two important design features: local reviewers and opportunities for reviewers and partners to discuss proposals.
- **Revise guidance for the FIP project-level technical review and provide an orientation for FIP grantees** to include clear explanations of roles, responsibilities and expectations for OWEB, reviewers, project applicants and the partnership as a whole. Include expectations that:
  - o Partnerships will work together to consider the technical design of each project and how well proposed projects collectively compare with the theory of change and prioritized actions before submitting it for OWEB's technical review,
  - o OWEB will facilitate a fair process where people ask challenging questions, listen to each other and consider the breadth of science and best practices above personal preference or biases, and
  - o Reviewers will read materials and come prepared to ask questions, listen and provide justification for any changes requested.
- **Provide the option, if time allows, for earlier review or a two-step review process.**
- **Continue dialogue and coordination among OWEB staff** to ensure consistency in how they advise partnerships to prepare project applications and how they facilitate technical review team meetings.
- **Strengthen the facilitation skills** and toolkit of OWEB staff facilitating technical review.

**OWEB** staff are currently updating the FIP project-level technical review process and orientation for the next cohort of FIPs integrating many of the above recommendations. The project application is the same for FIP and Open Solicitation, and OWEB is streamlining some of the questions so they are not as repetitive. They are also considering to possibly create an even more simplified project application for FIP considering that all the background and context is described in their SAP.

Responding to interest in moving the technical review earlier in the design process, **OWEB** is working on an option to hold site visits with partners and technical reviewers early in the design process to discuss project proposals, well in advance of writing project applications so that reviewers have more of a chance to influence designs. OWEB still needs reviewers to evaluate project applications later in the design process, but that can be a shorter meeting, even held virtually, as a follow-up to an earlier site visit.



PHOTO / HARNEY BASIN WETLANDS COLLABORATIVE



### 3 Expanding the circle

Expanding the circle refers to the intentional effort of including new people, organizations and/or tribes in some aspect of a partnership's work.

- Sometimes efforts to expand the circle are directed at recruiting new partners.
- Sometimes the focus is to be more inclusive of underrepresented groups who are impacted by a partnership's work but may not have any connection to the partnership or means to participate.
- Often, but not always, efforts to expand the circle overlap with a partnership's commitments to diversity<sup>4</sup>, equity<sup>5</sup>, inclusion<sup>6</sup>, and justice<sup>7</sup>, especially when working with underrepresented or historically marginalized groups.

Some of these terms can be polarizing so care was taken in this study to encourage people to interpret this topic 'expanding the circle' as they liked and share their views freely.

Some aspects of OWEB's grant programs relate to people's ability to access grant funding, for example offering individual consultations to anyone interested in a FIP and advertising this widely. Referred to as equitable grantmaking, OWEB has contracted two studies examining their grantmaking practices with an equity lens, one specifically looking at impacts to tribes (Miller 2021) and another broader analysis (ECONorthwest in progress). They have also developed new climate-related evaluation criteria, applicable to all grants, that include an environmental justice component for "Local Communities Disproportionately Impacted by Climate Change." Some of the findings and recommendations in the Synthesis section of this report also relate to this topic.

Other aspects of OWEB grant programs relate to the rules and programs that shape what funded partnerships work on and how they work together, which influences their ability to expand their circle. OWEB provides a lot of flexibility in their rules and guidance for partnerships to decide what is right for their context and needs, for example flexibility in planning frameworks, governance structures and monitoring plans. OWEB also emphasizes dialogue with grantees, partners and tribes and is responsive to feedback, which are all core tenets of equity, and yet particular details in grant rules and programs can still have a significant impact on grantees and their extended networks. The findings and recommendations in this section provide context for these types of changes that OWEB may want to consider.

**OWEB** identified this topic to include in the study because they have been undergoing their own process of learning and engagement to articulate their values around diversity, inclusion, equity and environmental justice, for example through the development of the Board's equity statement.

Because of the timing of this study, **OWEB** saw this as an opportunity to listen and learn from partnerships about their approaches and experiences with expanding the circle.

---

<sup>4</sup> **Diversity** is the breadth of differences in a group, in this context most often referring to differences in race, culture, language, economic stability and age.

<sup>5</sup> **Equity** is an approach that recognizes some groups have been systematically disadvantaged and works to mitigate those disadvantages by engaging people impacted to design systems and practices for everyone to thrive.

<sup>6</sup> **Inclusion** is the intentional practice of welcoming diverse people to participate meaningfully and nurturing a sense of belonging among everyone.

<sup>7</sup> **Justice** refers to making amends for wrongdoings and creating a fair system that provides opportunity for everyone.

### A range of perspectives

Partnerships expressed a range of perspectives on expanding their circle. Most partnerships felt it was important to expand their circle in some way to achieve their goals, while a few partnerships felt they have just the right circle of partners and participants to advance their vision without the need to expand.

When describing who they wanted to better include, partnerships often named tribes, landowners and farmers, sometimes also researchers. A few partnerships described a clear focus on engaging low-income residents, Spanish-speaking residents and/or Spanish-speaking restoration workers.



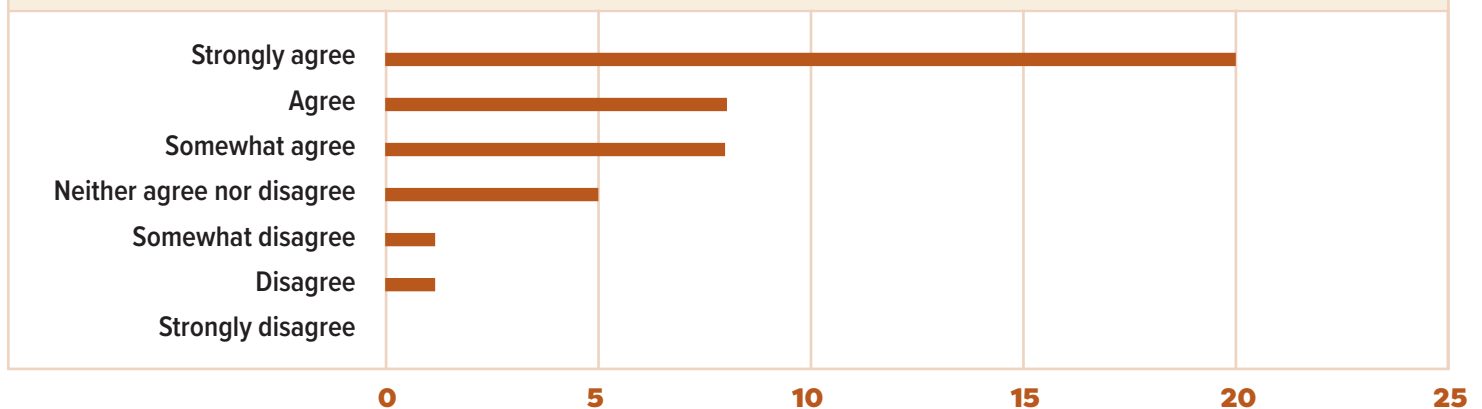
Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group - Cottage Grove High School students interplanting a riparian restoration project at My Brothers' Farm.

PHOTO / COAST FORK WILLAMETTE WATERSHED COUNCIL

### Belief that Expanding Your Circle Will Help Achieve Your Goals

To what degree do you feel that expanding your circle of partners and/or building relationships with underrepresented groups in your watershed will help you achieve your goals?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.



The breadth of views among grantees about expanding their circle is not surprising since the P-TA and FIP grant offerings provide partnerships a lot of flexibility to define their partnership on their own terms, widely considered a strength of the program. OWEB does not provide specific guidance or expectations associated with expanding the circle, except that:

- Partnerships need to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy and consider tribal engagement,
- Partnerships are expected to communicate effectively with all partners, and
- Partnerships should not exclude any organization who works on the same issues and geography and wants to become a partner.

### Perspectives from across the state

A few people openly talked about the politics that can come up when discussing equity and underrepresented groups, especially in the context of funding and sometimes influenced by cultural differences between urban and rural areas. They urged OWEB to think carefully about how they use these words and concepts as their words carry a lot of weight with the potential to be misunderstood or misrepresented.



East Cascade Oak Partnership. PHOTO / PALOMA AYOLA

### **Considering power and representation**

Power refers to access to resources, opportunities, knowledge and social networks that allow a person or entity to have influence over decisions and ultimately achieve their goals.

Some groups historically have not had power and have been disproportionately impacted by environmental burdens. For example, low-income immigrants who speak limited English and live in flood-prone areas are typically underrepresented in decisions about flood risk and mitigation.

Other groups may be underrepresented because their perspectives or goals are very different from the leadership and/or direction of a partnership. For example, the goals of farmers or academic researchers may not necessarily align well with the goals of a restoration initiative – or may require listening and dialogue to develop alignment.

It is also important to consider how power has changed over time. Some groups who have had more power and influence historically than they do today may be considered underrepresented, even though they may still have power and influence.

Understanding power and representation is nuanced and not straightforward. These are a few considerations that provide context for what is meant by expanding the circle to include underrepresented groups.

As an example, a couple of people from one rural partnership felt that buzzwords like equity, inclusion and underrepresented groups were applicable in urban areas with more diverse populations but not in rural areas. They were nervous that funders like OWEB would use these terms in ways that would reduce their chances for funding. And yet separately, someone from the same partnership described their ongoing work to engage tribes, which indicates awareness of this issue within the partnership alongside nervousness about what funders expect of them.

To put this comment in context and summarize responses from across the state, partnerships in both urban and rural areas working in different ecosystems have been engaged in thinking about expanding their circle in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion and integrating it into their work. Many are focused on learning, while a few have transformed the way they work by integrating new voices and perspectives into their partnership. A few haven't discussed expanding their circle as a partnership recently or at all with partners, in many cases admitting everyone is too busy implementing projects to discuss it. Some partnerships felt they have the partners and relationships already in place to confidently implement their work. For example, some partnerships already have more landowner interest than they have capacity to work with. In a few partnerships in both Eastern and Western Oregon, tribal partners are in leadership positions and integral to the momentum and direction of the partnership. One partnership in Eastern Oregon noted that a majority of their partners are female in a professional field that has been dominated by males.

### **Efforts to expand the circle**

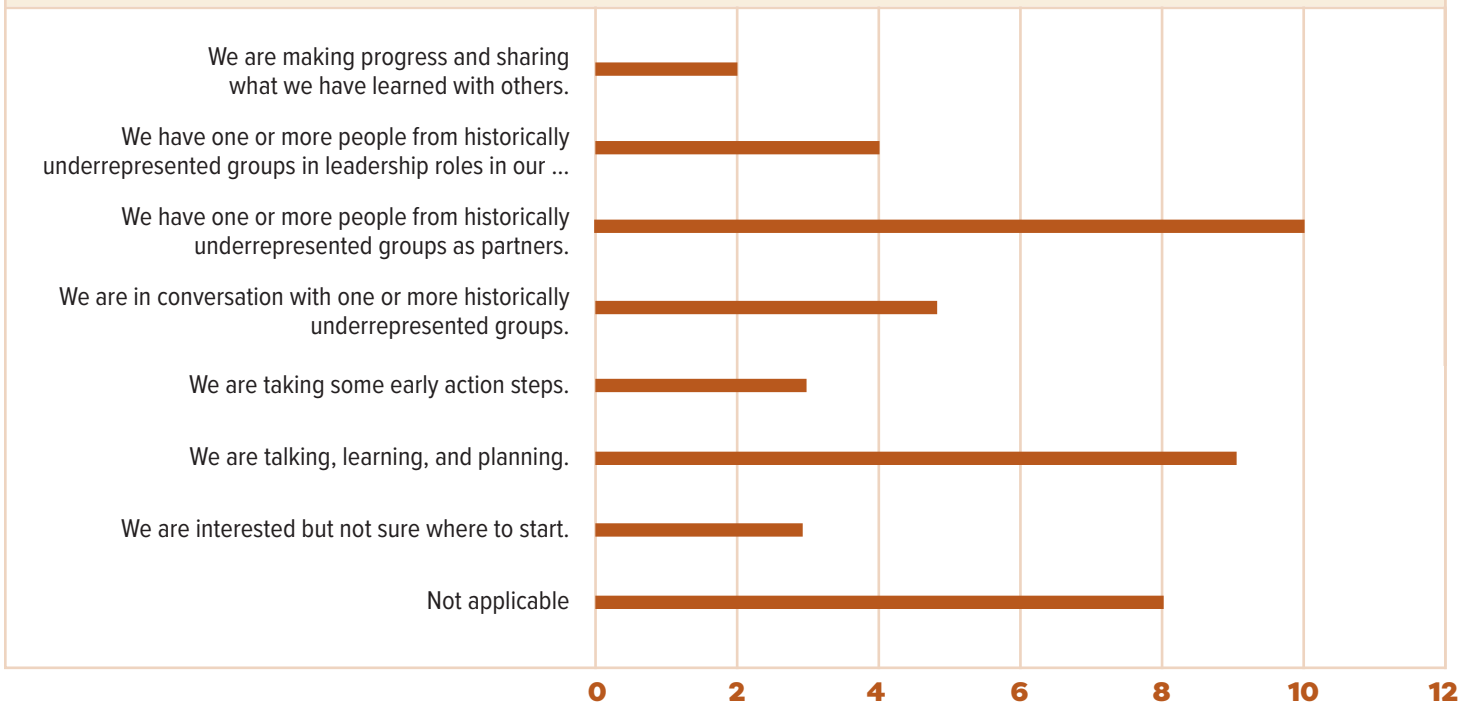
Considering those that want to expand their circle, many partnerships described themselves still in the learning stages, not sure where to start or taking early action steps to expand their circle, while several other partnerships have been actively taking strides and providing a model for others.



## Work to Expand Your Circle

To what degree are you working on expanding your circle of partners to include underrepresented groups?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.



### Partners described learning and early action steps to expand the circle.

*“It is tough at [my agency] to work on this topic because of our mission, funding and culture, but we are thinking, learning and trying to develop plans and actions that are realistic and meaningful.”*

*“The coast is largely white, working class folk. We have been really successful in working with our tribal partners, however there is much more work we can do in properly engaging, learning from, and being led by tribal members.”*

*“[Our basin], as a whole, inherently lacks diversity, and the partnership has recognized this and is looking into ways to expand our circle of partners. Many [partners] have recently taken DEI training. ... This is something we could use help with.”*

*“Our partners are working to fund tribal liaison positions to better coordinate collaborative efforts and ease the time burden on tribes to participate in conservation/restoration planning.”*

As partnerships engaged in deeper learning, one partner reflected on patterns of structural inequality<sup>8</sup> that can feel overwhelming.



*“Expanding the diversity of voices heard is a difficult task in rural coastal communities, not because we haven’t tried, but because the diversity is tribal and socioeconomic and the priorities of these diverse groups are different. Tribal engagement is critically important, but people available within the tribes to participate are extremely limited. Poverty issues related to housing and medical care continue to plague the small coastal towns. Bringing a range of voices to the table on restoration, conservation and natural resource issues likely feels like a ‘nice to do’ to most who are struggling day to day.”*

Addressing structural inequality is possible, but requires creative energy for relationship building and often reframing of a partnership’s goals to open up new possibilities for broader engagement. As part of that reframing, several partnerships discussed the distribution of costs and benefits from restoration projects, a cornerstone of environmental justice work, observing that if this question is not considered, economic benefits will often be highest for wealthier residents who own riparian areas or large upland properties.

Several partnerships described how the process of reframing their goals, vision and work together took place in tandem with new partners taking leadership positions. They also discussed how their governance structures, roles and/or decision-making processes evolved through this process.

- One partner described how tribes have become pivotal partners and taken on a leadership role in several projects as the partnership has deepened their commitment to tribal interests – transforming their planning processes with benefits including protection of culturally important resources.
- Two other partnerships described how local government agency partners with missions that emphasized public health and economic stability helped shift the partnership’s work to minimize or mitigate environmental burdens to low-income residents and increase benefits, for example when deciding which projects to implement first and investing in workforce development.



Oregon Central Coast Estuary Collaborative Field Trip, September 2023.  
PHOTO / MIDCOAST WATERSHEDS COUNCIL

<sup>8</sup>**Structural inequality** refers to a society where different groups have vastly different life outcomes and opportunities. It occurs when bias is embedded in the policies and practices of organizations and governments across sectors, such as housing, education, economic development, health care, clean water infrastructure, etc. People who experience disadvantages in one area are more likely to experience disadvantages in another, and vice versa, people experiencing advantages in one area are more likely to experience advantages in another, which structurally reinforces disparities over time.

While leaders have a clear role to play in expanding the circle and introducing new ways of thinking, the diversity of perspectives among staff and participating partners can also be transformative in the evolution of a partnership. Several partnerships described the value of having diverse perspectives both at the leadership level and also embedded throughout the general partnership and partner organizations. One partner, who is a citizen of a tribal nation, reflected that having more people with indigenous perspectives embedded within their organization has influenced the thinking, conversations and direction of their organization and the partnership overall with transformative results.



East Cascade Oak Partnership, Wildflower Walk. PHOTO / COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

Another partnership shared how they are continually investing in conversations with tribal partners and looking for ways to create more touchpoints, knowing that it takes time to build trust and understanding, which can then lead to deeper engagement.

*“Equity is layered into how we operate. We don’t have a formal tribal representative on the board, but I am in a leadership role with [my organization] and a citizen of [a tribal nation.] One person on staff is a citizen of [another tribal nation.] While we are not officially representing the tribes, we bring indigenous perspectives to our work. When I bring up issues, I guess yes, I feel like my voice is being heard. A bunch of collaboration is happening with tribes and other partners also. The tribes are collaborating in ways they didn’t before. This engagement is changing projects in the watershed and how we look at watershed restoration overall. Maybe not with landowners yet, but definitely within the partnership.”*

*“Through [funded projects] and our monitoring work, we’re having a lot of conversations [with our tribal partners]. I just talked with three tribal members last night about our shortages for monitoring consultants, and they said, ‘Well, we have these crews that are busy for three quarters of the year, and then don’t have anything to do for another quarter of the year.’ There might be some opportunity for us to train them up and hire them to implement some of our monitoring for us. And you know seasonally, it might not be ideal, but it might be from an equity perspective to more deeply engage tribal members in the work that we’re doing and for us to learn more from them about the things they’re seeing in the landscape and the lens that they view this work through.”*



In addition to reframing the work, one partnership highlighted compensation for people to participate in meetings who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend – as a way to reduce barriers for engagement. OWEB provides flexibility within the P-TA and FIP grants to pay people to participate meetings, so partnerships are allowed to use this funding to reduce barriers for historically marginalized groups that otherwise couldn't attend. Some partnerships described using this funding to ensure that grant-based organizations, and especially small watershed councils, could dedicate their time, but no one spoke of specific examples where partnerships are using this funding with historically underrepresented groups.

### Challenges to expanding the circle

A challenge expressed by several partnerships focused on implementation is lack of time to slow down and discuss questions like who to involve, why and how. One partner expressed frustration that there was never time on the agenda to discuss opportunities to bring in new partners who could help shape ideas for long-term planning. A lack of time or focus for these types of discussions is exacerbated even more when there is turnover among leadership or staff. Some partnerships that have been successful managing the power dynamics and interests within their existing circle were hesitant to think about including new partners because of the uncertainty and risk that it would slow them down.

*“I can see problems in certain watersheds, where adding too many groups could result in less restoration. If it takes too much time to come to consensus or if certain groups do not get along, that might be more problematic than reducing the number [of groups involved] to get good restoration projects done in an effective manner.”*

In some partnerships, progress working with underrepresented groups has been led by one or a few partners that have many years of experience integrating equity into their programs and operations. Some examples include workforce development that includes



Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership, Hall Ranch OSU Visit, 2015.  
PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

recruiting from Native and Latino communities, labor representation at the highest level of the organization and healthcare benefits for restoration workers. In one or two partnerships, it appears that the partnership as a whole has been less engaged in expanding their circle because one partner has been making strides that benefit the whole partnership.

It takes a concentrated effort for people who are relatively comfortable in a given context to understand the forces that marginalize others or even see that people are marginalized at all. Several partners felt fairly confident they had the right people involved, but then emphasized that they would gladly expand their circle if it turns out they are missing anyone. Several partnerships emphasized that this is an area where learning and support are needed and that they want to be thoughtful and intentional when bringing in new partners and attempting to expand their circle.

This was a common theme that it takes time for partnerships to consider whether to expand their circle, how and why, then time to make decisions together and take steps to follow through. This is challenging for many partnerships who have a heavy workload and other complications such as turnover among leadership and staff. It is very humbling work that requires trust and openness recognizing that there is no single right way and everyone will make mistakes.

## Expanding the circle in the context of OWEB grant programs

As OWEB continues to clarify their own internal values related to equity, diversity, inclusion and environmental justice, there likely will be aspects of their grant programs that they will want to clarify, change or further develop. Two examples below – land transactions and planning frameworks – illustrate how seemingly small details in program guidance can influence whether potential partners feel included or not.



Willamette Mainsteam Anchor Habitat Working Group - Public tour of project work at Snag Boat Bend, June 2017. PHOTO / LONG TOM WATERSHED COUNCIL

### *Land transactions – an example*

The example of OWEB’s land transactions and the conservation easements they include is used here to better describe how program rules – and perceptions about what is allowed or not - can restrict a partnership’s efforts to expand their circle. A few partnerships expressed concern that OWEB-funded land transactions exclude tribal harvest of culturally important plants, which is a high priority issue for tribes.

In the words of one tribal partner, who urged OWEB to change their policy, OWEB’s restrictions on land transactions make tribes not want to participate, which can negatively affect the momentum and direction of a partnership overall.

*“The significance of restrictions on land transactions is heavy. If OWEB doesn’t change the restrictions in ways that recognize and respect tribal uses and needs, tribes will struggle with land acquisitions. Tribes may prefer not to have them. I would want OWEB to add language to conservation easements that ‘When this land is returned to tribes, this easement will be dissolved.’ It is a recognition of tribal sovereignty.”*

*“Stewardship for us as indigenous people is about going out on the land, using resources, observing, talking about what you see, involving young people. When we take care of the land, we harvest and gather foods, medicines and materials for baskets and other culturally important purposes. We may want a simple structure to protect us from the weather as we process materials. Sometimes we may want to have a community space to hold a ceremony before we harvest. Our elders might need parking, maybe a bathroom to make it possible to be there with us. When we are observing, protecting and teaching about our resources across the generations, we are active stewards.*

*OWEB needs to change this policy - for tribes that are ready, it can bring about healing.”*

## OWEB's response to concerns about land acquisition from Tribes

When this concern was brought up to OWEB, their response was that tribal harvest of culturally important plants is allowed on lands acquired with OWEB funds as long as the harvest is consistent with the protection of conservation values for that property and is described in the management plan required by OWEB.

OWEB staff explained that the language in the conservation easement template for fee simple transactions says that vegetation removal is not allowed until either a management plan is developed that includes vegetation removal or OWEB approves vegetation removal separately in writing. From the comments received in this study and similar comments expressed directly to OWEB, it seems that this nuance has not been understood. OWEB staff also shared they have approved one management plan that includes the harvest of culturally important plants, so there is more flexibility than what people are perceiving.

OWEB's land acquisitions staff and regional staff work together to review proposed management plans for newly acquired property interests and management plan updates for prior transactions, in what they describe as a fairly straightforward process.

Land acquisitions staff emphasized they hope people pick up the phone and call if they have questions. They would be more than willing to work with tribes to include harvest of culturally important plants in OWEB-required management plans.

The question about other improvements such as a simple structure to protect people from the weather, parking, bathrooms and other infrastructure would need further discussion and would depend on the specific context of each property to determine what would be consistent with the protection of the property's conservation values. For example, some acquired properties are old farms so there might be an existing turn-around for a few cars to park and an easy spot to put a temporary port-a-potty with little risk of negative impacts. If there was a desire to have more extensive infrastructure like permanent bathrooms and shelters, or regularly host lots of people, other funding sources that align with community use of the property would be a better fit.

With respect to transferring

**OWEB**-funded properties over to tribes,

OWEB staff described a property that was purchased by a land trust and then transferred to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. They emphasized that OWEB uses conservation easements in all transactions including transfers because Oregon statutes require that properties acquired with OWEB funds are managed in perpetuity for the conservation purposes of the grant and give the Board certain authorities regarding the sale or transfer of the property. Changing this requirement would necessitate changing the statutes, which tribes could advocate for.

Recognizing the

need for more clarity on this issue, **OWEB** is already beginning to reach out to tribes to discuss concerns associated with the land acquisition grant program. They want to listen to better to understand tribal perspectives and ways they can address concerns.



### *Planning frameworks - an example*

As another example, at least one partnership felt strongly that the Open Standards for Conservation Planning framework referenced in OWEB's Strategic Action Planning Guide with its emphasis on 'threat reduction' did not align with their values and approach. They explained that an emphasis on 'threat reduction' positions people as causing threats that need to be managed instead of partners who work together to develop a vision and plan of action.

*"We approached our strategic planning a little bit differently than [other] partnerships who start with the ecological outcomes that they want to see and then threats and then figure out strategies to address those threats. We rejected the concept of 'threats' out of the box. Instead, we wanted to talk about impacts both positive and negative that people's behaviors have on ecological systems, just recognizing that we're all a part of them."*

Instead, this partnership created a modified planning framework that fit their values and approach. Their planning included broad outreach interviewing more than 60 people outside of the partnership to expand the ideas and perspectives that went into development of their results chain beyond their circle of partners.

While OWEB allows partnerships flexibility to choose their own planning frameworks and tools, which is widely celebrated as a strength including in this example, their planning guidance is largely shaped by the Open Standards approach, which caused friction in this case and has been critiqued more broadly for similar reasons (Arnold and Wilson 2021). This example provides a reminder of how values are embedded in planning tools and grant guidance, which may have unintended consequences for who feels included or not in the work.



East Cascade Oak Partnership, Wasco Collaborative Tour. PHOTO / COLUMBIA LAND TRUST





Deschutes Basin Partnership - Whychus Creek near Sisters now flows year-round after historically running dry most summers, supporting reintroduced salmon and steelhead.

PHOTO / DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY

## Recommendations for OWEB for expanding the circle

- Use terms such as diversity, equity, inclusion and underrepresented groups very intentionally, clearly articulating their definitions and why they are being used considering how this will be understood by different audiences.
- Continue proactively analyzing grantmaking practices and program rules to identify and eliminate barriers and increase accessibility to OWEB grant programs, especially inviting feedback from new applicants, new grantees and grantees working to include underrepresented groups.
- Consider how and when to integrate concepts of equity and environmental justice into grant programs and rules considering OWEB's strategic plan and equity statement, in development, alongside existing laws, policies and capacity to implement changes.
- Continue to provide resources and tools to grantees to support greater awareness of tribal issues, including sovereignty, treaty rights and the specific issues and cultural practices relevant to tribes in Oregon.
- Consider training or peer learning opportunities to raise awareness and share innovations related to engagement, equity, inclusion and environmental justice as they relate to restoration, for example how asking about the distribution of costs and benefits may help identify new groups to involve and/or new approaches.
- Invest in opening communication and building trust with tribes around concerns that OWEB-funded land acquisitions are not inclusive of tribal approaches to stewardship – clarify that harvest of culturally important plants is allowed and potentially other activities – and stay open to suggestions that may emerge from further dialogue.
- Confirm with grantees that they can use P-TA or FIP funds to compensate people for participating in meetings, which may reduce barriers for some underrepresented groups.

## OWEB

identified tracking

progress and telling the story of impact as a priority topic aligned with their ongoing efforts to understand the real challenges of monitoring and tracking progress so that they can support grantees to be as successful as possible (Boulay 2021; OWEB 2018). Tracking progress is valued as a means to understand the effectiveness of actions and adaptively manage future actions to increase the likelihood for impact. Tracking progress is also valuable for showing the impacts of a partnership's work to gain public support and increase competitiveness for funding.

Since

the start of the FIP Program, **OWEB** Board, staff and partnerships have shifted their thinking and expectations. They now recognize that while six years of funding is longer than most grants, the work needed to see ecological and social outcomes will take much longer. With this part of the study, OWEB hopes to elevate common challenges experienced by partnerships and any innovative strategies that all partnerships may benefit from.

### 4 Tracking progress and telling the story of impact

#### Success alongside common challenges

Overall partnerships expressed pride and confidence in their ability to track outputs and demonstrate progress toward meeting their strategic action plan's goals and objectives. Many partnerships relied on their theory of change to infer progress toward outcomes based on tracking of near-term indicators. In some cases, partnerships conducted effectiveness monitoring at the project level. However, landscape-level effectiveness and telling the larger story of impact was much more challenging.

One partner described having a thoughtful, science-based discussion within their partnership, where they determined it was neither feasible, financially or economically, nor a good use of the partnership's time and attention to focus on landscape-level ecological trends.

Another partner noting the substantial cost and complexity of monitoring change at the landscape level, encouraged creativity in telling the story of impact, for example integrating anecdotes, storytelling, traditional knowledge and observations at the ecosystem level.

*"We have a lot of project level success stories to tell.... We can't link our work directly to anything at the population level, and we struggle at the landscape level as well. But at the project level, we have a lot of good data. ..."*

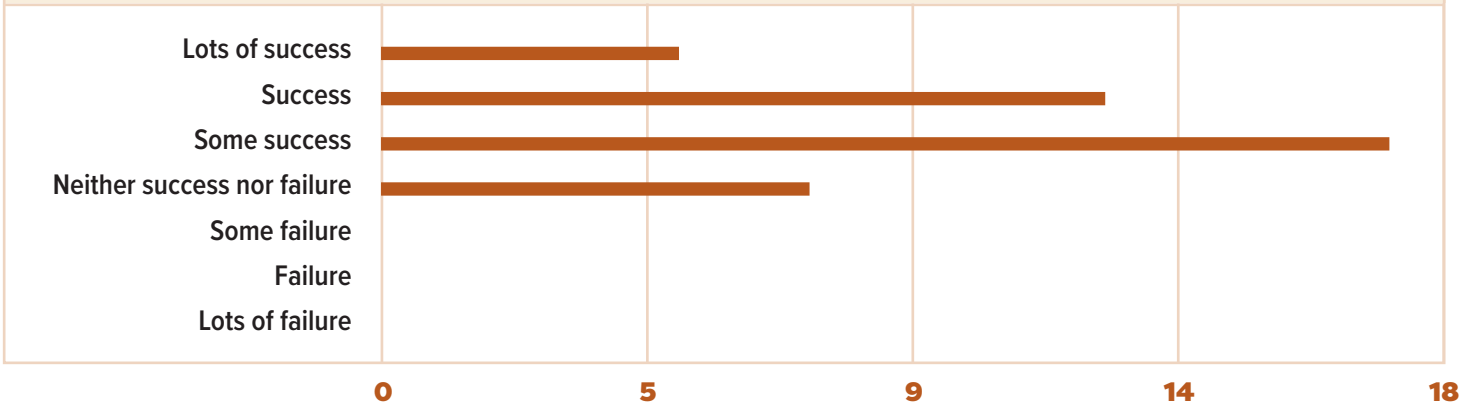
*One of the landowners, when we started a project, was like, 'Hey, there's no trout in my river!' And then we built this project, and he went out and had a 20-fish morning! His response was, 'I never knew how important large pools were.' It's learning you can touch."*



## Success Tracking Progress

To what extent have you had success tracking progress toward your long-term goals?

Note: This reflects survey responses only and not responses from interviews or group discussions.



### Common monitoring challenges

OWEB initiated this study by recognizing common challenges partnerships face with monitoring short- and long-term ecological and social outcomes:

- External changes, such as extreme flooding, catastrophic fire, economic recession, climate change, etc.
- Shifting understanding of how systems work and what we should be tracking to measure change
- Managing large complex data sets with multiple partners
- Funding for monitoring over the timeframe needed for outcomes to emerge, and
- Linking your work to the changes observed when there are other influences and unknowns.

Partnerships heartily agreed with this list – sharing examples of facing many of them at once.

Partnerships also added several more challenges to monitoring short- and long-term outcomes:

- Selecting the most relevant metrics out of all of those that interest partners and funders
- Lack of regionally standardized protocols
- Complexities of monitoring ecological and social outcomes, especially when integrating goals around diversity, equity, inclusion and justice
- Lack of historical data to establish trends
- Limited personnel with the capacity and expertise to develop monitoring plans and conduct analysis
- The time and expense to meet funders’ monitoring and reporting requirements that may not align with the partnership’s goals or available funding
- Limited time to turn around results and discuss together what they mean, and
- Trust to ask hard questions so what is learned from monitoring can improve future work.

*“Funding opportunities for monitoring habitat at the project scale are rare or may not be practical. Monitoring that is occurring at the population level is not detecting change, likely from the lack of habitat restored compared to what has been degraded over time. Remote sensing has provided another tool for monitoring projects that may be more cost effective, however, time scales and costs could prevent timely nature of effectiveness monitoring that can be applied.”*



East Cascade Oak Partnership, USFS Prescription Fire Tour with Roland Rose. PHOTO / COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

Again, partnerships described experiencing many of these challenges all at once. One partnership recommended that it would be more practical to develop regionally standardized protocols that would be implemented by highly trained and funded regional monitoring crews rather than expect that each partnership or organization lead their own monitoring.

### **A shared need for increased monitoring infrastructure**

Many partnerships expressed wanting to assess the effectiveness of their actions at a larger scale and over a longer timeframe – and yet an overwhelming theme was that more institutional support and monitoring infrastructure are needed to do so. Partnerships with monitoring expertise emphasized this point.

*“With only two staff dedicated to restoration work [from our organization], we simply do not have the time, funding, training, or capacity to track/monitor short and long-term outcomes on all of our projects.*

*Another challenge is that even if we did have the ability ‘in-house’ to do so, there is generally a lack of regionally standardized protocols established to track/monitor these various projects.*

*If there were in fact regionally standardized protocols, it would be most efficient to have a highly trained and funded regional or perhaps county-wide monitoring crew(s) dedicated to collecting and analyzing data to determine if short and long-term goals are being met.*

*This would be an extremely useful form of support to the partnership.”*

*“We all are monitoring on our own, including an incredibly robust program [that one partner is leading]. Everyone is doing a portion. All of us are putting in some of the ingredients, but the cake never actually gets baked. We are always just bringing our individual part. If you ask us, how did you change x, we can give you that answer. But telling you the whole story, that is what’s hard.*

*[We are waiting] for that moment when you actually have the final product that everyone can look at and say, ‘Okay! This is everything that we have done, and this is what’s been achieved.’ And we finally getting to eat the cake! I want that moment where I get to see all of it. It would be good to have a well-baked cake.”*



Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership, Hall Ranch OSU Visit, 2015. PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

Many partnerships, including both FIP and P-TA grantees, expressed specific needs for institutional support for monitoring. Partnerships with much less capacity and expertise required more support, for example the earlier suggestion for monitoring conducted with standardized protocols and regional monitoring teams. The priority needs highlighted here were commonly identified as critical gaps by partnerships, both FIP and P-TA grantees, who have relatively high capacity and expertise in monitoring.

### **Priority needs for institutional monitoring support:**

- Systems to manage and share data,
- Expertise for analysis, especially addressing multi-scale data, and
- Support to interpret results to tell the story of progress and inform adaptive management.

### **Possible types of institutional support:**

- An institute within the university system supported by federal funds, similar to the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes,
- Greater leadership by state and federal agencies,
- Contracts with private consultants, and
- Peer learning through conferences and workshops.

A prominent theme in these suggestions was the desire for more monitoring workshops or peer learning opportunities with at least seven partnerships expressing a strong interest. Some partners expressed preference toward in-person sessions that provide more targeted, directly useful guidance over written materials or virtual sessions.

*“A widely known scientific challenge is analyzing multi-scale data. I think a watershed restoration monitoring workshop would be very helpful so that we could all learn from each other on things like: monitoring different parameters, monitoring effectiveness of different types of restoration projects, writing monitoring plans for watersheds, funding for monitoring personnel and equipment, managing monitoring data, etc.”*

Several partnerships noted their disappointment that the universities haven’t played a bigger role in providing expertise and capacity for training, analyses and interpretation.

Suggestions for ways to fund additional monitoring infrastructure and institutional support included partnerships:

- Lobbying state and federal agencies for funding and/or
- Advocating for a statewide bond.

*“Looking forward, I think that OWEB and the state and federal agencies may need to look toward a high-level longer lasting institutional support [for monitoring and restoration] and lobby for the creation of something like the Ecological Restoration Institutes at Northern Arizona University, Colorado State University, and New Mexico Highlands University. This type of organization would support FIPs with science, monitoring, coordinated outreach and improved engagement by local partners.” (Link to [SWERI](#) and [federal authorizing legislation](#))*



### Suggestion for partnerships

Convene partnerships to explore a unified strategy to advocate for funding from state and federal agencies and/or some kind of bond measure.

### Feedback for OWEB on monitoring

Overall, OWEB monitoring staff were consistently recognized for their ability to understand the real challenges partnerships faced and provide meaningful, individualized support.

However, two partnerships felt that OWEB could do better providing clear guidelines or expectations for monitoring reports at the beginning of the FIP grant, especially given the limited timeframe and the complexity of the work. One partnership in particular was frustrated by the different metrics required by different funding sources that were not apparent at the beginning of the grant. OWEB responded that this issue was flagged in a 2021 assessment of granting practices (Miller 2021) and that they have been coordinating with the staff responsible for reporting on Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds to prevent this from happening again.

Partnerships consistently expressed appreciation for FIP funding that could be used to hire a monitoring coordinator and fund monitoring projects. FIP grantees further along in their workplan recommended to newer FIP partnerships that they reserve funding in the second and third biennia for monitoring since the need would grow as projects were completed. Partnerships emphasized grant writing should also be included in the second and third biennia.

**OWEB**  
reflected that these comments could help to reinvigorate the vision from the Oregon Plan, where the responsibility for landscape level monitoring is shared among state and federal agencies. This approach integrates two priorities from OWEB's 2018 Strategic Plan – the need to define monitoring priorities and working with agencies and private foundations to align funding for those priorities.

### Suggestion for partnerships

For FIP grantees, reserve funding in the second and third biennia for monitoring and grant writing.

Partnerships also realized that even though all grant funds would be awarded in six years, many projects might take one to four years or more to complete after the award. One partnership emphasized the value of the supplemental effectiveness monitoring funds that OWEB provided, in addition to their FIP funding, which was critical in responding to concerns by an oversight agency early in the project. The additional monitoring grant allowed them to show progress and gain the support needed to move forward with the project.

PHOTO / HARNEY BASIN WETLANDS COLLABORATIVE



*“That first round of restoration was a little messier than people were used to. ... And we really had to pause for several years and do monitoring and tell that story. Having that extra funding and that space to be able to tell that story [was an added] boost. We’ve restarted [the work] now, and it’s going much better. It helped us continue with that restoration effort overall. Having the funding and space to do that was really critical.”*



Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership, Longley Meadows Post Construction, June 2022. PHOTO / GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

Several partners pointed out that ongoing capacity for monitoring will be needed well beyond the FIP grant to tell the story of progress – and that they felt OWEB still has unrealistic expectations of how long it will take to observe ecological outcomes.

---

*“It takes decades to do this work to the extent we want to do it.”*

---

*“Post FIP, we will need to find a way to continue monitoring, which increases with each new project. If we are not able to find funding, it will be difficult to meet the monitoring requirements. I think that it would be helpful to have long-term funding associated with FIPs that covers monitoring expenses post-FIP.”*

---

*“We’re talking decades of monitoring. One brood year is 4 or 5 years out in terms of fish return. And then we need multiple generations coming back to be able to look at any trends. And then we have decadal oscillations in ocean productivity. Right now, if you look at our nice graph, we are at the bottom of yet another decadal oscillation. That’s the temporal scale that we need [consistently funded] monitoring programs guaranteed. The data doesn’t tell you a lot because you have to look at 50 years of data.”*

OWEB’s grants database was another area for improvement. FIP grantees are required to describe ‘lessons learned’ when they enter their grant reports in OWEB’s database. One partner highlighted that these lessons learned could be a source for peer learning across similar project types, except that this field in the grants database is not searchable. They recommended that OWEB update this function of the grants database or provide some type of annual summary of lessons learned by project type.



## *OWEB's learning around monitoring and tracking progress*

OWEB recognizes the inherent challenges in monitoring and tracking progress in complex systems, and they also understand the desire for grantees to have more clarity about what they are looking for in terms of monitoring. With this in mind, OWEB staff met with the third cohort of FIP grantees individually at the start of their grant to clarify monitoring expectations. They said they expect FIP grantees to conduct some type of monitoring that can be used to track progress towards meeting ecological outcomes and inform adaptive management, as described in their theory of change.

### **OWEB** staff

emphasized that they can provide tools, resources and guidance on general principles, but the partnerships are the ones that need to decide what is most important for them to monitor relative to their goals and theory of change, ideally involving the breadth of partners in these decisions.

As for changes to the grants database, there are not funds or capacity to do so at this time, but **OWEB** emphasized that it is good to document this request for future consideration and it echoes feedback they have heard previously.

### **OWEB** has

also learned the importance of flexible resources to respond to emerging monitoring needs, for example the supplemental effectiveness monitoring grants that were available to the first two cohorts of FIP grantees. OWEB is considering ways to set aside funding for similar sorts of emerging monitoring needs in the future.

While recognizing the need for consistent, long-term funding for monitoring, OWEB clarified that the FIP program is not the vehicle to address this need. In the near term, OWEB is very interested in having partnerships report on all they accomplished with their FIP grants. They acknowledge that there were not resources budgeted for this step and that reporting at this scale requires time and collaboration among partners. With this in mind, OWEB is piloting a post-FIP reporting project with a FIP grantee from the first cohort. The purpose is to synthesize and communicate information collected during the FIP, not to collect any new data. They are looking to use what they learn from this pilot to better define post-FIP reporting.

### **OWEB** does aim

to share lessons learned across partnerships, for example sharing Project Completion Reports with a partnership's permission. They also suggested that lessons learned can be found in a FIP grantee's Progress Tracking Reports, especially in the adaptive management section.





Salmon SuperHwy - Bridge construction on Peterson Creek to allow fish passage. PHOTO / TRAV WILLIAMS

### **Recommendations for OWEB for tracking progress**

- Clarify expectations for monitoring and reporting requirements at the start of each FIP grant in an individualized manner.
- Continue to allow flexibility in monitoring and reporting so that grantees don't have to invest energy into metrics or reporting that may be outside of the partnership's main focus.
- Invest in workshops, trainings and/or conferences to encourage peer learning and learning from experts and guest consultants, for example working through the challenges of multi-scale data including monitoring different parameters, monitoring effectiveness of different types of restoration projects, writing monitoring plans for watersheds, funding for monitoring personnel and equipment, managing monitoring data, cultural considerations, etc.
- Work with state and federal agencies to explore ways to increase investment in monitoring infrastructure, for example a restoration research institute or regional monitoring teams supported with legislative funding or a bond.
- Continue offering supplemental effectiveness monitoring grants to allow flexibility to support overarching monitoring needs identified by each partnership.
- Consider long-term funding for a monitoring coordinator through the P-TA grant.
- Given the long-term need to track progress beyond the six-year FIP grant, consider offering funding to all FIP partnerships for post-FIP reporting.
- Update OWEB's grants database to be able to search completed projects for lessons learned – or consider how to compile lessons learned and distribute to partnerships.



PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

## Synthesis – Partnership Types, Performance and Resilience

Partnerships are often fragile arrangements built on a delicate calculation that the individual roles and responsibilities that partners are willing and able to commit to add up to the collected effort needed to advance their shared vision. Ambitious work in complex systems that are not well-understood puts additional pressure on the partnership since uncertainties in the work make it harder to accurately estimate roles and responsibilities and puts a greater emphasis on learning. Resilience is centrally important in these contexts.

*“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.”*

**Compromise** refers to a quick resolution of differences with the goal of at least partly giving each party what they want.

**Collaboration** refers to a deeper exploration of differences, engaging in dialogue to understand the ‘whys’ behind what each party wants with the goal of developing more creative and inclusive solutions that address common interests and overarching goals.

Partnerships that engaged in more straightforward work in relatively well-understood systems may experience fewer stressors and be able to perform well with less emphasis on resilience.

For many partnerships, especially project-oriented partnerships, that calculation is negotiated as the partnership is formed so that each partner, or a subset of core partners, will get some portion of the budget and will be afforded the trust that they have the professional skills and judgment to carry out high quality work. These financial expectations may be spelled out in a charter or grant agreement, but more often, they are an implicit premise that keeps everyone showing up and is foundational to the stability of the partnership. If one partner falters in their performance, the threads of resilience can help a partnership stabilize, for example camaraderie and openness to talk about problems and pitch in to resolve them, plus shared leadership to keep the overall focus on the partnership’s work, rather than individual interests.





East Cascade Oak Partnership, Grass Identification.

PHOTO / COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

In the context of this delicate calculation, many partnerships are set up to compromise when issues arise about overall performance or accountability, for example which actions are most likely to have a positive impact or which partner is best suited to take on specific roles. In the ideal sense, collaboration may seem like a better approach to boost performance, where partners engage in deeper dialogue for mutual understanding and problem-solving.

However, if partnerships have a solid understanding of their socio-ecological systems, if there are best practices to address their resource concerns and if partners have the capacity and expertise to advance the work, then they may be able to operate at a high level of performance relying on compromise without the need to have deeper conversations about performance and accountability. In fact, they may be able to maximize their efficiency and performance by relying on compromise.

Further, most partnerships are not structured for this level of higher level of interdependence and accountability. Even if their intent is to be structured in this way, they may not have enough stability or resilience to do this well, in terms of that negotiated division of labor and budget that keeps everyone showing up. This may be especially true when individual partners depend on the partnership for their financial stability or reputation. If funders push partnerships too hard expecting them to hold each other accountable with performance issues and the stability and

resilience isn't there, performance could suffer. For example, tensions caused by the attempt to talk about performance issues could close down communication making it harder to address concerns. Partnerships that have more threads of resilience, for example camaraderie, success, organizational anchors, shared leadership and openness, are better able to withstand the destabilizing forces of working through these types of challenging questions.

A focus on compromise instead of collaboration is common for project-oriented partnerships and to some extent planning-oriented partnerships. Compromise and 'splitting the pie,' for example splitting budgets evenly among partners, may contribute well to performance in relatively well-understood systems with straightforward work plans, especially if a number of actions are considered equally important and the roles align well to split the work.

However, **OWEB** has expressed that they do expect a higher level of collective attention on prioritizing projects and preparing projects for technical review. They explained that the FIP program provides a unique opportunity for partnerships to work together to strategically focus on actions that have the greatest potential benefit relative to their restoration goals. Splitting the budget evenly among partners could be a strategic approach to keeping partners at the table and sharing the workload, but not necessarily strategically focused on the highest priority restoration activities. **OWEB** believes partnerships who split the budget evenly would be a better fit in the Open Solicitation Program.

"We don't want partnerships to form and apply for the FIP simply so they each have access to a larger pot of money for projects. We want to fund partnerships that utilize their collective expertise to implement the most meaningful, priority projects in their geographies."

**OWEB**



Compromise may also be more common when partners work in separate geographies, for example with multiple watershed councils or Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which by definition only implement projects in their geographies respecting the territory and autonomy of their neighboring districts and councils. However, there were clear examples of partnerships with multiple watershed councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts organized as a planning-oriented partnership where they were structured to work collectively to fund the best projects, rather than just 'split the pie.' Planning-oriented partnerships tend to emphasize shared leadership, as in a steering committee that includes representatives from different partners organizations that keeps the focus on what is best for the partnership. Partnerships that have their own internal review process often also rely on a steering committee to weigh in on proposed projects.

Systems-oriented partnerships are structured to have even greater accountability, where they collaboratively develop standards and expectations along with mechanisms to raise questions and a process to work through them to meet standards. Developing this level of infrastructure is resource intensive and requires a greater emphasis on resilience although none of the partnerships in this study were fully built out systems-oriented partnerships. Partnerships are better able to mobilize funding for this

level of infrastructure when their work commands high interest and there is the potential for dedicated long-term funding. Several partnerships leaning towards a systems-oriented partnership were able to use the FIP grant as a catalyst to start to build that level of long-term funding, but the findings from this study caution not to expect such a high level of commitment without long-term consistent funding.

In contrast, learning-oriented partnerships are structured to ask challenging questions, since learning is the focus and what brings value to partners. However, they are structured to work independently, not to plan or implement projects together, and so the consequences of asking hard questions are not as destabilizing to partner reputations or finances in most cases. Each partner is responsible for securing funding to do their own work, and so the partnership can withstand partners coming and going, for example if there is a change in focus to improve performance that some partners dislike, with less risk to the partnership as a whole.

**OWEB** shared that they will continue to reflect on these findings to more clearly understand and articulate their vision of how successful FIP partnerships function.



East Cascade Oak Partnership, Wildflower Phenology Walk. PHOTO / COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

# Synthesis – OWEB’s Role in Supporting Partnership Performance and Resilience

Partnerships have been eager to participate in the FIP program because the scale of funding over six years allows them to tackle more ambitious projects over larger landscapes. However, there was evidence that this hard push for implementation has sometimes kept them from pausing to check-in on trust, reflect on whether projects are meeting strategic priorities and consider opportunities to expand their circle. Yet, there were also many examples of partnerships effectively scaling up their work, while still dedicating time to reflection, expanding their circle, and strategic thinking. **Overall, there is evidence that the supportive culture within OWEB mitigates for this tension to perform at an accelerated pace and that the benefits of the FIP and P-TA grants related to performance and resilience outweigh the costs and stressors.**

Overall, OWEB’s investments in partnership planning, governance, coordination, project implementation and monitoring have been found to be well-positioned to support high performance and resilience.

*“OWEB had a gathering a few years ago of funded partnerships to come and share at the Menucha Retreat Center. I thought that kind of thing is pretty helpful and would like the opportunity to do that again, to talk with other partnerships informally and get ideas. It was really useful, really great hearing [from others]. I just assumed OWEB wanted to see a perfect partnership, and I remember sitting with [another partnership] and hearing them talk about some of their [struggles]. It was just great to be like, ‘Oh, good! Okay. So you can still be successful and have issues and are working through it.’ And then just hearing and seeing what other people were doing, it was very reassuring for me. Yeah that was good.” - P-TA Grantee*

This study finds that the biggest near-term change that OWEB could make to support partnership resilience would be streamlining administrative burdens from the FIP program so that partnerships could dedicate more of their time to the operation of their partnership – specifically, streamlining project applications, technical review, reporting guidelines for monitoring and use of the online application portal and grants database. Some of these OWEB is working on, integrating recommendations from this study, while others like the database are not possible due to current capacity.

Further investments in institutional support for monitoring, such as near-term investments in peer learning opportunities and training workshops, were also identified as a high priority for investment to support resilience. OWEB holds a gathering for FIP and/or P-TA grantees every biennium, and OWEB staff are interested in more frequent peer learning or peer mentoring opportunities. They are considering what is possible given their staff capacity. Monitoring is especially important as partnerships who were able to learn from their efforts and tell the story of their success have been better positioned to be effective and secure ongoing funding. If OWEB can help introduce grantees to other funders, this would also contribute to resilience in terms of greater opportunity to secure ongoing funding. Over the long-term, support to help interested partnerships integrate equity into their vision and approach, including an emphasis on underrepresented groups, has the potential to boost resilience by tapping into the creative potential of broader constituencies and more diverse funding sources.

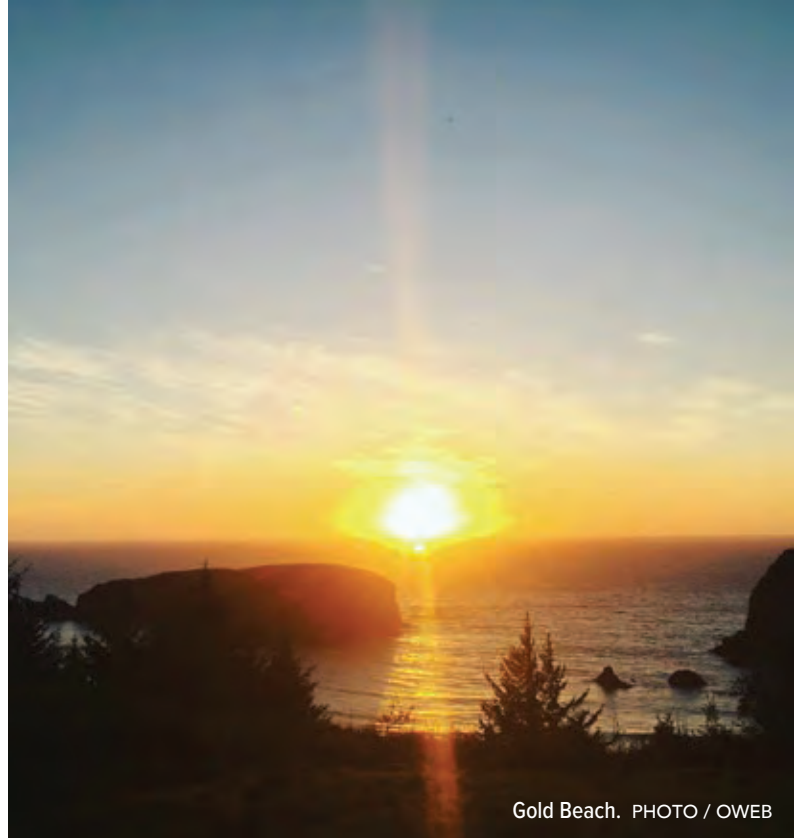
# Conclusion

This in-depth, qualitative study found many examples of partnerships accomplishing more complex work at a larger scale than any one organization could do alone. Most of the assumptions from OWEB's theory of change have held up with some fine-tuning related to performance and resilience.

Partnerships emphatically described the value that the P-TA and FIP grants had to their performance, growth and resilience, including the cumulative value of these programs for partnerships that received both. FIP grants were described like 'rocket fuel' that launched partnerships into a higher level of performance, which also supported their resilience and competitiveness for future funding from other sources. P-TA grants created an opportunity for partnerships to formalize their focus, commitment and governance structure, which for most partnerships created momentum to then take advantage of large funding opportunities, including partnerships that were not selected for FIP grants. On the other hand, partnerships who weren't able to secure funding for the partnership to implement projects anticipated operating at a lower level until new funding was available, implementing the work individually or restructuring around a new focus and funding opportunity.

Thoughtful reflection on the function and structure of partnerships led to development of a series of conceptual tools describing:

- **Partnership types** defined by relative interdependence among partners,
- **A framework for understanding high performance** including categories of performance common to all partnership types and others that vary by partnership type, and
- **Threads of resilience** that maintain the integrity of a partnership despite stressors and change.



Gold Beach. PHOTO / OWEB

OWEB's efforts have been striking in their long-term commitment to invest in a breadth of partnerships working in different ecosystems across the state, their openness to learn alongside partners and their commitment to continually evolve the program to have the greatest impact possible.

However, program innovations must fit within the funding OWEB has for staff and infrastructure such as the online application portal and grants database – funding which is decided through the legislative budget process and relatively modest compared with their large funding portfolio. Program innovations must also fit within the statutes that govern the use of lottery funds for the benefit of water quality, watershed function, native fish, wildlife, plants and ecosystems. As OWEB continues to clarify their values and commitment to equity and environmental justice and as they learn from ongoing innovation led by partnerships and tribes, the interpretation of these statutes may play a key role in the future evolution of their partnership-focused investments.

OWEB's focused commitment to learning and adaptation in support of high performing partnerships has yielded many insights and practical tools that will be of use to partnerships and funders working in restoration and across sectors.



# References

- Arnold, J. 2017. Partnership Learning Project Part 1. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. <https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/Documents/Partnership-Learning-Project-Part1.pdf>
- Arnold, J. 2018. Partnership Learning Project Part 2. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. <https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/Documents/Partnership-Learning-Project-Part2.pdf>
- Arnold, J. S. and W. Bartels. 2012. Participatory methods for measuring and monitoring governance. In: Barnes, G. and B. Child., editors; 2012. Adaptive Cross-Scalar Governance of Natural Resources. Routledge: NY.
- Arnold, J.S. and A. Wilson. 2022. Bridging worldviews in the Salish Sea. In: Conway-Cranos, L., J.D. Toft, D. J. Trimbach, H. Faulkner, J. Krienitz, D. Williams, S. Des Roches, editors; The 2021 Puget Sound Nearshore Restoration Summit Proceedings. March 10-25. Virtual Summit. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: Olympia, WA: p. 166-68. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02339/wdfw02339.pdf>
- Boulay, P. 2021. Regional Monitoring Frameworks: Summary of Lessons Learned. Produced for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.
- Brouwer, H., J. Woodhill, M. Hemmati, K. Verhoosel and S. van Vugt. 2019. The MSP guide: how to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing. <https://edepot.wur.nl/543151>
- Charmaz, K. 2006. Constructing Grounded Theory. London: Sage.
- Christen, B. D. and P. T. Inzeo. 2015. Widening the view: situating collective impact among frameworks for community-led change. Community Development 46(4):420-435.
- Cigler, B. A. 1999. Pre-conditions for the emergence of multicommunity collaborative organizations. Policy Studies Review 16 (1): 86-102.
- Mandell, M. P. and T. A. Steelman. 2003. Understanding what can be accomplished through interorganizational innovations: the importance of typologies, context and management strategies. Public Management Review 5 (2): 197-224.
- Miller, Alli. 2021. Granting Practices Impacts to Tribes: An Assessment Of The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Grant-Making. Presentation to the OWEB Board: October 21. <https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/Documents/2021-Oct-ItemO-1-Tribal-Granting-Practices-Assessment-Presentation.pdf>
- Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation Version 4.0. 2020. Conservation Measures Partnership. <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/CMP-Open-Standards-for-the-Practice-of-Conservation-v4.0.pdf>

Robbins, B. 2016. What is Trust? A Multidisciplinary Review, Critique, and Synthesis. *Sociology Compass* 10 (10): 972–986.

Stern, M. J., and T. Baird. 2015. Trust ecology and the resilience of natural resource management institutions. *Ecology and Society* 20 (2): 14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-07248-200214>

Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig. 2004. Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems. *Ecology and Society* 9:5.

Wollenberg, E., J. Anderson and C. López. 2005. Though all things differ: Pluralism as a basis for cooperation in forests. Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry. [https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/Books/BWollenberg0501.pdf](https://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/BWollenberg0501.pdf)



Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Project – 2016 OWEB Board tour to the Roth Property, a private parcel that has Pacific Fisher dens. PHOTO / CITY OF ASHLAND



# Appendix A

## *Partnerships awarded a FIP and/or P-TA grant: 2015-2022*

The following partnerships were invited to participate in this study, except those with an asterisk who had only recently received funding when the study started. **Partnerships shown in bold participated in this study.** All of these partnerships are included on the map at the beginning of this report.

### *Partnerships awarded a FIP grant only: 2015-2022*

Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration  
Baker Sage-grouse Local Implementation Team  
\*Coos Basin Coho Partnership  
Deschutes Basin Partnership  
Grande Ronde Model Watershed  
Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative  
Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse All Counties  
Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat  
Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group

### *Partnerships awarded a P-TA grant only: 2015-2022*

Umpqua Basin Partnership  
Siskiyou Coast Estuaries Partnership, formerly Wild Rivers Coast Estuaries  
Wallowa Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership  
Rogue Basin Partnership  
Willamette Valley Oak Prairie Collaborative  
Hood River Basin Partnership  
Intertwine Alliance Oak Prairie Working Group  
Salmon Super Highway  
Pure Water Partners  
Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership  
Partners of the North Santiam  
Upper Deschutes Partnership  
\*Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative Partnership  
\*Nehalem Basin Partnership  
\*Coquille Coho Partnership  
Upper Willamette Stewardship Network

### *Partnerships awarded a FIP grant and P-TA grant: 2015-2022*

Clackamas Partnership Restoration for Native Fish Habitat  
John Day Basin Fish Habitat Initiative  
Rogue Forest Partners  
Oregon Central Coast Estuary Collaborative  
Siuslaw Coho Partnership  
East Cascades Oak Partnership  
Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network



Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Project





PHOTO / ROBERT WARREN

## Appendix B

### *OWEB's Partnership Learning Project- Partnership Survey*

#### *Thank you for your willingness to participate!*

Your thoughtful comments will contribute to a greater understanding of how partnerships grow and evolve under different circumstances. We hope this will benefit your partnership and others, while also directly informing the evolution of OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Program and Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA) grants.

It is possible to complete the required questions in this survey in about 20-30 minutes. (Required questions are marked with an asterisk.) If you have more time to add comments and examples, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of partnerships and potentially more creative recommendations for OWEB.

Your responses for each page will be saved automatically each time you click on the 'next page' button. If you close your browser and have cookies enabled, you can open the survey link in the same browser and return to your responses to make changes or complete the survey.

If you would prefer an interview by phone or Zoom to share your thoughts instead of taking this survey, please reach out to the email below.

As a gesture of appreciation, each partnership that has at least two people complete the survey or participate in an interview will receive a check for \$250 - which could be spent on meeting refreshments to celebrate your good work or whatever your partnership chooses.

All of your responses will be confidential and only seen by the research lead, Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D. of Reciprocity Consulting, LLC. Only aggregated summaries or anonymous quotes will be shared after all personally identifiable information is removed.

Findings will be presented to OWEB staff and board and if all goes well, we'll also develop an academic publication for a broader audience. We will recognize all of the organizations that participate.

If you include your email address, you will receive a copy of preliminary findings and be invited to share your feedback, likely sometime in early 2023. In the meantime, please reach out with any questions.

**Thank you for the work you put in every day - and the opportunity to learn alongside with you!**

Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D., Reciprocity Consulting, LLC  
jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com 520-990-6922  
reciprocityconsulting.com

# Partnership Survey

## A Few Questions about You and Your Partnership

The following questions will help track patterns in responses across partnerships and allow for individual follow-up if questions come up during analysis.

### 1 Which partnership(s) are you a part of? Please mark all that apply.

- Ashland Forest All-Lands
- Baker Sage-grouse Local Implementation Team
- Clackamas Basin Partnership
- Deschutes Partnership
- East Cascades Oak Partnership
- Grande Ronde Restoration Partnership
- Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative
- Hood River Watershed
- Intertwine Alliance Oak Prairie Working Group
- John Day Basin Fish Habitat Initiative
- Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network
- McKenzie Collaborative
- Millicoma Forks Coastal Coho Restoration Partnership
- Oregon All Counties Sage Grouse
- Oregon Central Coast Estuary Collaborative
- Partners of the North Santiam Watershed
- Pure Water Partners
- Rogue Basin Partnership - Little Butte Creek Watershed TRIB Initiative
- Rogue Forest Partners
- Salmon Super Highway
- Sandy River Basin Partners
- Siuslaw Coho Partnership
- Umpqua Basin Partnership
- Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership
- Upper Willamette
- Wallowa County Annual Invasive Grass Partnership
- Wallowa Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership
- Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat
- Wild Rivers Coast Estuaries
- Willamette Mainstem Anchor Habitat Working Group
- Willamette Valley Oak Prairie Cooperative

### 2 If you marked more than one partnership, which one are you most involved with?

Please answer the survey questions with this one partnership in mind. In the open comment boxes throughout the survey, you are also welcome to share reflections about other partnerships you have experience with.

### 3 Your Name

Your name is strongly preferred but not required. None of your responses will be linked to your name, organization or partnership. Research lead, Jennifer Arnold, will be the only person who will see personally identifiable information.

### 4 Your Email

If you provide your email, I will share preliminary findings for your review and feedback.

## 5 Your Organization

## 6 Your position in your organization and your role within the partnership, if you have a specific role.

## 7 Are you interested in being contacted for a follow-up conversational interview?

I am looking to talk to people from different types of partnerships to hear more about the questions in this survey.

- Yes, I would like to have a conversation.
- Maybe
- No

## 8 Do you think your partnership might be interested in participating in a facilitated discussion?

If there is interest, I can virtually attend one of your partnership meetings to listen and/or facilitate a group discussion about some of the questions from this survey.

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

## ★ Questions or comments?

## 9 How long has your partnership been operating in one form or another?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years ago
- 10-20 years
- 20+ years
- Don't know
- No longer operating



**10** How long has your partnership been operating in one form or another?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years ago
- 10-20 years
- 20+ years

★ Comments?

**11** Which OWEB grant has your partnership applied for?

- Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA) grant, formerly called Development FIP and Capacity Building FIP
- Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant

**12** Which OWEB grant has your partnership received?

- Partnership Technical Assistance (P-TA) grant, formerly called Development FIP and Capacity Building FIP
- Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant
- None of the above

---

**PARTNERSHIP TYPES**

---

Partnerships work at different scales, geographies and focus areas. Each has a unique structure, function and focus, which may change over time as the work evolves and in response to changes in leadership, new partners, funding, policies, external events, etc.

The next few questions will ask you to reflect on your partnership with respect to the four partnership types described below, where partners have differing levels of relative autonomy or interdependency. The four types are also described in the questions below, but this graphic is provided for more detail. Each of these types can be high-performing and generate impact.

# Partnership Types

Partnerships work at different scales and in different geographies and contexts. Each has a unique structure, function and focus, which may change over time as the work evolves and in response to changes in leadership, new partners, funding, policies, external events, etc.

The partnership types below differ with respect to interdependency. In reality, this is a gradient, not discrete types. With more ambitious goals and greater interdependency, partners take on greater risk to meet shared commitments.

## Project-oriented partnerships

Partners remain relatively autonomous and independent, but commit to a set of shared priorities and tasks, typically in response to funding opportunities. Usually there is a small number of partners. A coordinator serves as a project manager, a role which may be rotated among partners.



● Partners   ● C Coordinator   ● \$ Funding

## Learning-oriented partnerships

Partners come together with a desire to learn together and tackle shared questions and concerns. Partners remain fully autonomous and independent, but collectively advance their thinking around strategies or practices that each partner can use in their work. A coordinator serves as an ambassador and convener.



## Partnership Types

## Planning-oriented partnerships

Partners engage in collaborative long-term planning and commit to implementing shared goals and strategies. Individual partner organizations may have to shift their internal priorities and approaches to align with the partnership overall. A high level of sustained funding is required. A coordinator typically serves as facilitator and project manager.



## Systems-oriented partnerships

Partners are highly committed to long-term systems change. Partners may have to make substantial changes within their organizations to align with the partnership. A very high level of sustained funding is required to invest in iterative cycles of learning, planning and implementation and to work through differences to achieve alignment. A coordinator serves as facilitator, ambassador and project manager. The complexity of the work may require committees.



Draft - 2022 revised graphic based on partnership continuum from OWEB's Partnership Learning Project, 2018 - Feedback welcome [jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com](mailto:jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com)

### 1 Which partnership type best describes how your partnership is currently structured?

- Learning-oriented partnership – partners remain fully autonomous and independent, but collectively advance their thinking
- Project-oriented partnership - partners remain relatively autonomous and independent, but commit to shared priorities and tasks
- Planning-oriented partnership – partners engage in collaborative long-term planning and implementation which may require individual partners to shift their internal priorities
- System-oriented partnership - Partners are highly committed to long-term systems change and may have to make substantial changes within their organizations to achieve alignment
- Don't know

### 2 Which partnership type best describes how your partnership has functioned in the past? *Mark all that apply.*

- Learning-oriented partnership – partners remain fully autonomous and independent, but collectively advance their thinking
- Project-oriented partnership - partners remain relatively autonomous and independent, but commit to shared priorities and tasks
- Planning-oriented partnership – partners engage in collaborative long-term planning and implementation which may require individual partners to shift their internal priorities
- System-oriented partnership - Partners are highly committed to long-term systems change and may have to make substantial changes within their organizations to achieve alignment
- Don't know

★ Comments?

**3** Which partnership type best describes how you would like your partnership to function in the future?  
*Mark all that apply.*

- Learning-oriented partnership** – partners remain fully autonomous and independent, but collectively advance their thinking
- Project-oriented partnership** - partners remain relatively autonomous and independent, but commit to shared priorities and tasks
- Planning-oriented partnership** – partners engage in collaborative long-term planning and implementation which may require individual partners to shift their internal priorities
- System-oriented partnership** - Partners are highly committed to long-term systems change and may have to make substantial changes within their organizations to achieve alignment
- Don't know**

★ Comments?

**4** Describe how your partnership has changed over the years – and share from your perspective, what are some of the influences that have driven those changes? *Consider partnership structure, function, partner composition and/or focus of your work.*



## EXPANDING YOUR CIRCLE

OWEB believes that healthy watersheds are supported by people who reflect the diversity of their communities.

Increasingly, people are acknowledging that segments of the population have not been engaged in restoration efforts – and that the support and creativity from the breadth of people in a watershed is important, or even necessary, for restoring watersheds and realizing the full potential for social and ecological benefits.

**1** To what degree do you feel that expanding your circle of partners and/or building relationships with underrepresented groups in your watershed will help you achieve your goals?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Don't know

★ Please explain or provide examples.

**2** To what degree are you working on expanding your circle of partners to include underrepresented groups? *Mark all that apply. Your name or partnership will not be linked to your answers.*

- Not applicable
- We are interested but not sure where to start.
- We are talking, learning and planning.
- We are taking some early action steps.
- We are in conversation with one or more historically underrepresented groups.
- We have one or more people from historically underrepresented groups as partners.
- We have one or more people from historically underrepresented groups in leadership roles in our partnership.
- We are making progress and sharing what we have learned with others.

★ Please explain or provide examples. If you are working to expand your circle, please share which groups or constituencies you are working with.

## PARTNERSHIP TRUST & ACCOUNTABILITY

When we spoke to OWEB-funded partnerships five years ago, some partnerships noted that trust was fragile and partners were hesitant to ask challenging questions of each other during project prioritization and technical review.

They recognized that holding each other accountable requires leadership and substantial investment in relationships and trust building. They also reflected that governance documents, a skilled facilitator and planning tools help too.

They wondered if it would become easier to ask challenging questions of each other over time as relationships and trust were built.

**1** To what extent do you currently trust your partnership to ask hard questions of each other so that collective decisions and actions have the greatest chance for impact? Your name and partnership will not be linked with your response.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Trust a lot                | <input type="radio"/> Mistrust somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Trust                      | <input type="radio"/> Mistrust          |
| <input type="radio"/> Trust somewhat             | <input type="radio"/> Mistrust a lot    |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither trust nor mistrust | <input type="radio"/> Don't know        |

★ Comments?

**2** To what extent do you think that trust among partners has changed over the years, thinking about the trust needed to ask hard questions and make planning and budget decisions together to hold the bar high for performance and impact?.

- Greatly increased trust
- Increased trust
- Somewhat increased trust
- Stayed the same
- Somewhat decreased trust
- Decreased trust
- Greatly decreased trust
- Don't know

★ Comments?

**3** If you can, please share an example of when partners asked challenging questions of each other to increase their chance for greater impact.

---

## ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TECHNICAL REVIEW PROCESS

---

*Note: Only FIP grantees were asked the questions in this section.*

OWEB works with partnerships in the technical review process to keep the bar high for performance and likelihood of impact. However, OWEB also appreciates each partnership's autonomy and investment in strategic planning and internal governance that was the basis for the FIP grant award.

**1** To what extent do you think OWEB's role in technical review has led to a better outcome for implementation and greater likelihood for impact?

- Very much agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



**2** What do you appreciate about OWEB’s role in technical review and what could be improved?

---

**TRACKING PROGRESS  
AND IMPACT**


---

High performing partnerships are often very good at tracking progress with respect to implementation and outputs, such as miles of stream restored or acres of forest treated.

However, it is much more challenging to track short and long-term ecological and social outcomes, such as changes in salmon populations, the resilience of forests to extreme fire events or economic and human health benefits from healthy watersheds.

**1** To what extent have you had success tracking progress toward your long-term goals?

- Lots of success
- Success
- Some success
- Neither success nor failure
- Some failure
- Failure
- Lots of failure

 Please explain and share examples.

**2** The following are some examples of why it is challenging to track short and long-term ecological and social outcomes. Please mark all those that you've experienced and describe any others below.

- External changes, such as extreme flooding, catastrophic fire, economic recession, climate change, etc.
- Shifting understanding of how systems work and what we should be tracking to measure change
- Managing large complex data sets with multiple partners
- Funding for monitoring over the timeframe needed for outcomes to emerge
- Linking your work to the changes observed when there are other influences and unknowns

**3** Please share examples of your biggest challenges with tracking short and long-term outcomes.

How have you navigated these challenges, which might include changes in staffing, technology, training, etc.? What support would be useful from OWEB or other funders?

---

**PARTNERSHIP RESILIENCE  
AND FUNDING**

---

Partnership resilience refers to the ability of partnerships to withstand stressors and changing circumstances and still advance their vision and goals. A partnership may change in structure, function, composition or focus over time, but it is resilient if it continues to advance its vision and goals. A partnership may face many different kinds of stressors, but in this study, we are specifically looking at how partnerships respond to changes in funding.

**1** To what extent do you feel confident that your partnership will be resilient and sustain its work as different funding opportunities come and go?

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Very confident     | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat unsure |
| <input type="radio"/> Confident          | <input type="radio"/> Unsure          |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat confident | <input type="radio"/> Very unsure     |
| <input type="radio"/> Neutral            |                                       |

 **Comments?**

**2 From your perspective, what makes your partnership more or less resilient to changes in funding?**

Consider your partnership structure, governance, history, partner composition, community context, access to funders, etc.

**3 Are there ways funders can better support partnership resilience, short of continuous long-term funding commitments?**

**4 What are you most proud of with respect to fundraising for the partnership? *Include any significant or impactful grants that you have received, not including OWEB, with amounts and funders, for example NRCS, Oregon Department of Water Resources, private foundations, etc. We would like this information to understand the range of funding sources across partnerships and get a sense for the diversification of sources. We appreciate that this is sensitive information, and these details will not be shared. If you include private foundations, please share the name of the foundation.***



---

## FINAL THOUGHTS

---

**1** What inspires you to continue investing your time and energy in this partnership?

**2** Do you have any other comments, feedback or questions to share?

Thank you so very much for your time! Please reach out with any questions.

**Jennifer**

Questions: [jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com](mailto:jennifer@reciprocityconsulting.com)



# Partnership Learning Project



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

PREPARED BY

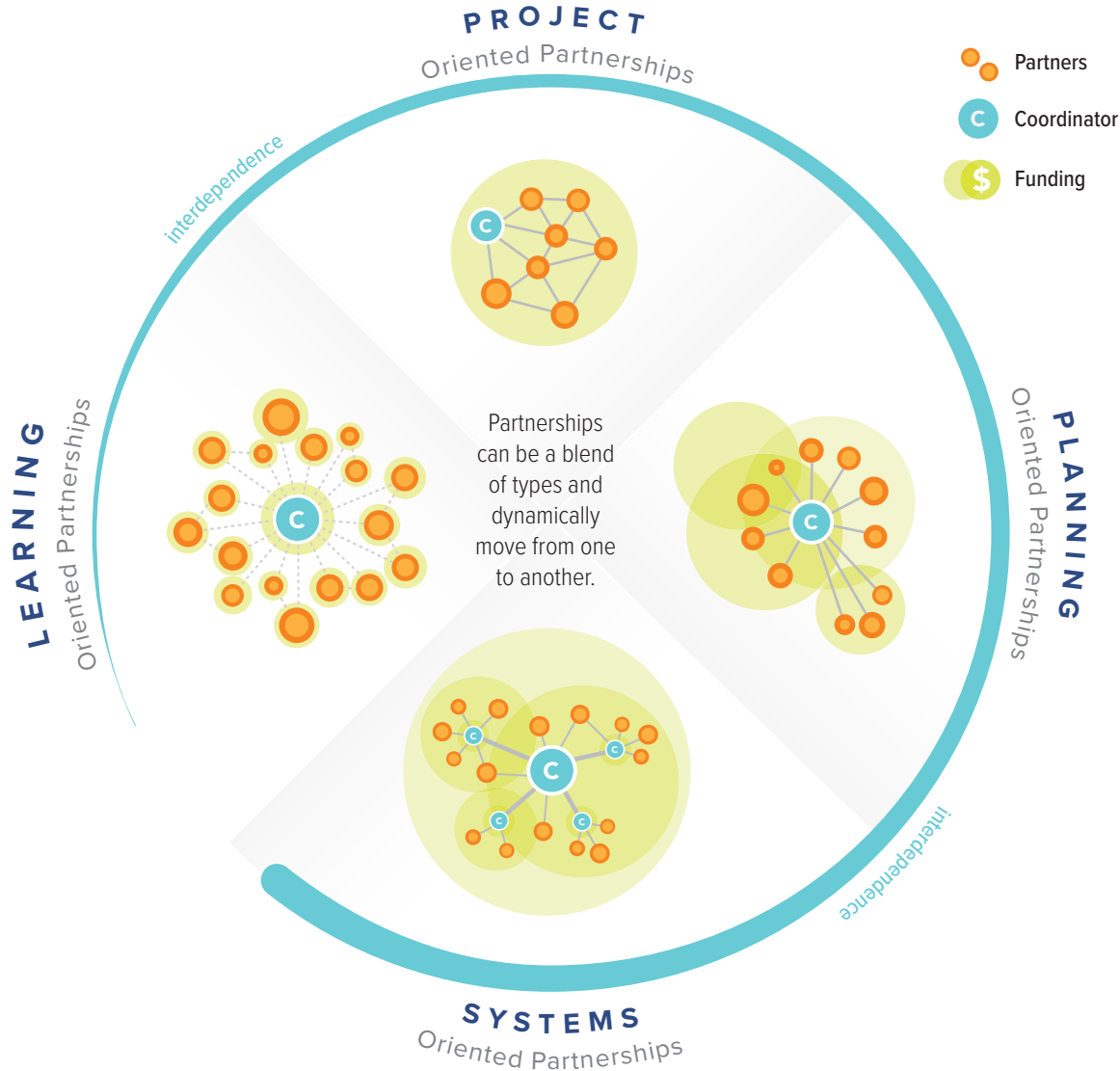
**Jennifer Arnold, Ph.D.**

RECIPROCITY CONSULTING, LLC

October 2023



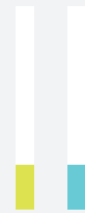
The partnership types below are defined by the relative autonomy or interdependence of partners. This originates from the Public Administration literature (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999) and was further developed inductively through ‘grounded theory’ analysis of data from the partnerships in this study.



OWEB’s Partnership Technical Assistance grants would be suitable for any partnership type. OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership grants, with their focus on implementation, would be suitable for project-oriented, planning-oriented or systems-oriented partnerships.

# A TYPOLOGY OF Partnership Types

\$ Funding for Coordination    🔗 Interdependence among partners



## Learning-Oriented

Partners are **fully autonomous** with **little interdependence**.

Partners come together to tackle shared questions to improve strategies, practices or policies. Partners independently apply their learning. A coordinator serves as convener.



## Project-Oriented

Partners are **mostly autonomous** with **some interdependence**.

Partners go through an initial period of collaborative planning and commit to a set of shared actions. Their main focus is coordinating implementation, often with each partner leading their own projects. After projects are complete, the partnership may dissolve or reorganize around a new focus. A coordinator serves as a project manager, a role which may be rotated among partners.



## Planning-Oriented

Partners are **moderately interdependent**.

Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and work together to implement shared priorities. Individual partner organizations may have to shift how they operate to align with the partnership overall. A coordinator serves as a facilitator, planning coach and project manager, a role which is usually held by a partner organization who may also contract with an independent facilitator.



## Systems-Oriented

Partners are **greatly interdependent**.

Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and establish shared standards, practices and systems to hold each other accountable to systems change. They work through differences, achieve alignment and coordinate for implementation. A coordinator serves as collaborative leader, facilitator and project manager, a role which may be held by a partner or host organization who may also contract with independent facilitators.

As partnerships experience stressors, they may change from one partnership type to another while maintaining their clarity of purpose and core members - or they may dissolve, merge with another partnership or shift in purpose, scope and structure to form a new partnership.

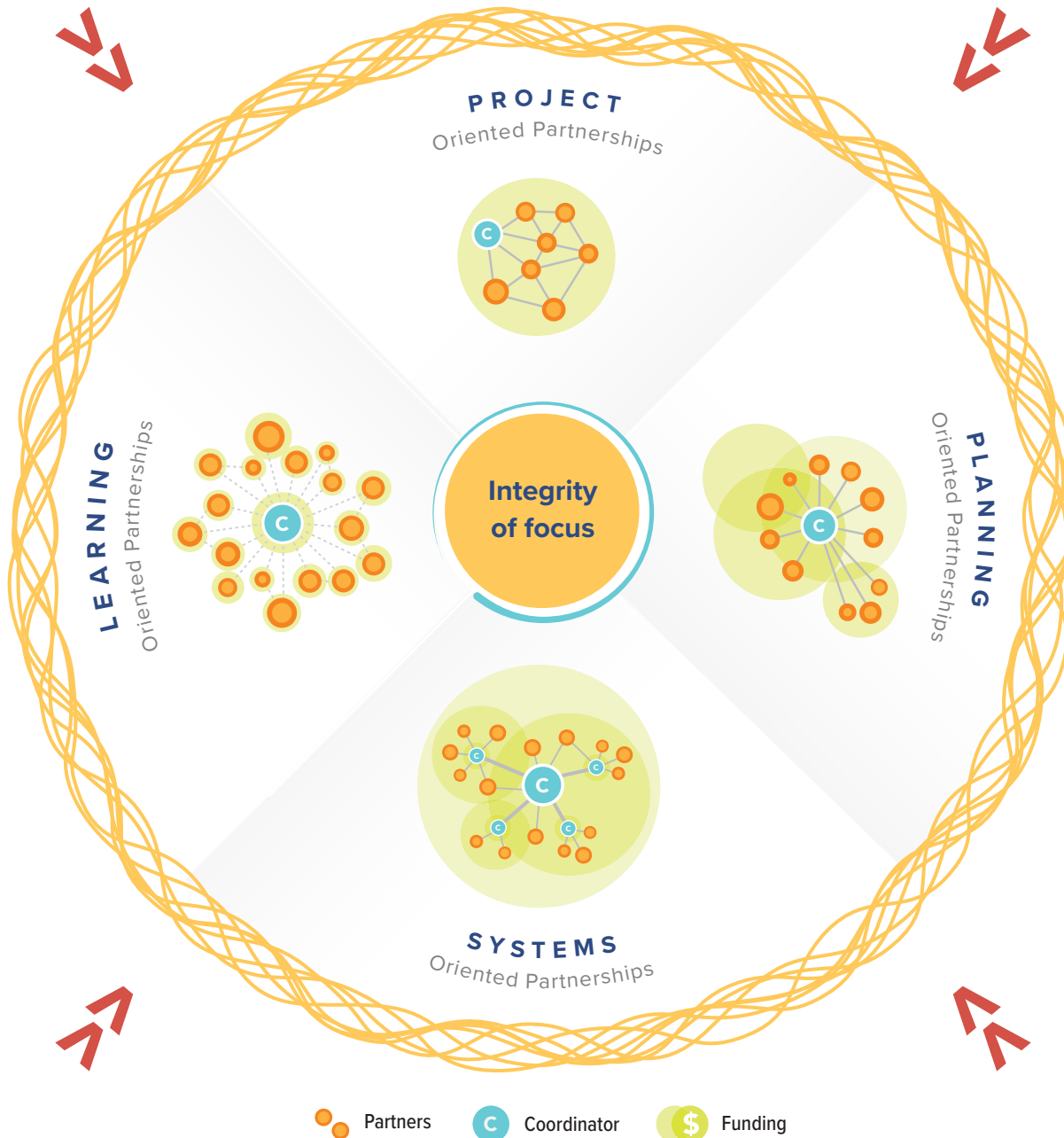
**Examples of stressors:**

- >> Loss of a coordinator and/or key leaders
- >> Catastrophic events like fire or drought
- >> Loss or gain of substantial funding
- >> Inaccurate assumptions in the theory of change
- >> Strong critiques and/or opposition

# THREADS OF Partnership Resilience

**Resilience** refers to the ability to withstand changes and stressors and still maintain the integrity of a partnership.

The following threads, or elements, contribute to a partnership’s resilience with multiple threads reinforcing each other.

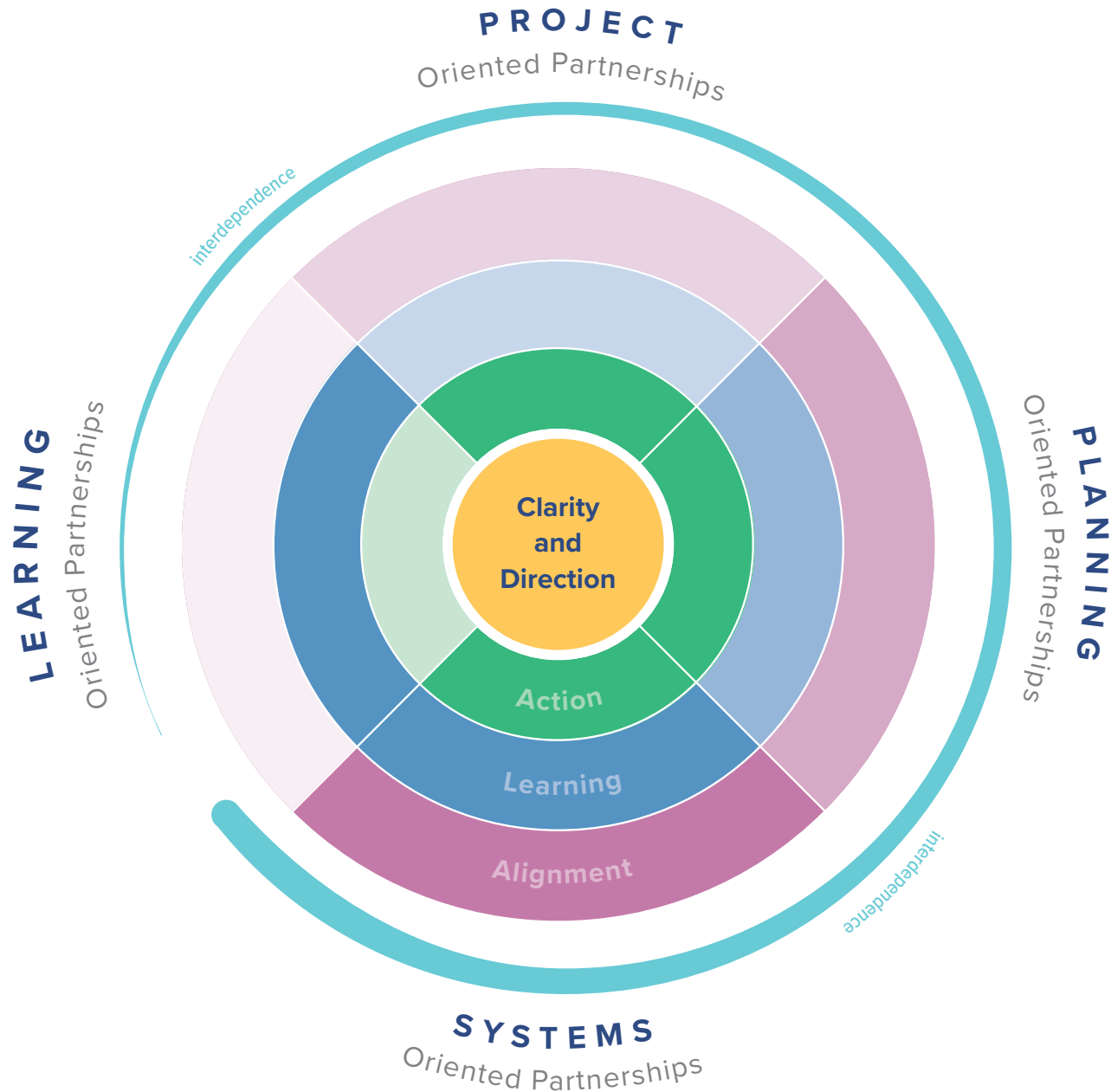


- Camaraderie**  
Partners like each other and pitch in to help
- Success**  
Success creates more opportunities for success
- Formalized commitments**  
Partners document agreements and plans
- Consistent funding**  
Partnership coordination is consistently funded
- Organizational anchors**  
Fiscally strong partner organizations add stability and capacity
- Shared leadership**  
Leadership is shared among partners, both structurally and in the culture of how partners work together.
- Openness**  
Leaders and partners are open to learning and change
- External relationships**  
Partners connect with individuals and organizations who can be a source for new ideas and resources

**Performance** refers to the ability of a partnership to achieve their goals and make an impact.



**High performance** looks different for different partnership types. Greater color intensity below denotes categories of performance that are highly important for overall performance for each partnership type.



## UNDERSTANDING High-Performing Partnerships

The following categories of performance were inductively developed from the data.

- **Clarity and Direction**
  - Leadership, dedicated partners, and funding
  - Clear purpose and scope
  - Clear roles and decision-making
  - Effective communication and coordination
- **Action**
  - Strategic plan with prioritized actions
  - Well-executed actions
  - Ability to track progress and make improvements
- **Learning**
  - Trust to work through hard questions
  - Incorporation of new learning and latest science
  - Dissemination of learning
- **Alignment**
  - Standardized practices and norms
  - Systems for feedback and accountability
  - Ability to tell the story of learning and impact

**Clarity and Direction** are important for all partnership types to perform well, while other categories may be more or less important for overall performance depending on the partnership type ([See Partnership Types](#)). Partnerships can be a blend of different types and dynamically move from one to another.