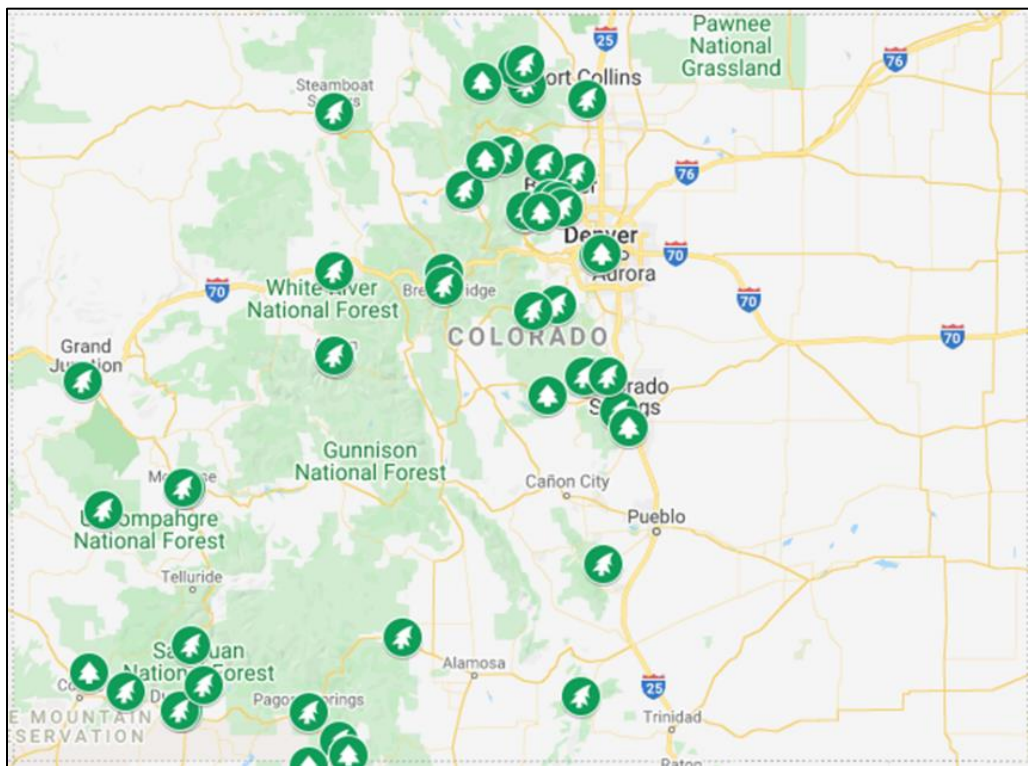


Situation Assessment for a Network of Forest Collaborative Groups in Colorado

Final Draft Report
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements..... i

About the Authors i

Executive Summary..... ii

Introduction 1

Approach..... 2

Findings

Objective 1. Understand the value of networks of forest collaboratives in other states 3

Objective 2. Characterize the need for and interest in a network of forest collaboratives in Colorado among collaboratives, agencies, and other key partners. 7

Objective 3. Offer recommendations about the next steps developing a network, including the responsibilities and roles of a network facilitator. 14

Summary 17

Appendices

 Appendix A. Funding Models for Networks of Forest Collaboratives..... 18

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Executive Summary

Colorado forests and watersheds are facing increasing risk from climate change, wildfires, and other disturbances. Communities, land managers, and policy makers are developing strategies and activities to address these issues at a meaningful scale. That means collectively identifying statewide priorities and goals and supporting planning and implementation at local levels. Place-based forest collaborative groups continue to be a vital link in this necessary alignment.

Colorado has more than 200 place-based collaborative groups focusing on natural resource issues, including at least 30 with an emphasis on forest resilience and wildfire risk mitigation. These groups have made significant achievements in the past two decades. They also face many challenges and barriers to success. Despite their clear value and the need to bolster their work, there is no statewide organization, such as in other western states, that specifically seeks to support and represent these collaboratives.

- ❖ **The overall goals of the assessment reported here** were to describe the need for a network of place-based forest collaboratives in Colorado, understand the appetite for a network and barriers to participation, and identify potential responsibilities of a network facilitator.
- ❖ **In short, there is a clear need and strong interest in a network** of forest collaboratives in Colorado. A facilitator could help institutionalize the culture of collaboration statewide.
- ❖ **The following summarizes the assessment** approach and findings in more detail.

The approach to the assessment that occurred in March and April 2021 involved two main components:

- a) **Reviewing background material and existing programs** related to other networks and programs that support collaboratives in Colorado and other states.
- b) **Conducting a total of 33 interviews** with collaborative leaders and agency representatives who work with collaboratives and networks across the west, as well as representatives from collaboratives, agencies, and other organizations in Colorado.

The following key findings are organized by the three main objectives guiding the assessment.

Objective 1. Understand the value of networks of forest collaboratives in other states.

- ❖ Interviewees in other western states described how statewide networks of forest collaborative groups in their states serve important functions enhancing communication, coordination, capacity, and representation for collaborative efforts and groups across the state.
 - ❖ Networks in other states support shared learning and communication across forest collaboratives and between collaboratives, agencies, and other organizations. Convening at an annual conference is highly valued, as is the facilitator's role in regular communication and coordination.
 - ❖ Networks provide structure and other support that increases collaborative group capacity in ways that can enhance agency and other funders' confidence in providing funding to collaboratives.
 - ❖ Network facilitators can function as a liaison with state and agency leadership to deliver a clear and collective voice amidst many competing values, needs, and successes among the groups and other interests.
 - ❖ Networks in other states each have unique approaches to funding, structure, membership, and governance. Each network faces challenges finding and sustaining funding for the network and collaborative groups across the state.
 - ❖ Participants said the networks would be more effective with consistent and sufficient support.
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Objective 2. Characterize the need for and interest in a network of forest collaboratives in Colorado among collaboratives, agencies, and other key partners or organizations.

- ❖ Recent assessments, plans, and strategies across Colorado are uniformly calling for coordinated forest management planning and implementation across boundaries. They also explicitly identify the need to involve place-based forest collaborative groups in these efforts.
- ❖ Collaborative leaders in Colorado articulated an overwhelming need for a network to formalize a community of collaboratives, increase peer learning and innovation, and be a collective statewide voice. A network could also better align collaboratives and the Forest Health Advisory Council.
- ❖ Representatives from agencies who work regularly with collaboratives in Colorado recognized the roles a network could serve in their work through sharing information, developing relationships, and aligning local efforts and statewide priorities.
- ❖ Representatives from non-agency organizations that work with collaboratives clearly recognized the value in a network. They generally acknowledged that there was not currently a statewide network that focused on connecting and supporting collaboratives.
- ❖ Some potential tensions over a new network emerged among existing organizations that interact with collaborative groups, illustrating the need to clearly articulate a new network's added value.
- ❖ Forest collaboratives in Colorado face significant capacity and funding limitations.
- ❖ Collaboratives in Colorado strongly desire a statewide network. They think it can facilitate coordination and shared learning, help them build capacity, serve as a collective voice to state-level leaders, and help develop programs to support them and get more work done in the forest.

Objective 3. Offer recommendations about the next steps for developing a network.

- ❖ Develop outreach materials about this assessment and the network.
 - These resources can be used to articulate the value of a network of forest collaboratives in Colorado, solicit funding, and garner broad support for the network.
- ❖ Secure endorsement for a network, form a steering committee, and establish a facilitator position.
 - State level endorsements and funding will legitimize the network. A steering committee of collaborative leaders will guide the network. They will develop a position description for a network facilitator and determine the appropriate institution to house the network.
 - The initial effort could be a 3-6 month pilot or a multi-year commitment.
- ❖ With the steering committee, create a 3-year work plan for the network.
 - Identify and outline proposed goals, outcomes, and milestones for the network. Define what the network will do, how it will be structured, long-term funding models for the network, how it will adapt, and how membership eligibility and roles will be determined.
- ❖ With the steering committee, determine what exactly a network facilitator would do.
 - A facilitator will build relationships with collaboratives, agencies, and other organizations. They will elevate collaboratives at a state level and work to support them through programs, policies, conferences, trainings, coordination with the Forest Health Advisory Council, aligning local and statewide priorities and opportunities, and other roles.
- ❖ Synthesize key findings from literature about collaboration, networks, policy implementation, and organizational change. Incorporate these findings into the network's program of work.

Summary: Networks of collaborative groups have proven their value in other states. A network could address many of the limitations and challenges facing collaboratives and agencies in Colorado. It would give collaboratives a collective, statewide voice. It would be a hub for agencies and the state to connect locally. The need is evident, and the interest is strong. Investing in a network now is one important step to future success in collectively addressing statewide forest and watershed health issues at local scales.

Introduction

Overview

Mitigating wildfire risk and improving forest and watershed health across Colorado forests and communities requires collaborative, cross-boundary approaches and coordination among local and statewide scales. Place-based forest collaborative groups are key to ensuring local priorities and needs are reflected in statewide goals and investments. Despite the rich history and diversity of forest collaborative groups in Colorado, no formal network exists to support them in communication and coordination with each other and with state and federal agencies, or to help them build capacity to meet their local goals and contribute to statewide priorities. This assessment compiles lessons learned from similar networks in other states, examines how a network in Colorado intersects with existing organizations, reports on discussions with forest collaboratives and others about their interest in a network in Colorado, and offers recommendations for proceeding with the development of a network.

Context

Statewide [forest health assessments](#) and strategic plans, such as the [Colorado State Forest Action Plan](#), highlight the extent of risks to forest and watershed health across the state. They identify the need to address these issues with coordinated planning and management across jurisdictions, communities, and landscapes. Regional and national efforts, such as those framed in the U.S. Forest Service's [Shared Stewardship Strategy](#), further illustrate the importance of collaborative, cross-boundary management at local scales to address forest restoration priorities at state, regional, and national levels.

Local, place-based collaborative groups are a vital component to successfully approaching these multi-scale efforts. Effective place-based collaboratives can contribute meaningful input to local, state, and federal efforts to create policy and implement robust management. They can also earn and sustain social license by listening to local concerns, educating communities, and giving assurance that a project will be done in accordance with local expectations.

Colorado is rich with place-based collaborative groups who work to improve forest health, water reliability, and wildfire resilience in their geographies. The number of groups across the state has been steadily increasing for the past two decades. As of 2020, according to the [Atlas of Collaborative Conservation in Colorado](#), there are more than 200 natural-resource based collaborative groups in Colorado, including at least 30 active forest-based collaborative groups throughout the state that focus on forest health and resilience issues. Across Colorado, there are federal and state agencies, research organizations, committees, and non-profits that engage independently with these collaboratives. There are also existing organizations and networks that interact with or support collaboratives in some way. There is not, however, a statewide network of collaboratives that harnesses their collective potential.

Assessment purpose

This report presents the findings of a systematic assessment to understand the potential value of a network in Colorado and the interest in it among groups and other organizations. Informed by those findings, it also presents recommendations for collectively developing a network. If establishing a network does move forward, co-creation of the network with collaboratives needs to be a core guiding principle to provide real value, complement other efforts, and avoid overburdening collaborative groups. This assessment articulates the foundation and provides a framework for those efforts.

Approach

The overall goals of the assessment, conducted in March and April 2021, were to describe the need for a network of place-based forest collaboratives in Colorado, understand the appetite for a network and barriers to participation, and identify potential responsibilities of a network facilitator. The two main components of the assessment to accomplish these goals involved:

- a) **Reviewing background material and existing programs** related to other networks and programs that support collaborative groups in Colorado and other states.
- b) **Conducting a total of 33 interviews** (see Table 1) with collaborative leaders and agency representatives who work with collaboratives and networks across the west, as well as representatives from collaboratives, agencies, and other organizations in Colorado.

Table 1. Summary of interviewees and participants for the assessment

Interviewee and Participant Category	Number of interviews	Number of people
Leaders from networks and agency representatives in other states	8	11
Leaders in collaboration and agency representatives in Colorado	8	8
Organizations in Colorado that interact with or support collaboratives	6	6
Place-based forest collaborative groups in Colorado <i>*interviewees represented at least 15 different collaborative groups</i>	11	14*
Total	33	39

Here are the specific assessment **objectives and the approach** used to address each objective:

Objective 1. Understand the value of networks of forest collaborative groups in other states.

- a) Reviewed existing programs that support collaboratives and networks in other states.
- b) Interviewed leaders from networks of forest collaborative groups in other states about their roles, structure, funding, and other key lessons learned or recommendations.
- c) Interviewed state and federal agency representatives in other states who work with and support place-based collaborative groups and networks of those groups.

Objective 2. Characterize the need for and interest in a network of forest collaborative groups in Colorado among collaboratives, agencies, and other key partners or organizations.

- a) Reviewed statewide strategic plans and collaborative initiatives or efforts to understand the context in which a network could function.
- b) Identified agencies and organizations that support collaboration in Colorado, interviewed key representatives, and considered potential interactions between them and a network.
- c) Interviewed collaborative leaders in Colorado about collaboration here, the potential value of a network, why a network does not exist, and what is needed to develop one.
- d) Interviewed representatives from place-based forest collaborative groups in Colorado representing different regions, interests, and history or maturity about their needs and goals, perceived value of a new network, and interest in participating in a network.

Objective 3. Offer recommendations about the next steps for developing a network, including the responsibilities and roles of a network facilitator.

- a) Used findings from Objectives 1 and 2 to develop recommendations for next steps towards developing a network and identifying roles of a network facilitator.

Findings

Objective 1. Understand the value of networks of forest collaborative groups in other states.

Interviewees in other western states described how statewide networks of forest collaboratives in their states serve important functions enhancing communication, coordination, and capacity for collaborative efforts and groups statewide.

These participants included representatives from the Washington Forest Collaboratives Network, Oregon Forest Collaboratives Network, Montana Forest Collaboration Network, and the Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership. We also spoke with state and federal agency representatives who work with collaborative groups and the network in those states.

Networks facilitate communication and shared learning.

Representatives from each network emphasized the value of the network in facilitating communication and shared learning among collaborative groups and between collaborative groups, agencies, communities, and other organizations. This was accomplished in two primary ways: 1) an annual event, and 2) other channels or activities throughout the year guided by a network facilitator.

Each network representative said that an annual conference or workshop was one of the most valuable services provided by the network. These events are well attended by collaboratives. Other attendees or speakers often include personnel from the U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies, governors, state foresters, county commissions, and non-profit conservation organizations. Policy makers and other leaders who can shape programs aimed at supporting collaborative efforts also attend. At these events, attendees can share challenges and issues, discuss solutions and innovations, build relationships, and gain perspective on how work on their local landscape integrates with broader efforts across the state.

Network facilitators and electronic services served as the other primary sources of communication and shared learning. Some network facilitators attend as many individual collaborative group meetings throughout the year as feasible, and join collaboratives' email list serves, to learn what each group is doing and share relevant updates about other groups or issues across the state. Network facilitators also lead regular meetings with representatives from each collaborative group to accomplish similar goals. Newsletters are also common sources of communication for networks to reach collaborative groups and support shared learning. Network websites were mentioned as helping build capacity without "reinventing the wheel" by providing templates and examples of by-laws, charters, sub committees, decision-making and consensus-building techniques, or other governance structures from other groups.

Networks assist state-level coordination and provide a collective voice for collaborative groups.

Networks serve as a "one stop shop" or a "hub" where agencies or policy makers can go to understand needs and challenges facing collaboratives, their key successes, and strengths, and how to effectively support them. Interviewees said network facilitators provide a collective voice for collaborative groups across the state, so their interests and needs were being shared directly with leaders and policy makers. This was particularly valuable because most collaborative groups lack capacity, time, and staff to consistently communicate and interact with leaders. Similarly, agency leaders and policy makers are unable to interact regularly with each collaborative group across the state.

Network representatives explained how each member collaborative group was unique and autonomous, but the network provided a unified and clear voice for promoting programs and policies that benefited all the groups or advanced broader collaborative efforts. The network facilitator could also communicate key issues of concern or interest among agency leaders or policy makers back to the individual collaboratives to facilitate two-way dialogue. Some networks described crafting letters of support for certain programs or strategies that collaboratives could choose to circulate or sign and send back to agencies or policy makers.

Network facilitators also coordinated with other networks and organizations in the state to support collaboratives in different ways. For instance, in Montana, the executive director for the Montana Watershed Coordination Council is on the Montana Forest Collaboration Network's Advisory Board and they regularly interact to discuss synergies between their respective members and efforts. Network leaders in Idaho described working with the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Idaho Department of Lands to develop and distribute a survey across agencies, collaboratives, and other partners in the state to evaluate the strength of partnerships and areas for improving collaboration and coordination.

Networks help collaborative groups build capacity so they can be strategic and accomplish more work.

Participants described different state-level programs for directly investing in place-based forest collaboratives to support collaborative groups in alignment with statewide priorities. These programs generally provide funding for two types of support, capacity building and implementation.

Funding for capacity building can help groups with hiring facilitators, note takers, or other administrative tasks; pay for trainings, field trips, or travel for members to attend conferences or workshops; outreach and communication to partners and other stakeholders; developing zones of agreement, action plans, and project proposals; and providing technical assistance in support of project planning and implementation. Interviewees said that multi-year funding this type of support helped collaboratives focus on getting work done and not solely on securing funding so they could keep functioning.

Interviewees said that state funding to help collaborative groups with implementation was essential for supporting locally driven projects that helped address state-level priorities. This type of funding can typically be used for vegetation treatments, landscape evaluations, planning, data acquisition, aquatic evaluations, post-implementation monitoring, and coordination with landowners and other stakeholders.

Networks of collaboratives helped with these state-funded programs in several ways. In some states, the network facilitator provides input into the development and modification of these programs based on feedback from the collaboratives. Some network facilitators also serve on review committees to evaluate proposals according to pre-determined criteria (see the [Montana RFP for example](#)). Additionally, network facilitators help step back and make sure that local efforts are aligning with state-level priorities or strategies since many groups may be too focused on with their local issues to see the bigger picture.

Agencies also highly value the role of networks in providing resources and support to collaborative groups to make sure the groups meet the eligibility criteria for state programs or funding. This support increases agency confidence in investing in those groups. Examples of common eligibility criteria included:

- A statement of commitment signed by collaborative members.
 - Established planning, business, and collaboration processes, and regular meetings.
-

- Leadership structure and process to show how organizational decisions are made, including but not limited to a standing leadership committee or administrative committee, by-laws, etc.
- Doing restoration work on private and/or public lands.
- Engaging with multiple stakeholders locally.

Several people also described how networks enhance collaborative group capacity through organizing workshops, webinars, or other events. For instance, networks have organized multi-stakeholder workshops to establish a mutual understanding of what collaboration is and what roles different partners or participants serve. Other workshop examples provided included training in conflict resolution, effective facilitation strategies, and the different steps and considerations around the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping and analysis processes.

A [recent “SWOT” analysis](#) among collaborative groups in Idaho and Montana identified the top three strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the groups ([see report](#)). Network representatives in these states were aware of these findings and working with others to address challenges facing the groups, communicate the strengths of collaborative, and support opportunities to help groups succeed. These findings likely share similarities among groups in Colorado or could inform a similar SWOT analysis.

- Strengths: Composition, representation from agencies and elected officials, and facilitative support.
- Weaknesses: Low membership diversity, low member participation, and varying levels of membership knowledge. Additional weaknesses include a lack of funding and ineffective group process/functioning.
- Opportunities: Facilitative support, funding, and shared learning.
- Threats: Opponents to the collaborative process, the challenges presented by working with the U.S. Forest Service and, tied for third, both community dynamics and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Networks in other states each have unique approaches to funding, structure, and governance, though some consistent themes emerge. Each network faces challenges finding and sustaining funding for the network and collaborative groups across the states.

Maintaining consistent and sufficient funding to operate the network is a challenge for each network (see Appendix A). Effectively accomplishing the network’s goals without consistent and long-term support from agencies or other investors requires volunteer support, donations, or leveraging other in-kind organizational resources. Network representatives were interested in securing more and longer-term funding to maintain and improve the network and to distribute to collaborative groups to support them.

Participants described the importance of clearly articulating the added value of a network uniquely to different entities to maintain financial and other types of support. For instance, networks in some states strive to show agencies how a network can help the agency achieve its flagship target. This can be difficult given that many of the efforts and outcomes of networks are not easy to measure nor always tangible or easily tracked (relationship building vs acres treated). Then, network facilitator can also communicate to collaboratives how their participation will improve shared learning, coordination, and capacity building.

Governance structures across networks also varied. Each group had a facilitator. Most groups had some type of advisory board. Most boards were inclusive and changed composition periodically. One board included a core group of founding members and was described as static. Most interviewees said that formal voting was not a part of how they functioned, except perhaps for voting on the budget and other internal issues. For most networks, any individual members of forest collaborative groups were welcome to attend the regular or annual meetings. Regular meetings for the network in Oregon typically only included collaborative group facilitators as the network was still developing.

Each network approached membership differently. For instance, the Idaho network includes only forest-based groups because the context and issues were too different in other landscapes or ecosystems. In Washington, the state DNR had criteria that essentially determined the parameters of a forest collaborative group in terms of who could apply for state funding aimed at collaborative groups. Members of the Montana network are required to agree to a set of core principles guiding the network. There were approximately 10 member collaboratives each in the Idaho and Washington networks, and approximately 25 member collaboratives each in the Oregon and Montana networks.

Each network representative described how collaboratives in their state are continually evolving, developing, or disbanding. Group membership in the network is also dynamic. Agencies and networks are faced with responding to those changes through how they define and support collaboratives in the state.

Networks in other states provide many key lessons that can inform a network in Colorado, including facilitating shared learning and communication, providing a collective voice to state-level leaders, and helping inform and adapt programs and policies that support collaboratives.

Participants said that networks:

- Face challenges related to finding and sustaining funding for the network and for collaborative groups across the state.
 - Have different approaches to structure, governance, and membership that all affect how they function and the types of support they provide.
 - Support shared learning and communication across collaborative groups and between collaborative groups and agencies.
 - Provide structure and other support that increases collaborative group capacity in ways that can enhance agency and other funders' confidence in providing funding to collaboratives.
 - Help define collaborative groups and work with agencies for eligibility requirements, then work with groups to make sure they meet eligibility for different funding opportunities.
 - Have facilitators who function as a liaison with state, regional, and agency leadership to deliver a clear and collective voice amidst many competing values, needs, and interests.
 - Help monitor and align local efforts and needs with state-level priorities and resources.
 - Encourage shared learning across collaboratives, agencies, and other organizations and leaders towards development and adaptation of programs and funding mechanisms for collaborative group capacity enhancement and project implementation.
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Objective 2. Characterize the need for and interest in a network of forest collaborative groups in Colorado among collaborative groups, agencies, and other key partners or organizations.

Recent assessments, plans, and strategies at local, state, and national levels are uniformly calling for coordinated forest management planning and implementation across boundaries, and in many cases specifically calling for the involvement of place-based forest collaborative groups.

The [2020 Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests](#), the [Colorado Forest Atlas](#), and [other scientific assessments and resources](#) highlight the increasing threats to forest and watershed health across Colorado's forests. These resources clearly articulate the urgency and the social, ecological, and economic importance of planning and implementing landscape scale restoration and wildfire mitigation activities statewide.

The [2020 Colorado State Forest Action Plan](#) (SFAP) identifies high priority treatment areas across jurisdictions and reflects the need to collaboratively align local and statewide priorities and goals. The plan references opportunities to expand partnerships with collaboratives to get more work done. It also encourages collaborative groups to use the SFAP towards coordinated approaches and implementation across jurisdictions. On page 68, the plan identifies the creation of a centralized database of partners and collaboratives across the state as a necessary resource towards accomplishing the plan's goals.

Shifting agency approaches, such as those reflected in the [US Forest Service's Shared Stewardship Strategy](#), [Colorado's Shared Stewardship MOU](#), and the [Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative](#), indicate commitment for collaborative forest management in Colorado. Local communities are beginning to adopt similar language and formalize agreements to work together to accomplish more forest management work, such as in [Boulder County](#). The work that these agreements seek to accomplish requires supporting and coordinating with local collaborative groups given their local knowledge, relationships, and influence.

Recent [research about Shared Stewardship](#) perceptions and implementation found that some local partners and collaborative groups in Colorado were concerned or unsure about how their landscapes and priorities would be affected formal state-level engagement with the U.S. Forest Service. Some were concerned that resources would be taken from their landscapes to focus on priority landscapes. At the time, they were unclear about their involvement in priority landscape selection and how multiple state-level prioritization processes would affect their local landscapes and influence on state-level decisions.

These considerations signal the need for clearer communication and coordination between agencies and place-based groups. Local groups need capacity to sustain long term effective involvement. We heard clearly about the value of networks of forest collaboratives in other states in providing this type of support and giving collaboratives a collective voice in state-level planning, prioritization, and decision making.

Collaborative leaders in Colorado, who have been involved with collaborative groups for decades, articulated an overwhelming need for a network to formalize a community of collaboratives, increase peer learning and innovation, and be a collective statewide voice for collaboratives.

These individuals have been involved in setting up an annual meeting for collaboratives, serving on many collaborative groups in different functions, and providing scientific data and analysis to assist decision making. In fact, the idea of connecting more deliberately between annual events grew out of the meeting

they convene. They discussed how groups can seem disconnected without a formal network and that they consistently see groups get energized after the annual meeting of collaborative groups where the groups feel like part of a community and understand they are not alone.

They said that more structured peer learning among collaboratives would encourage dialogue and shared problem-solving, resource leveraging, and relationship building. These leaders said this dialogue would help newer groups learn from more experienced groups. A network facilitator would also be able to identify areas across the state where collaboratives need investments. Then, the facilitator could work to build a coalition within the legislation and locally for supporting collaborative groups across the state.

These collaborative leaders described a need for a common voice to share the successes, value, and needs of collaboratives to agencies and state leaders. They said a network could also play a role in giving collaborative groups a formal presence with the Colorado Forest Health Advisory Council and elevate their voices, perspectives, and needs. They noted how agencies rely on local collaboratives in many areas to inform planning and support implementation. However, it is generally perceived that agencies are not providing necessary support, training, or other resources to collaborative groups for effective involvement. There is not a group that is convening and coordinating collaborative groups and carrying their voice upward to the state government and soliciting support to sustain them. One potential example role of a network would involve organizing an expo day for collaboratives at the capitol. Another would be inviting state and agency leaders to the annual conference to connect directly with collaboratives.

These participants also recognized that securing financial support for a network requires clear articulation of the value added by a network. They suggested developing a table concept map that shows what other networks in other states do and how they are funded, what the functions of a network in Colorado would be, and how much it would cost to fund the network including any network staff. They recommended making a three-year strategic plan so it is clear where the network is heading, how it is being sustained, and which deliverables or milestones would be expected at different phases.

Representatives from agencies who work regularly closely with collaboratives in Colorado recognized the roles a network could serve in their work through sharing information, developing relationships, and aligning local efforts and statewide priorities.

They said that formalizing the shared learning happening across collaborative groups could help elevate or draw attention to similar issues that are likely being discussed separately across landscapes. In this way, groups could learn more from each other and more effectively work towards implementation efforts that align with agency goals and priorities.

Agency staff work with many different groups at different scales. They have limited time and capacity to effectively engage with all the local collaboratives. Finding the time to track collaborative's efforts, attend their meetings, and meaningfully engage with them is challenging. They said a network would help them stay connected to local collaboratives in a more efficient manner and monitor local efforts across landscapes to help track achievements towards larger scale priorities.

One person mentioned that some agency staff may be hesitant to work with a network if it was seen as too politically active rather than an organization aiming to support collaboratives, and agencies, to get more work done. Furthermore, they noted that if a network is seen as an advocacy group, influential

people or groups may try to leverage the network to advocate for a position not held across all the collaboratives across the state. These are things to consider in how the network is packaged and delivered.

Representatives from non-agency organizations that work with collaboratives recognized that there was not a statewide network that focused on connecting and supporting forest collaboratives. They said defining network membership would be difficult given the number and diversity of collaboratives.

Participants said that many local groups have their own relationships that forms many different informal networks across the state. They explained how it would be important to articulate the value added by a network in a way that does not seek to duplicate those relationships but rather harnesses existing relationships and networks in certain parts of the state to help groups and networks in other parts of the state learn together.

Several people mentioned how a network would help with problem solving by providing a statewide, structured forum for sharing issues and solutions across the state. One person suggested that individual groups should be driving the peer learning process for a network (e.g., providing questions or concerns or challenges and then others sharing ideas or solutions). Others noted that a network facilitator would be important for organizing the efforts or opportunities and pushing it forward.

Several people noted how a network would be valuable in connecting local groups to agency leaders, policy makers, and other decision makers. They felt that many groups are focused on their local issues and landscapes and do not have the resources or time to elevate their work and voice to state or regional levels. A couple people also mentioned that a network could also serve to connect the Colorado Forest Health Advisory Council with local groups and helping local groups use the Council to move things forward based on issues they are having organizing or getting work done in their landscapes and communities.

A few people also discussed the importance and conundrum of figuring out how a network might approach network membership. With more than 200 different natural resource based collaborative groups across the state, it will be important to get input from the groups themselves or a steering committee to identify the appropriate focus of a network. A couple people suggested letting the collaborative groups self-identify. Others discussed how core and periphery members could be engaged differently based on their organizational maturity and ability or interest to contribute differently. Another idea was to distinguish members who could benefit from a network from participants who could be more active in supporting the network. One person thought a network could help step back and consider the need for so many different collaboratives and think about ways to gain efficiency.

Overall, it was recognized that collaboratives are constantly changing, developing, or disbanding. A network will need to incorporate that consideration and flexibility in what it provides and how it functions.

Some potential tensions over a new network emerged among existing organizations that interact with collaborative groups, illustrating the need to clearly articulate a new network's added value.

The main concerns with a new network involve perceived potential for competition for time and resources. Agency staff, collaboratives, and other organizations have limited time and staff capacity to engage in more meetings. The value of participating in a network would need to be articulated clearly to them. People do not want anything taken away from their organizations or their existing relationships at

the expense of a new network. Efforts to develop the network must carefully incorporate existing networks, efforts, and relationships to avoid unwanted duplication. One person suggested considering how a network might be rolled into an existing organization. Development of a network should include transparency about the source of funding and resources for the network.

Participants identified several organizations that interact in this space in Colorado. Their discussions revealed how they perceived each group as serving a different role than that of networks of forest collaborative groups in other states or a network that collaborative leaders in Colorado have envisioned.

Here is a summary of how participants overall described existing groups, including why they do not currently serve the functions that a network of collaboratives would:

- [Fire Adapted Colorado](#) (FACO) focuses on a broader set of stakeholders (e.g., local fire departments, landowners) and defensible space towards wildfire risk mitigation. FACO provides an important forum for sharing lessons learned about leveraging resources and implementation strategies among their members. Several people suggested that a network could help connect FACO with which types of learning would be valuable for collaboratives.
 - [Wildfire Adapted Partnership](#) in Southwest Colorado works with many different forest collaborative groups in that part of the state but does not inform or track efforts in other parts of the state or at a state level. They are a member or participant in many of the collaborative groups in SW Colorado and help connect people and efforts locally.
 - [West Region Wildfire Council](#) (WRWC) focuses on education about fire mitigation to increase fire adaptiveness, promoting fire risk reduction planning, and providing funding to assist landowners with fuels reduction projects. They focus on landowners in several western Colorado counties. Most participants did not discuss WRWC and did not view them as significantly supporting collaborative groups or collectively representing their interests at a statewide level.
 - [Coalitions and Collaboratives](#) (CoCo) was viewed as a group that provides financial and technical assistance to collaborative groups and organizations. They have more of a national level focus. Their Executive Director has a strong history of supporting collaborative groups in Colorado, serves on the Forest Health Advisory Council, and is a source of information about state and national level efforts for some collaboratives in Colorado who have a relationship with that person. A couple peoples said a network could help CoCo think about where or how to invest in collaborative groups in Colorado.
 - [Southern Rockies Fire Science Network](#) was viewed as a source of scientific information for collaborative groups and others by sharing fire-related reports and other publications. They also host webinars and support the annual wildfire conference in Colorado. People viewed the network as doing more one-way information sharing than facilitating shared learning or two-way dialogue between groups and agencies.
 - [Colorado Forest Restoration Institute](#) (CFRI) was recognized as a group that supports collaborative organizations and efforts by providing scientific information or interpretation of how scientific information might apply to a particular landscape or effort. A couple people also mentioned how CFRI has helped support collaboration by providing resources and support on effective approaches to collaboration.
 - [Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes](#) (SWERI) is a group of three university-based restoration institutes (including CFRI). SWERI was mostly discussed in their high-level role supporting collaborative efforts by providing scientific data and recently organizing an annual workshop to share lessons learned about collaboration. The institutes do not represent collaborative groups at local, statewide, or regional scales.
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- [Western Collaborative Conservation Network](#) (WCCN) was described as supporting collaborative efforts across the West. They focus less on implementation and more on skills and tools for collaboration and sharing information. Their scale is well beyond Colorado and their membership includes many organization, agencies, and different types of natural resource place-based collaboratives.
- [Colorado Watershed Assembly](#) (CWA) provides small grants to watershed group, shares updates and opportunities to members, and co-hosts that annual Sustaining Colorado Watersheds conference. Watershed groups supported by CWA tend to focus on riparian and river restoration and river flows.
- [Wildfire Watershed Protection Group](#) was mentioned by a couple people regarding the group's role in connecting agencies, funders, and utility companies to conduct assessments and implement projects to address watershed health. They do serve networking functions between those entities, but participants did not see much overlap between them and a statewide network of collaboratives. WWPG and the High Country Forest Collaborative are driven especially by volunteer efforts by Brad Piehl at JW Associates. In recent years, Brad has been coordinating the annual forest collaboratives summit.
- [Mountain Studies Institute](#) (MSI) was brought up frequently, especially among participants in Southwest Colorado, as serving various roles with local collaboratives (e.g., facilitation, scientific data collection, and information sharing). A staff member sits on the Forest Health Advisory Council, so people connected to that person are more aware of the Council's work. There is not a formal structure or platform for coordination, nor do they serve as a collective voice for collaboratives statewide.

To be clear, these groups were generally highly regarded and valued but their work was perceived as occurring at a different scale or scope than a network of forest collaboratives could provide. In particular, the two main niches described as missing were 1) providing a formal, structured space for place-based, forest collaboratives to interact and learn from each other, and 2) providing a state-level collective voice for collaboratives to ensure programs and policies support collaboratives.

Forest collaboratives in Colorado face significant capacity and funding limitations. They strongly desire a statewide network to facilitate coordination and shared learning across groups, help groups build capacity, serve as a collective voice to state-level leaders, and help develop programs and policies that support their groups and their work on the ground.

Collaboratives need increased and more flexible funding for capacity building and implementation.

Funding was a major concern for most groups. There are limited grants available for them that pay for elements required to build capacity. For example, many people noted that some grants will not allow them to bill for time spent communicating and relationship building, even though that is a main aspect of their work. They spend a significant amount of their time chasing money to sustain basic functions of the group, leaving little time to focus on planning and implementation.

Another common limitation was lacking funds specifically to pay for facilitation or coordination. Participants noted that without a facilitator or someone "steering the ship" it was difficult for the group to stay on track and for agencies to feel confident investing significant time or funding into them. They thought a network could assist shared learning about facilitation, and perhaps help collaboratives share resources and jointly fund a third-party facilitator that could help multiple groups.

Collaboratives in Colorado need ways to improve efficiency in coordination and communication between them.

Many people noted how collaborative groups members or leaders are often volunteering their time to participate. A lot of time is spent coordinating with local partners and seeking solutions to problems facing them. Many people said a network would be welcomed if it made those efforts more efficient for them.

Most collaboratives we spoke with described relationships with other local groups or partners. However, every collaborative group participant said a more formal, structured system for communication and promoting shared learning across groups would be highly valuable. They recognized that groups across the state likely face similar problems as they do. There are likely many innovative solutions out there that they may not be aware of without some formal channels for sharing that type of information. Many groups do not have the time, or the connections, to know who to call to ask how to handle different issues or challenges. Participants said a network would help formalize and centralize that space for peer learning.

Another main challenge facing many collaboratives was how to address biomass utilization in a cost-effective manner. They felt that shared learning through a network, including close involvement with industry representatives, would help create and share innovative solutions. Many people felt that if an approach or solution worked in one region or landscape, it could work in another.

Collaboratives need more training and resources to collaboratively implement projects.

Several participants noted a lack of training and knowledge among their group about how to participate in the NEPA assessment process to help the agency move that process along. Others described limitations among group members in understanding how to seek, hire, and monitor contractors working on implementation. While many groups felt they generally had access to scientific information to inform their decisions from existing groups (CFRI, MSI, SRFSN, RMRS, universities), they often lacked the capacity to interpret and discuss it consistently across group members. Having a third party help them step back and understand the science in their context would be helpful.

Overall, many people said they lacked the resources or tools for learning “how to collaborate.” Agency leaders and other organizations noted this limitation as well. Participants discussed these challenges in the context of where a network might be able to provide some resources or guidance on these types of training and capacity issues they face regularly.

Collaboratives lack a collective voice and desire state-level representation to better support them.

Another important need that consistently came up among collaboratives was they lacked a collective voice to represent them among state level leaders, agencies, and policy makers. Many said they do not have the time or resources to connect with higher level leaders to share their concerns, needs, and successes. They wanted a person or network to help elevate their stories to the state level.

People said it would be valuable to have a network facilitator who agencies, policy makers, and collaborative groups could go to learn or share information with other parties effectively. They also felt a network or facilitator in this role could help inform higher level policies, strategies, and funding mechanisms that reflected the challenges facing groups and types of support needed across groups.

There is a strong appetite for participation in a network of forest collaborative groups in Colorado. The biggest barrier to participation in a network would be time and capacity limitations.

Every collaborative group participant in this assessment expressed interest in a network. The concept of a network serving the functions described above was well received. In fact, one recently developed wildfire council emailed the lead author of this report when they heard about the assessment. They requested to be interviewed and said they wanted to join a network of forest collaborative groups.

The main barriers to participation in a network involve how much time an individual or group needs to invest. The question of if and how they would participate was difficult for most groups to consider in depth without knowing more about how a network would function, what it would do, how it would be structured, and what would be asked of participants or members. They suggested that a clear articulation of the specific values that a network added to existing resources for collaboratives and expectations for participation would be needed to determine the degree of interest and ability to participate.

Many collaboratives were unsure or unaware about the role of the Colorado Forest Health Advisory Council. They said a network could better ensure collaboratives' representation and communication with the Council.

Approximately 1/3rd of the participants followed the Council's updates or meetings. These participants were generally closely connected with Council members (typically Aaron Kimple or Carol Ekarius) and communicated with them regularly. These individuals had a more developed perception of the Council's higher-level role and potential than other participants, though they were unclear about the Council's impact on collaboratives and their awareness of collaboratives' needs and successes. Slightly more than 1/3rd of the participants was somewhat aware of the Council but also unsure what the Council's precise role or how it affected them. The other participants were completely unaware of the Council in any way.

Among those who were familiar with the Council, they were interested in having a more formal way to connect with the Council or having at least one seat or member who could explicitly represent collaborative groups and their interests. Given the uncertainty about the future of the Council pending the current legislative session, people were not sure of the best way to ensure collaborative representation on the Council. They generally felt that a network could at least serve as a liaison between the Council and the groups to make sure collaborative voices were elevated to that state level and that higher level issues and priorities were communicated effectively back to collaborative groups.

Collaboratives expressed mixed awareness and intentions regarding the State Forest Action Plan. There was also some confusion about different types and scales of assessments and prioritization processes.

Participants were generally aware of the State Forest Action Plan and some of them had provided input or attended a workshop or webinar during its development. Approximately half of the collaborative group participants said they would use the State Forest Action Plan to identify state-level priority areas that overlapped with their landscape. They would focus on those overlapping areas for preparing and submitting relevant grant proposals (e.g., Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) Grant Program). Others explained that their focus was more on their local landscape and they were less aware of how local priorities aligned with state-level priorities.

A couple people described a plethora of assessment and prioritization processes used across the state at different scales and that many local groups used their own processes that meet their needs and objectives.

They thought some streamlining or alignment across these processes would make sense. There were not strong or well-articulated suggestions for how a network might facilitate connections between collaborative groups and statewide plans. A few participants speculated that a network could help connect agencies and collaboratives in communities where those relationships are lacking and help facilitate plans and resources to implement projects on those landscapes that align with statewide goals.

Objective 3. Offer recommendations about the next steps for developing a network, including the responsibilities and roles of a network facilitator or other staff.

Develop outreach materials about this assessment and the network.

- Share this report with appropriate people to use the assessment findings as a foundation to develop the network collectively with collaborative groups and agencies.
- Hire a graphic designer to create two additional documents to share based on this assessment. Both documents should clearly articulate the values that a network adds to the existing context, including why collaboratives should participate and how it contributes to agency flagship targets (e.g., assisting agency efforts in implementing cross boundary projects across the state).
 1. A 1-page infographic about this assessment's findings, including methodologies, decision points, and other considerations to begin informing a new network. This would help illustrate the efforts that went into this assessment but also serve as a resource for other states or entities looking to develop similar networks.
 2. A 1-page document that highlights the main needs among Colorado collaborative groups, how a network can help, and a summary of network actions and deliverables, followed by an estimate of operating costs for the network.
- Develop a presentation or short video highlighting the findings from this report.
- These resources can be used together to solicit funding and garner broad support for the network.

Secure endorsement for the network, form a steering committee, and establish a facilitator position.

- Because of the importance of Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the Colorado State Forest Service in our statewide forest management and wildfire mitigation challenges, secure endorsement of a new network from the DNR Executive Director and our State Forester.
 - Establish funding commitments from federal, state, and/or private sources.
 - Form a steering or leadership committee to at least set up the network, and perhaps serve as a permanent function. Committee members should include core leaders in collaboration across the state, representatives from agencies and the Colorado Forest Health Advisory Council, and others who operate in this space and work with collaboratives.
 - With the steering committee, write a job description for the facilitator position that includes high-level roles and responsibilities and minimum and preferred qualifications.
 - With funders and the steering committee, decide where the network facilitator would be housed, then secure funding and hire a network facilitator.
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With the steering committee, create a three-year work plan for the network.

- Develop a three-year work plan with a leadership committee that outlines proposed goals and outcomes of a network throughout regular intervals and integrates the associated job description for a network facilitator and any other desired staff.
- Define who else is going to be involved in developing the network, when, and how.
- Articulate the value added from a network and what it does. Deliberately address the concerns that were raised by a few interviewees about overlap with existing organizations and structures.
- Continue organizing and formalize the annual collaboratives conference or workshop in Colorado. Consider alignment with FACO's Colorado Wildfire Conference.
- Determine any structural and governance decisions for a network. Who will make decision and how? What types of communication will occur within the network and between the network and agencies or other groups?
- Earlier stages of the three-year plan may focus more on outreach and development, then later stages focusing more on implementation and delivering and adapting network products.
- Identify how the network can be flexible and adapt to changing social, political, and ecological conditions in Colorado that affect collaborative's needs and the space for collaboration.
- Consider network membership. Determine the parameters for defining forest collaboratives and who would be included or invited to join a network. What will the expectation of members or participants be? Will there be varying levels of involvement; for example, might there be a core group of members who participate regularly and another level that receives communication but is otherwise not actively participation? Initial criteria for defining place-based forest collaboratives developed by a group of individuals associated with the annual forest summit:
 - Includes multiple partners/members/participants representing different organizations and a diversity of interests including non-governmental interests.
 - Is on-the-ground action oriented and works with local communities primarily to prioritize, design, and implement forest and/or fuels management projects.
 - Has a specific and limited geographic focus such as that of a forest, county, or watershed (place based).
 - Presently designs and supports projects extending across landowner jurisdictions.
 - Engages in a sustained process of interaction and/or consensus-building.
 - Self identifies as a collaborative of diverse interests for the above purposes.

With the steering committee, determine what exactly a network facilitator would do and how much time would it take.

Based on this assessment, several main functions of a network facilitator are recommended:

- Building relationships with forest collaborative groups in Colorado and maintaining communication with them to better understand their landscape, goals, needs, and successes. This involves site visits and ways of connecting in person and virtually.
 - Reaching out to state and federal agencies, and conservation NGOs, and other landowners or stakeholders to build relationships and share the message of the network.
 - Using those outreach efforts, knowledge gained, and relationships built to elevate the collaboratives voices and tell their stories statewide to ensure that programs are developed, and resources are provided that meet the needs of the groups.
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- Organizing an annual conference or workshop and inviting agency members, collaboratives, other organizations, and state leaders to interact and learn together.
- Facilitating opportunities for shared learning about best practices and innovation through webinars, newsletters, online forums, personal interactions, and other means identified or preferred by collaborative groups.
- Identifying training and other capacity needs among forest collaboratives and working with others towards providing those opportunities.
- Coordinating with the state Forest Health Advisory Council (if not a member), agencies, and state leaders as the collective voice of forest collaborative groups in state level conversations, plans, and strategies.
- Tracking local and statewide efforts and resources to identify opportunities for collaboration across collaboratives and agencies and alignment between local and state-level priorities towards SFAP implementation.

The amount of time needed for a network facilitator would depend on the specific work developed and any other input from a steering committee. Based on the spectrum of time commitments and staff across existing networks in other states, it is likely that a position would be approximately .50 FTE. However, a network with more than 30 groups is likely to require more staff capacity and other resources.

Additional considerations

- Consult with core leaders of collaboration in Colorado for advice coordinating next steps after receiving endorsement from state agencies or departments. There are two general options:
 - 1) *Pilot the network as a shorter-term project.* Secure 3-6 months of funding, hire a facilitator or other position housed in an existing organization (e.g., CCC, DNR, CSFS, FACO, or WCCN, or other organizations) to help develop the strategic plan and secure longer-term funding and support and make more permanent decision about directions.
 - 2) *Commit to standing up the network immediately and for the long term.* Secure three years of funding commitment from agencies and other sources, determine where a network and the facilitator will be housed, and hire a network facilitator to lead the development and implementation of the three-year strategic plan.
 - Keep the momentum going. Maintain regular conversations with agency and state leaders already involved or supportive. Continue conversations with incoming state and regional foresters. Discuss opportunities to embed this network into the culture of collaboration in Colorado.
 - Connect with someone from the DNR's Colorado Water Conservation Board (e.g., Chris Sturm). The CWCB is working with a [consulting firm, Brown and Caldwell, on updating the state water plan](#). We heard that they recently sent out a survey to water groups in April and one question was if respondents wanted a statewide network of watershed groups.
 - Take a strategic and deliberate approach to building trust and relationships among agencies, collaboratives, organizations, private landowners, and other stakeholders. Learn best practices from existing efforts and organizations (e.g., Western Collaborative Conservation Network).
 - There are many key, relevant lessons in the literature about policy implementation and organizational change. There is also a wealth of literature about setting up effective networks. That information should be systematically reviewed and synthesized by the network facilitator.
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Summary

This assessment sought to describe the need for a network of place-based forest collaboratives in Colorado, understand the appetite for and barriers to participation, and list potential specific responsibilities of a network facilitator. Findings from this assessment verify what collaborative leaders in Colorado have envisioned and experienced for years.

Agencies, collaborative groups, and other organizations in Colorado see the need for a network of forest collaborative groups to:

- Facilitate shared learning, collegiality, and relationships among collaboratives, and between collaboratives, agencies, and other partners.
- Help collaboratives coordinate efforts and leverage resources to get more work done in the forests.
- Serve as a collective voice for the collaborative groups to statewide agencies, policy makers, and other leaders to share collaboratives' success stories, challenges, and needs.
- Assist in developing state level programs, funding, and policies that support collaborative groups in ways that they need support to build capacity and increase implementation.

Participants in other states confirmed that networks in their states are providing these types of support. Networks provide value through improved communication, capacity, coordination, and ultimately, getting more work accomplished in the forest to protect communities and improve forest health. However, networks in other states face many of the same capacity and funding limitations as individual collaborative groups. Agencies, state legislatures, communities, utility companies, and other stakeholders consistently articulate the need for supporting local collaborative groups to address local needs and accomplish statewide priorities. However, the long term and flexible funding that collaborative groups, and a network, need is just not there yet.

Colorado has an opportunity to change this imbalance by moving beyond rhetoric and investing deeply in its forest collaborative groups. A key step, clearly supported by this assessment, is to invest in a network that can support and guide collaborative efforts and align them with state-level priorities, resources, and leaders. A network endorsed and funded by the state, federal and state agencies, and other key partners sends a message of mutual support geared towards addressing important cross-boundary forest health and wildfire mitigation issues. That network can carry that message broadly and build a coalition that gives collaboratives the support and recognition they deserve.

Forming a leadership or advisory committee and hiring a facilitator will be important next steps. Then, developing work plans and strategies, articulating the value added of a network in clear terms to potential members and agencies, developing communication and outreach plans, and building relationships will be essential for securing funding for the network and harnessing the interest and desire among many entities to be a part of this network. Through these coordinated and strategic efforts towards clearly defined outcomes and milestones, an effective network of collaborative groups in Colorado can have a significant impact on collaborative groups, and more broadly on the culture and outcomes of collaborative forest management in Colorado.

Appendix A. Funding Models for Networks of Forest Collaboratives

Overview

Funding models to support networks of forest collaboratives, including network facilitator positions and related expenses, vary widely. Here, we summarize findings about network funding models from interviews with facilitators and others from networks in Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, as well as a review of official reports and other materials for those networks.

Montana

The Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) uses The Blackfoot Challenge (a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Ovando, MT) as its fiscal agent for MFCN agreements, contracts, and funding. The MFCN has recently operated on approximately \$60,000 annually (see table below and p.19 of [MFCN's 2020 Annual Report](#) for a breakdown). More than half of the funding is allocated to contractors for report writing and layout, printing, and other services to support the network. MFCN has two paid positions, a coordinator, and an administrator, who each log ~40 hours per month. The network's annual workshop is supported by a portion of the MFCN budget and through sponsorships and donations from conservation organizations, the timber industry, a grant from the Society for American Foresters, and other diverse organizations and sources.

MFCN Financial Data Breakdown, July 2019 – June 2020

Expenses		Income	
Supplies	\$95	Corporate	\$850
Meeting expenses	\$242	Foundation	\$2,150
Contractors	\$36,191	Individual	\$1,275
Project costs	\$3,071	Federal/State	\$51,594
Event	\$7,439		
Admin. Costs	\$3,352		
Indirect	\$5,062		
Total	\$55,452	Total	\$55,869

Slightly more than half of MFCN's funding comes from the state, the Bureau of Land Management, and the NRCS contributing similar amounts, and approximately \$4,000 from corporate, foundation, or individual donations. The Forest Service has provided the remainder in the past (recently ~\$36,000), however the Region 1 Office has indicated they will no longer be contributing funds to the network due to legal concerns. The MFCN coordinator is currently working with state leaders to have funds designated through their legislative appropriations from funds the Governor made available for collaborative restoration work, including to the network and to the Montana Watershed Coordination Council.

Washington and Oregon

The Washington Forest Collaborative Network (WFCN) and the Oregon Forest Collaborative Network (OFCN) are administered and coordinated by Sustainable Northwest (SNW), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Portland, OR. SNW has an agreement with the Forest Service Region 6 Office that gives SNW funding to provide a variety of technical assistance to agency efforts, including supporting SNW staff to coordinate the OR and WA networks. The amount of funding provided to SNW from the Forest Service varies annually, largely dependent on how supportive the Regional leadership and staff are towards collaboration. Annual funding for SNW to provide staff time to coordinate the networks has ranged in recent years from approximately \$15,000 to \$60,000 annually for *each* network.

SNW also organizes the Pacific Northwest Forest Collaboratives Workshop aimed at Oregon and Washington collaborative groups, agencies, and other partners. Expenses for the workshop can surpass \$50,000 to cover SNW staff time coordinating the event, securing a space, and providing food and travel scholarships for attendees. Funding support for the workshop comes from the Forest Service, the WA DNR, the OR Department of Forestry, timber companies, ski resorts, and other organizations through agreements, donations, and sponsorships. The WFCN also hosts an annual summit for WA collaborative groups, there is currently not a separate summit for Oregon groups.

Idaho

The Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP) recently became incorporated and is working towards a 501(c)3 designation. They are relatively less organized and less funded compared to the other networks. IFRP's primary functions are managing a non-profit Board of Directors; hosting an annual conference that aims to connect collaborative groups, agencies, and other stakeholders; and hosting or sharing [webinars or workshops](#) throughout the year to for sharing information that supports collaborative groups and efforts. IFRP operates on less than \$15,000 annually and those funds come entirely from their annual conference. They pay approximately \$5,000 per year for website management and \$3,000 per year for a National Forest Foundation staff member to facilitate meetings of the Board of Directors, and the remainder of the funding goes back to supporting the annual conference.

Funding for the annual conference (and IFRP) comes from attendee registration fees and donations and sponsorships mostly through conservation organizations, timber companies, and a small amount from the Forest Service and the state. IFRP is hesitant to receive funding from the Forest Service or other agencies to directly support the network out of concerns that network constituents would perceive the network as biased towards agency initiatives or perspectives because of the funding.

Key Takeaways

- Each network is interested in securing a more consistent source of funding to reduce time and energy spent seeking funding and to encourage longer term planning. Several people described having funding for a network included in a state or federal agency budget line item as ideal.
 - Currently, a diversity of public and private funding sources supports each network through direct agreements, donations, and, especially in Idaho, annual conference proceeds.
 - Funding for networks primarily supports facilitation/coordination (e.g., staff time, travel), website maintenance, reporting and communication (e.g., sharing reports, social media management), and covering costs for meetings, events, and other projects or tasks as needed.
 - Funding for events is often separate from funding to support the network administration (except for IFRP), however the annual events and other types of support provided by the networks are clearly related.
 - No network has its own, separate office space. The SNW staff who support the OR and WA networks staffed in SNW's office space, and those overhead costs are built into their current funding arrangements. There is no official space for the MT and ID networks.
 - Each network also relies significantly on volunteerism and much of the time spent to coordinate, administer, and otherwise support the network is volunteered or provided at highly discounted rates. This situation is generally considered less than ideal for several reasons, including that it makes delivering consistent support for the network substantially more challenging.
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