
REPORT TO THE USDA FOREST SERVICE
ON PHASE II OF THE PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

“LEARN WHILE DOING:”
A MODEL FOR WORKING IN COLLABORATION AND THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

In response to the USDA Forest Service's need for greater competency in the arena of natural resource management partnerships, this report presents a model for partnership development that delivers internal and external resources and support to the front-line managers and communities of interest involved in on-the-ground collaborative efforts. As its name suggests, the "Learn While Doing" model for partnership development is intended to help the Forest Service and its partners overcome barriers and navigate the various stages of an on-going collaborative decision-making process by providing resources (e.g., training, mentoring, coaching, and facilitation) on demand. This collaborative process is outlined in terms of six phases (assessing, preparing, framing issues, making collaborative decisions, implementing decisions, and maintaining relationships) with basic outcomes and skill needs outlined for each. The model then identifies several types of internal and external support that can be called upon to help the Forest Service and its partners work through a particular stage or meet a particular skill need. Included among these supporting resources are "master performers," who are experienced Forest Service employees available to lend coaching and advice in partnership situations. A number of existing and customizable training and mentoring courses are also listed. To ensure that the process of partnership development is examined across the agency, a panel of observers is incorporated into the model, with the responsibility of learning from partnership processes evolving on the ground and applying that knowledge toward improving the agency's institutional capacity for partnerships and collaboration. Suggestions for applying the model to existing programs that require a collaborative approach to implementation, such as the National Fire Plan, are given along with recommendations for involving volunteer units and communities in testing the partnership development model.

KEYWORDS: leadership, collaboration, partnerships, skills

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INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service has long struggled with how to be an effective facilitator of conflicting perspectives regarding public land management issues. In its attempt to address this challenge, the agency has focused on analyzing its abilities to form partnerships with outside stakeholders and to advance conclusions reached through the collaborative decision-making process.

In 1989, the need for more meaningful public engagement was highlighted in a review of the implementation of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), which revealed that the public overwhelmingly felt they had been left out of land management planning decisions. This sentiment arose despite the fact that the agency had held thousands of public meetings, workshops, and field reviews.

The Forest Service received more feedback on this topic during the Reinvention Town Meetings held in the mid-1990s, when the public was asked to describe the “Forest Service of the Future.” The message that emerged from most, if not all, of the meetings was that the Forest Service of the Future should first of all be *an educator*. Meeting attendees said, “The Forest Service has so much knowledge and so many talented people that could help us learn more about ‘our land.’” Secondly, it was conveyed that the Forest Service of the Future should be *a convener and facilitator*. The message from the public on this point was, “We want the Forest Service to bring us together to make decisions about ‘our land.’”

In 1997, the Forest Service took its first major step toward trying to understand what is needed to bring about the changes necessary for collaboration and partnerships to be accepted and implemented throughout the agency. This effort, known as the Estill Task Force, sought information, advice, and opinions from over 1,000 people -- including a diversity of Forest Service employees and members of the public from around the country. Unfortunately, the resultant “Estill Report” was not immediately given the attention it deserved, sending a strong message through the organization that this effort was not sincere.

The Estill Report was eventually resurrected and updated, and some of the recommendations were acted upon. A number of task forces have been formed over the past several years, tackling various aspects of the barriers to collaboration identified in this report and others. In addition, core partnership skills have been defined, and numerous out-service sources of skill training have come on the market in the last three to six years. The agency has also begun to recognize some of its early innovators at the ground level, who have been using collaboration and partnership approaches to advance projects and activities in many locations. However, something is still missing.

In research carried out by the Pinchot Institute for the preceding Phase I Report on Partnership Development, experts in the field of collaborative natural resource management identified “organizational culture” as a significant barrier to the Forest Service moving forward in the arena of partnerships and collaboration at a more rapid pace. They also pointed out that many Forest Service employees still do not believe that the agency is sincere about using collaboration as a way to make decisions.

Despite the number of signals indicating that the Forest Service should adopt collaboration as its way of doing business -- such as the Committee of Scientists report,^Ψ the specific language in the National Fire Plan appropriation language requiring community involvement in decisions, and indeed, a kind of movement in the country as a whole toward local decision making -- there is still doubt. What is going on?

Do policies, structure, and processes determine organizational culture or does culture drive policies, structure and processes? Could it be that Forest Service employees are “reading the tea leaves” and are not seeing enough support coming from the institution to approach things any differently today than they did yesterday? Whatever the chicken-and-egg situation may be, problems are bound to arise if land managers are asked to shift away from their traditional technical role in favor of one of convener/facilitator and are not given the support they need to make this transition. If agency structure and processes are not adjusted to reflect this changing role, then no amount of verbal affirmation from headquarters will make a lasting difference.

Collaboration and partnerships have no true programmatic home in the Forest Service. In fact, these ways of doing business have been viewed more as vehicles for getting through problems at-hand than as instigators of the cultural shift that needs to be institutionalized throughout the organization. The roots of traditional Forest Service culture can be traced to the Progressive Era, which emulated the notion that science and a corps of professionals can deliver better decisions about natural resources than the general public. For sixty years, the agency was so successful in operating under this mantra that it did not recognize the need to change when confronted with value-laden issues for which there was no easy solution. Under the old model, the agency framed a given problem, devised a solution, and then sold its ideas to the public. Today, the interest base for natural resources issues is remarkably broad, information is readily available, and the public has easy access to the courts and to policymakers, assuring that the Forest Service cannot rely solely on its old leadership patterns to solve problems.

As the American experiment with democracy continues to mature, the view of what constitutes leadership must simultaneously evolve. Public participation, or at least the way it has generally been conducted, has served as a substitute for true leadership for too long. The required public participation conducted under NFMA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has deflected the attention away from the growing need for leadership within natural resource agencies to address problems that lack easy answers. These are the types of problems that call for adaptive changes within all communities of interests in order to reach mutually agreed-upon solutions. Collaboration and partnerships are the means to achieve such ends.

A Model for Partnership Development

This document communicates the results of the second phase of the Forest Service’s request of the Pinchot Institute to design a core skill development model for a “Partnership Development Program.” It is based upon the information gathered through interviews (Phase I) with more than twenty-five experts in partnerships and collaboration as well as the Pinchot Institute’s own experience from nearly ten years of engagement with the Forest Service and its partners on the

^Ψ The Committee of Scientists was convened by then –Secretary of Agriculture Glickman in 1997 and released its final report in 1999. The Committee was tasked with recommending ways in which the Forest Service could better manage its forests and grasslands. Among other things, the scientists recommended that the agency engage in more partnerships with outside groups such as industry, recreation and environmental organization, and other agencies when making land management decisions.

subject of collaborative decision making regarding routine, value-laden natural resource management issues.^ψ

After conducting the interviews required of Phase I of the Partnership Development Program, the Pinchot Institute produced a report that highlighted several distinct skill sets that are critical to building successful partnerships: relationships building, understanding communities, facilitation/mediation, business skills, and monitoring. This report also outlined the most significant barriers that the agency faces in partnerships: internal culture, agency procedures, lack of skills, and lack of internal support.

In the second phase of this work, reported here, the Pinchot Institute has incorporated these findings into the design of a core skill development model. This Model for Collaboration and Partnerships represents one of many possible approaches for building new leadership capacity in land management. Its strengths are that it fits the culture of the agency, it recognizes the strong assets and energy that agency employees already bring to working with others, and it presents a flexible approach to current and dynamic problems. It is hoped that the implementation of the “Learn While Doing” Model will help equip front-line managers and their partners in collaboration with the skills and resources necessary to build effective partnerships.

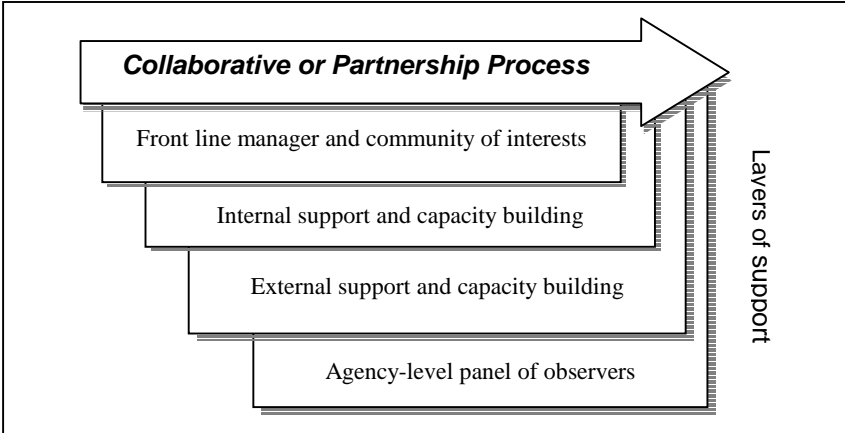
^ψ During this period, the Pinchot Institute designed and conducted workshops aimed at cultural change in the Forest Service regarding leadership processes necessary for engaging the public. Additionally, the Pinchot Institute has been associated with numerous special agency task force activities aimed at identifying barriers and gaps, and assessing existing training programs.

THE “LEARN WHILE DOING” MODEL FOR COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Learn While Doing Model for Collaboration and Partnerships is a systematic, yet flexible approach to partnership situations and collaborative decisionmaking that enables Forest Service managers, faced with the responsibility of carrying out activities with outside input, to draw upon internal and external training, mentoring, and other resources at critical times throughout various phases of activity. This model is based upon a characterization of the partnership development process, which can be broken down into six common stages. Briefly, they are: *assessing, preparing, framing issues, making collaborative decisions, implementing decisions, and maintaining relationships*. Each phase is important to building effective partnerships that can accommodate change and, as will be discussed in greater detail below, each stage has a requisite set of skill needs and resources.

Built into the Learn While Doing model are various kinds of resources that a manager or Forest Service team can rely on for support at any of the stages of the partnership process. The first level of support is the front-line manager, who comes to the partnership or project with a skill set, an expectation to engage the public and partners in a meaningful way, and a basic understanding of the steps required for building effective partnerships. At that manager’s disposal are a host of internal support mechanisms provided by the agency in the form of task groups such as the Collaboration Support Team, Collaborative Resource Teams, and individual “master performers, who can provide experienced-based knowledge and mentoring at key points in the process. A third layer of support is the external resources that the Forest Service could keep on retainer for immediate help in training, mentoring, facilitation, and mediation at opportune times during the partnership process. These outside experts may be academics, professional service providers with the non-profit and for-profit sectors, employees from other agencies, community leaders, or retired Forest Service employees with good track records in collaboration.

The Learn While Doing model also incorporates a monitoring or observer component that follows the overall progress of the partnership process, evaluates how the various layers of support are functioning, and provides feedback to the agency of regarding areas of needed improvement in partnering and collaboration. In charge of the monitoring are overseers, designated by the Forest Service, who are not directly involved in the project, but who can examine the collaborative processes at work and further the extent of institutional learning that can be gained from such an analysis of such experiences. The overseers may help out a process by making recommendations to those involved about where they can find the training, coaching, or support needed. They are also responsible for making sure that internal or external support is available to address those needs that arise during the partnership process.



Characteristics of the Model

The Learn While Doing model for collaboration and partnership development was designed with the following characteristics:

- Supports real life challenges, project, activities
- Has adaptive features built in
- Uses success stories
- Uses master performers
- Serves all players
- Improves institutional processes
- Demonstrates top level support for collaboration/partnerships
- Provides assistance and/or training at all stages
- Supports “bottom up” philosophy
- Provides flexibility in addressing value-laden issues
- Draws on help from a number of sources
- Recognizes and ties into findings, recommendations, and outcomes of related studies and taskforces, including:
 - Service-wide Leadership Succession Plan
 - Service Leadership Workshops: “Leading Where You Are”
 - Forest Service Partnership Task Force:
 - Development of Policies
 - Articulation of the Leadership’s Direction
 - Simplification of Grants & Agreements Processes and the Development of Related Tools
 - Review of Pertinent Budget and Financial Accountability Issues
 - Establishment of Incentives to Work in Partnerships
 - Determination of Core Skill Competencies and Related Training Needs
 - Assessment of Organizational Structure and Identification of Staffing Needs (in terms of supporting partnership work)
 - Creation of a Partnership Resource Center and Network
 - Stewardship Contracting Pilot evaluations
 - Community Forestry Restoration Program

Components of the Model

More than a recommendation for training in partnership development, the Learn While Doing model suggests a method for applying numerous existing and developing resources to specific situations where the environment is ripe. In order for managers, partners, and the Forest Service as an institution to get the most from this applied learning, the model contains the following components.

The Learn While Doing model provides support targeted toward the implementation of a project, process, or activity. It does this in several ways. First, most learning in collaborative natural resource management occurs in connection with existing, on-the-ground activity and therefore coaching, mentoring, and even classroom instruction are best shaped around existing situations that encourage managers to directly apply what they have learned. Second, building learning into collaborative projects reinforces the idea that partnerships and collaboration should become a regular part of a manager’s approach to work and not merely something to consider while attending a training workshop. Third, partnerships require a variety of different skills at different times and thus training is most effective if it can be specific to that particular stage of a partnership process. Fourth, the elements of the partnership process do not have a specific

organizational home within the Forest Service and thus will not be given the appropriate attention and resources unless they are tied to the success of a particular task.

The Learn While Doing model supports managers with on-call “master performers” and existing or emerging agency support teams such as the Collaborative Resource Teams. The Forest Service has many excellent leaders and effective managers who have found countless ways to work successfully with partners, the public, and communities of interest. These practitioners can provide a wide range of support at any stage of a collaborative or partnership process, whether it be in the form of facilitating meetings with diverse stakeholders, coaching a manager through a new challenge, or recommending the appropriate agreement to be used to authorize the partnership. The Learn While Doing model sets the expectation that resources are made available up-front to enable experts to be brought in on short notice to help managers properly orchestrate a collaborative project.

The Learn While Doing model requires expert on-staff skills in process facilitation. Most of the issues a public land manager has to deal with are value-laden and will require some degree of participation from communities of interest in the assessment and decision-making process. The agency is being pushed to give stakeholders a larger role in land management. Examples of this emphasis include the National Fire Plan, the Committee of Scientists report, proposed legislation to carry out the Healthy Forest Initiative, and many in-house initiatives to improve the agency’s authority and capacity to build partnerships. The Forest Service can counter a current climate of crisis and opposition by building relationships with and between interested parties. This includes a concerted effort to make the Forest Service a more integral part of communities and to broaden the agency’s priorities with an eye toward the problems these communities face. To manage stakeholder participation productively, almost all successful collaborative efforts rely on a good process facilitator. With multiple collaborative efforts going on simultaneously on any given forest or district, there is ample demand for trained facilitators.

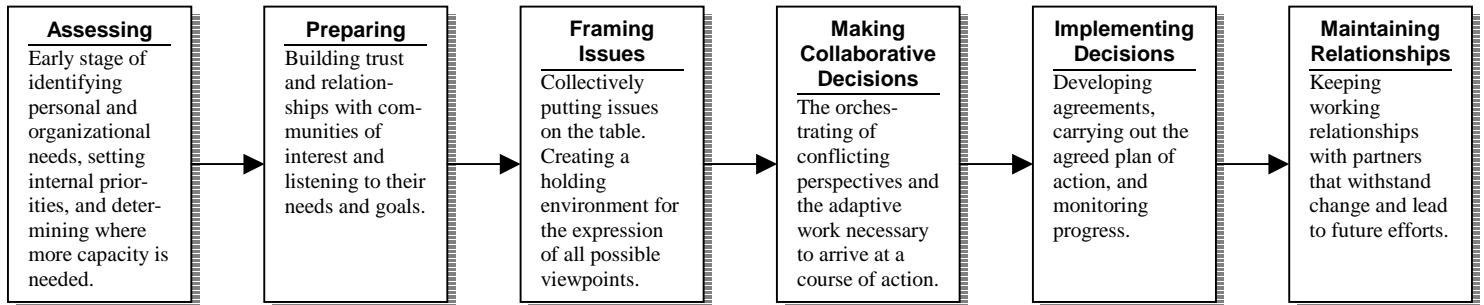
The Learn While Doing model draws on the support of external experts who are available on demand to help at appropriate stages of a partnering process. Almost all collaborative efforts aimed at working through value-laden issues reach one or more deadlocks (firewalls), and outside expert intervention is necessary to help the efforts break through and move on. This kind of outside intervention by experts is needed on short notice, and the Learn While Doing model supports an on-call delivery mechanism for such services. Delays can be deadly to the collaborative process. Often the administrative and procurement tools of the agency move too slowly to secure this help in a timely manner, and the effort is set back or completely collapses. Under the Learn While Doing model, outside sources for process facilitation, conflict resolution, training, and mentoring will be ready to be brought in on contract.

The Learn While Doing model contains a monitoring component in the form of observers who examine and learn from partnership processes, identify institutional barriers, and improve the support available to managers on the ground. A national panel of observers will evaluate what is going on in real world collaborative/partnership activities and to translate their conclusions and recommendations into institutional policy, organizational structure, procedures and process improvements. In other words, the panel will define, refine, and adjust the institutional needs necessary to sustain an organization that is able to engage to quality collaborative efforts.

Structure of the Model

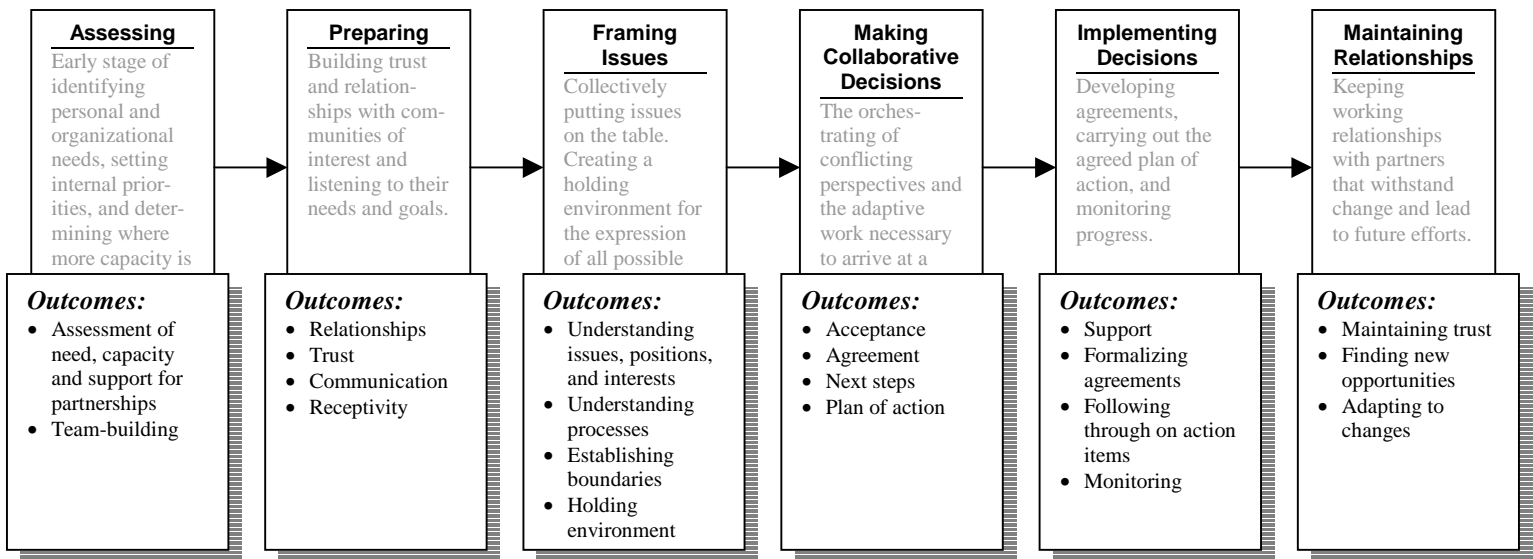
The Learn While Doing model is structured around a real world partnership process or collaborative situation. This process has been broken out into six stages diagramed below.

General Stages in a Collaboration and Partnership Process



Each of these stages represents a part of an overall process that is designed to lead to productive institutional relationships that can accommodate change. While a manager may not go through every stage as diagrammed, or might enter a collaborative situation somewhere in the middle, each one produces important outcomes that contribute to successful collaboration or partnerships.

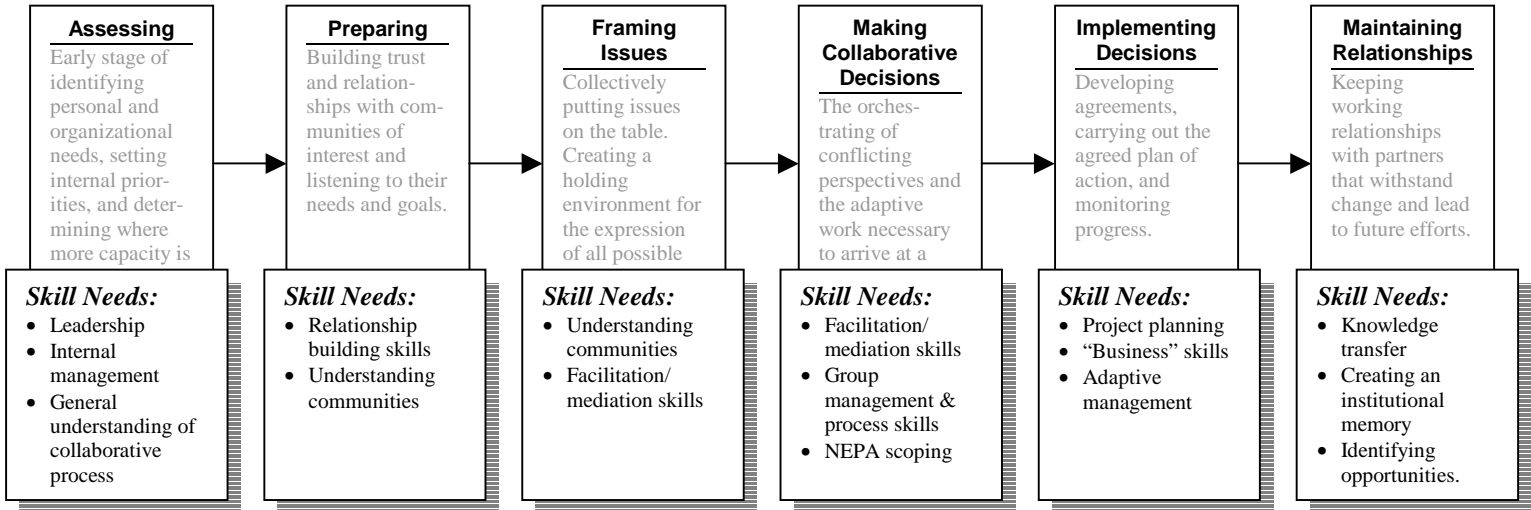
Outcomes From Each Stage



Sets of skills which the agency and communities of interest may need to master to be successful in the partnership realm can be defined for each stage. Skills may already exist among the players, may need to be acquired through some training or instruction, or they may be skills that

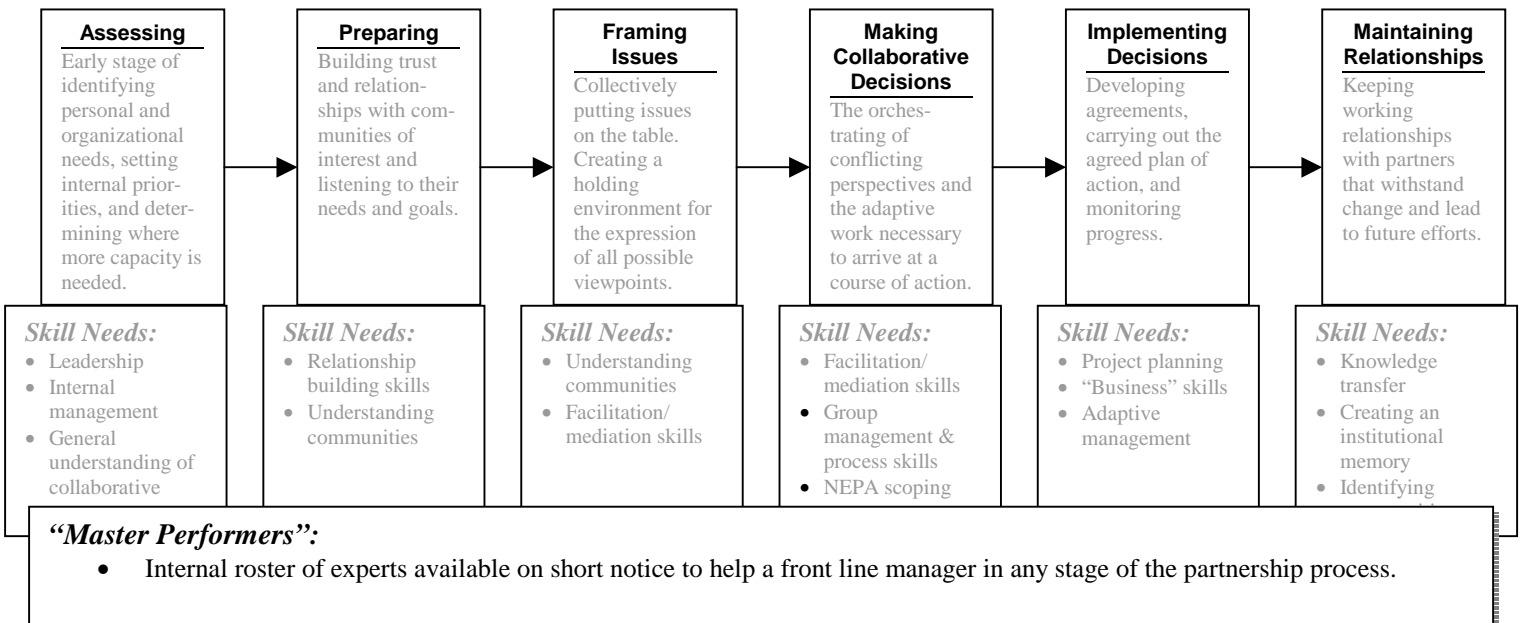
can be brought to the process by way of an outside contractor. Below are some of the skills recommended for success at different stages.

Skill Sets Required at Each Stage



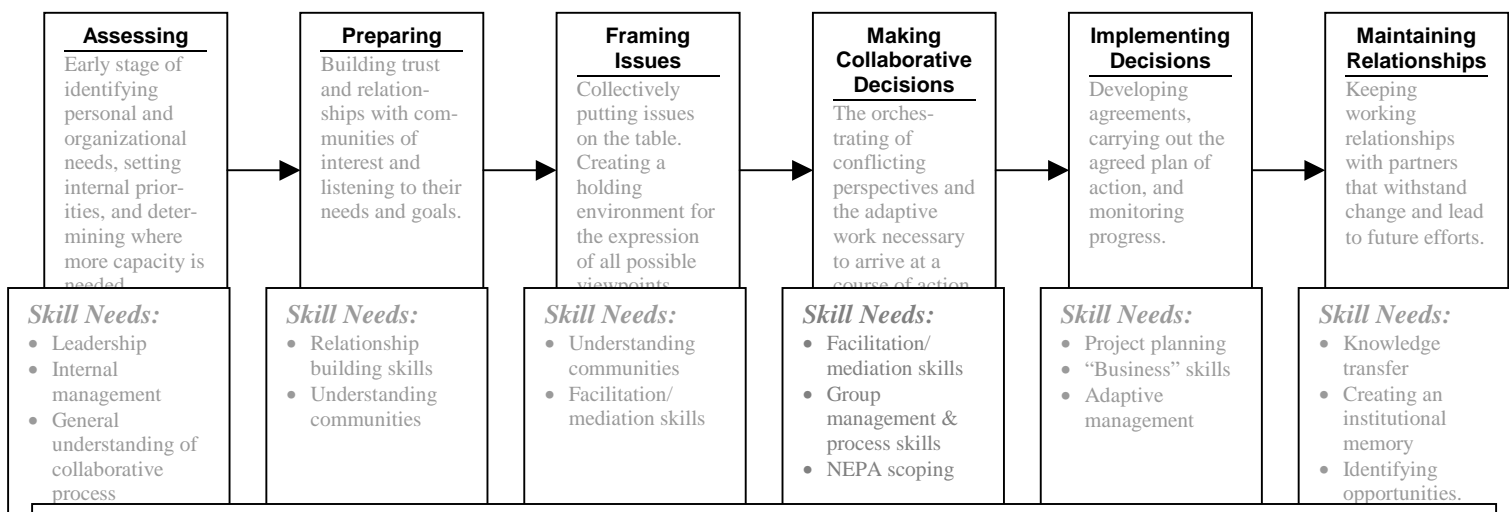
For each skill need, there is a host of supporting resources available that can help the participants through the partnership process. One of the most important resources, which already exists within the agency, are "master performers" or individuals with a high degree of experience in partnerships and collaborative resource management who can help a manager through a particular stage of the process. The Learn While Doing model uses master performers as one of the first lines of support for a manager. Ideally several "master performers" would be available on a roster in each region to assist managers at any stage on relatively short notice. Funds should be made available to cover the time and expenses of the master performers while they are lending their expertise.

Master Performers: First Line of Support for Managers



In addition, managers can call on a wider support structure that already exists within the agency or which is available to the agency through outside contractors, offering services in training, facilitation, coaching, and mentoring. The Forest Service already has begun a few key initiatives designed to provide internal support collaboration and partnerships, which directly link to the framework of the model. The Collaboration Support Team and the Partnership Task Force have developed a variety of resources to assist Forest Service employees. Additionally, many Forests and Regions have personnel trained in facilitation who can be called in to help with activities such as community meetings and divisive issues. Where further or more specialized help is needed, the Forest Service can turn to private industry, non-profit organizations, and academia for help in collaborative processes, training, or coaching. Many outside service providers can offer very specialized support, tailored to the issue and communities of interest involved. For example the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Mediation maintains a roster of more than one hundred neutral process facilitators who are available to help with conflict resolution and consensus building. The agency might consider keeping some of the better providers available through indefinite quantity contracts so that they can be called to help a process at very short notice. The following diagram indicates some of the internal and external resources that might be drawn upon at any stage in the partnership process.

Resources to Support the Front Line Manager



Internal Support and Expertise:

- **Collaboration Support Team:** A group of FS employees, experienced in working collaboratively and in partnerships, that was chartered to support collaboration in the FS by breaking down internal policy barriers and coaching and supporting other employees.
- **Technical expertise:** Experts, on-call who can provide specific support to a partnership at a particular stage. (Ex. someone skilled in developing partnership agreements; expert in public comment procedures.)
- **Facilitation specialists:** Trained staff on each forest that can assist with facilitation of meetings, esp. involving multiple interests.
- **Skills training:** Provide on-demand training in skills needed for a particular stage in partnership development. Offered through the FS and a number of external sources, including other agencies.
- **Mentoring Programs:** Short-Term: internship programs; Long-Term: mentor/mentoree relationship.

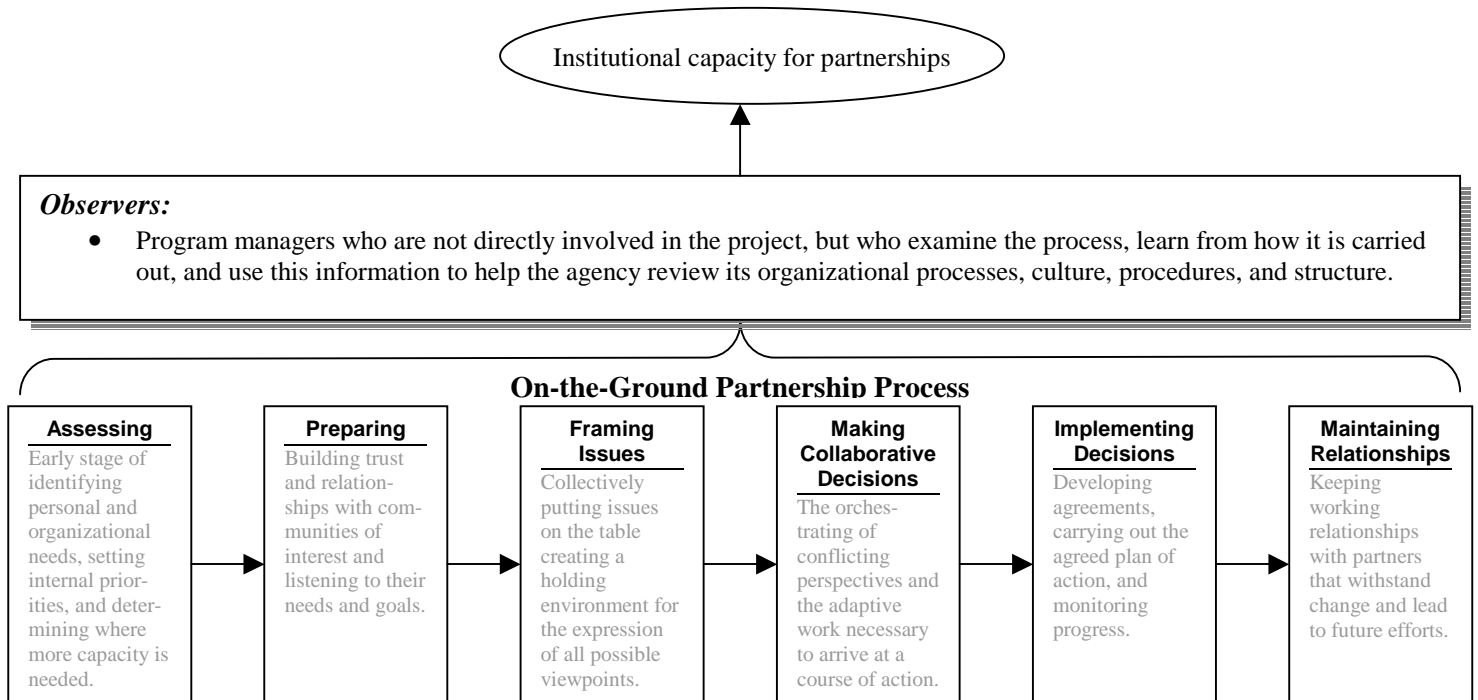
External Support and Expertise:

- **Collaborative Resource Teams (combined internal/external):** Groups, comprised of both FS and external "experts" located in geographic areas, whose members can serve as coaches and mentors to those working collaboratively by helping them obtain resources, resolve issues, and get in touch with others who may be of assistance.
- **Support on call:** Expertise that is kept on retainer and is available on short notice to intervene and help the Forest Service work through an appropriate stage, through timely training, coaching, facilitation, mediation, etc.
- **Skills training:** Provide on-demand training in skills needed for a particular stage in the partnership development. A number of external sources, including other agencies offer off-the-shelf and customized training for just about any stage.

Finally, the model is structured with a national panel of observers that is responsible for evaluating the progress of individual partnership development processes, measuring the impact of the support and training applied to those processes, and learning collectively from partnership processes throughout the agency. These observers play a critical role in affecting organizational change by using the progress of on-the-ground partnership processes to identify how the agency can eliminate institutional barriers and provide greater support to these processes. The observers would monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the support provided to managers and keep track of overall trends in how the Forest Service is fulfilling its role as a convener and facilitator in collaborative natural resource management decisionmaking. While managers and field staff

develop their capacity through applied learning, the observers in the model will ensure that the agency as a whole is learning and adaptively changing to improve its institutional capacity for partnering.

Monitoring the Partnership Process with Observers



Target Audiences

Forest Service Managers. Although the Learn While Doing model may theoretically be utilized by any of the participants in a given partnership, the model is designed with the needs of Forest Service front-line managers in mind. These individuals often have the responsibility of advancing activities, policies, ideas, projects or positions regarding value-laden issues facing the agency, and their success in resolving such issues depends on some level of support by those interested in or affected by the outcome. They can play a pivotal role in bringing the community of interest to the table to work collaboratively on value-laden issues. The partnership skills needed by the front-line manager are ancillary to the basic technical and managerial skills central to his/her job. Typical Forest Service front-line managers include District Rangers, Forest Supervisors, planners, public affairs specialists, and “process managers,” whose basic job is to facilitate and/or mediate group decisionmaking and communication.

Outside Beneficiaries. In addition to front-line managers, those outside the agency who participate in collaborative decision-making processes and form partnerships with the Forest Service will benefit from the support provided through the Learn While Doing model. Government agencies, elected local officials, non-governmental organizations, and interested members of the public who want or need a forum and process to work with the Forest Service in a constructive mode may find this model useful because it was designed to be applicable in real

world, multi-stakeholder situations. They will be closely involved as the agency builds its capacity because resources will be directly applied to existing, on-the-ground issues and initiatives. In addition, the partnership skill-building efforts and training programs undertaken by the Forest Service should engage all of their key partners in order to be most effective.

The Institution. Organizational change must occur at a variety of levels in a large agency. This model focuses a variety of resources on managers who are involved in advancing value-laden situations, but it also aims to build the overall capacity of the agency to support partnerships and collaborative work. It does so by way of “observers,” who are program managers, a step removed from the partnership/collaborative process, whose job it is to look at multiple partnership situations and determine how the agency needs to change its organizational processes, procedures, structure, and culture to be successful. Currently, there is no natural home in the agency for collaboration/partnerships to be treated in a holistic way. Therefore, the role of the “observers,” is critical to learning from on-the-ground efforts and using this experience to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of the managerial elements necessary for sustained quality performance regarding collaboration and partnerships.

Some specific examples of the kind of observers needed would be Washington Office and Regional Office Staff Directors who have responsibility for procurement, training, grants and agreements, land management planning, community forestry, fires and fuels management, and forest management.

THE NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By demonstrating support for the Learn While Doing model, the Washington Office can make an important first step in bringing about needed changes in institutional culture. According to the model, partnership development is driven by actual projects and is bottom-up, but there is a key role for management to provide the institutional environment where collaborative decision making can thrive. This can be done through encouragement, reward, financial support, and program and policy design.

Within the Learn While Doing model, there are several points where national-level leadership could provide effective support for on-the-ground partnerships. First, it could review and implement the policy recommendations made by various taskforces working on partnerships and collaboration, many of which identify resources and administrative tools that would enable managers to move more easily through the various stages of the partnerships process. Second, national leadership could be an active part of the proposed Panel of Observers, who analyze multiple on-going partnerships and use the lessons learned as evidence in reviewing agency procedures, processes, structure, and culture. If given sufficient weight, the recommendations of these observers could be a crucial link between challenges of managers in the field and the program decisions made at the national level. Third, up-front financial support will be needed to fund some of the capacity building called for in the model. Funding is needed for “Master Performers” to spend time advising managers, for training and mentoring to be offered at opportune moments, and for training to be developed in the few areas where it does not already exist. If budgeting for these resources is left entirely to the project manager, funds may be allocated only to those efforts *perceived* to be most in need. Finally, leadership has an important role to play in encouraging partnerships and collaborative work through rewards and incentives granted to employees that take risks and build their capacity to work in a new way.

Some of those interviewed for this work have pointed out that many Forest Service employees still do not believe the agency is sincere about recognizing collaboration as a legitimate, and often necessary, way to make decisions. Yet there have been many task groups, initiatives, and even legislation such as the National Fire Plan that are focused on enhancing the agency’s ability to involve a wide range of interests in decision making. The Learn While Doing model attempts to pull together existing resources and apply them to real situations that are ripe for building capacity. Furthermore, it provides a mechanism for allowing the examination of the institution as learning takes place, with the objective of facilitating the needed and appropriate adjustments.

SIX STAGES OF COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships and collaborative efforts evolve in different ways and according to different timeframes, but the basic, comprehensive approach to engaging in these processes can be distilled into the following stages:

1. Assessing Personal and Organizational Competencies
2. Preparing for Collaboration and Partnerships
3. Framing the Issues
4. Making Decisions Collaboratively
5. Implementing Decisions
6. Maintaining Relationships

In the pages that follow, each stage of partnership development/working collaboratively is described according to these categories:

- **Skill Needs**
Those skills identified as necessary and/or a benefit to working in collaboration and through partnerships.
- **Available Training**
Training courses offered by independent organizations that help develop needed skills.
- **Training Gaps**
Where training for certain needed skills is lacking.
- **Links to Partnership Task Force Resources and Initiatives**
The Partnership Task Force is a team of Forest Service personnel that was commissioned from June – December 2002 to assist practitioners and Forest Service partners by fostering an agency culture that cultivates and expands partnership capacity and streamlines internal work processes. In cooperation with a number of outside partners, the Task Force has developed several products that fit within the framework of the Learn While Doing model.

In addition, the appendix provides several brief case studies that illustrate struggles and successes experienced in each of the various stages of working collaboratively and/or developing partnerships.

STAGE 1: Assessing Personal and Organizational Competencies

This stage requires an assessment, on both personal and organizational levels, of the capacity for forming partnerships and working in collaboration with outside partners. During this stage, a front line manager of a project will ask him/herself a set of questions about the need and ability to work toward solutions in a collaborative manner. Questions include:

- *Does my challenge warrant and/or need external participation?*
- *Am I ready, philosophically, to engage others?*
- *What are my choices? How is the advancement of my issue dependent on this partnership development?*
- *Is my organization able and willing to support me under new approaches?*
- *Is there support for this work at higher levels?*

It is at this stage that managers and their immediate supervisors might set the expectations for partnership work and evaluate the resources and capacity available internally to use partnerships in a particular effort. At this time, the manager is not deciding what form the partnership will take - s/he is merely asking what internal preparation is needed to work in collaboration on a project leading to a supported course of action.

The outcomes of this stage will include the articulation of intent, purpose, or need to use partnerships as a way of doing business.

Skill Needs

Leadership Skills:

- Building a common vision
- Team building

Internal Management Skills:

- Staffing
- Budgeting

Available Training

For the assessment stage, more than any subsequent stage, classroom or seminar training may be effective, particularly courses that help line officers understand the purpose and stages of the collaborative process and how they can mobilize their staffs to take on such an approach. Some examples include:

- USDA Forest Service: agency training on management and leadership.
- Tom Thompson's leadership development work and work with Ed Brannon at Grey Towers.
- Pinchot Institute: leadership and "Mobilizing People to Act" workshops.
- Additional private providers of management training: may already be available for contract through FedSource or MOBIS.

Training Gaps

- Specific courses on collaboration in a Forest Service context – covering forest planning, stewardship, strengthening rural communities, etc.

Links to Partnership Task Force Resources and Initiatives

- Partnership Assessment Tool: for identifying staffing needs and organizational structure to support partnership work.
- Assessment of Organizational Structure and Identification of Staffing Needs (in terms of supporting partnership work).
- Development of position descriptions, series, and career ladders for the partnership field.

STAGE 2: Preparing for Collaboration and Partnerships

The early preparation required of partnership activity is an important opportunity for relationship building, learning about the communities of interests and their concerns, and sharing with these communities a broad strategic approach that will count on their involvement. At this stage, the Forest Service must concentrate on initiating and/or maintaining open channels of communication with communities, organizations, other agencies, and the public. In this stage, there may not be any formal partnerships in place between parties, but this is the time to build trust and lay the groundwork for future collaborative agreements.

Skill Needs

Relationship Building Skills:

- Communication
- Dropping ideologies and replacing them with a commitment to community
- Fostering trust
- Utilizing or calling upon someone with multilingual skills when necessary
- Outreach and networking
- Understanding the theory and meaning behind public participation and collaboration
- Engaging the people who pose the most difficulty in a particular situation
- Addressing past problems to forge new collaborations
- Knowing who to engage, as well as how and when engage them
- Identifying local expertise in the region and tapping into their knowledge

Understanding Communities Skills:

- Understanding the complexity of natural resource problems and actors
- Understanding other organizations and how they view partnerships
- Identifying the values of all effected parties
- Assessing the issues important to communities of interests
- Identifying and nurturing the strengths of a community
- Identifying and dissolving the weaknesses of a community through capacity building
- Understanding small communities – how they work and how to respect local traditions
- Understanding informal networks and how to access them

Available Training

Training and mentoring in relationship building and understanding communities should be available to any field staff member who must effectively work with communities and outside interests in his or her work. Because managers will not always have free time to meet with the public, attend meetings, and build relationships, it is important that other staff members learn these skills. When managers are promoted elsewhere, the relationships will then live on. There are some good training courses that can teach tested methodology in understanding communities. These skills can also be learned through mentoring and facilitated settings in which agency employees are guided through the process of listening to diverse interests.

Understanding Communities:

- The BLM National Training Center: Partnership Series courses
- James Kent Associates: custom-designed and existing training
- Greg Walker and Steve Daniels: custom-designed and existing training
- Integrations: custom-designed courses

- Consensus Institute: custom-designed courses
- University of Michigan Ecosystem Management Initiative (EMI) – custom-designed courses
- Sonoran Institute: “Building Partnerships” course and custom-designed courses
- The Heartland Center: community development training.
- USF&WS National Conservation Training Center (training developed by Todd Jones)

Training Gaps

- Understanding trust building between organizations.

Links to Partnership Task Force Resources and Initiatives

- Changes in existing departmental policies to allow Forest Service employees, in an official capacity, to participate in and serve on the boards of certain nonfederal professional, scientific and local public service agencies.
- Web-based Resource Center for Partnerships and Collaboration.

STAGE 3: Framing the Issues

Framing the issues is key to partnerships because it is the process by which parties must come to understand one another's perspectives on a given issue. This stage is where difference of opinion on process should be handled to reduce the risk of dispute once time and effort investments have been made. States Chris Moore of CDR Associates: "This phase is critical to the success of a future partnership. If the issues are not adequately identified and framed in such a way that they are acceptable to future partnership participants, people will not participate, will not engage in the process, will flounder for lack of direction (or go the wrong direction), and/or may try to sabotage the process."

During this phase of a partnership process, the manager will rely heavily on relationships that have already been forged during the preparation stage. Getting their participation requires the creation of a proper "holding environment," or in other words, creating a situation where people say, "I have to be at the table."

Skill Needs

Understanding Communities Skills (see Stage 2)

Facilitation/Mediation Skills (some of the skills that might be drawn upon in this stage):

- Framing/reframing issues (in a way that engages the audience and promotes participation)
- Mobilizing
- Assessing and analyzing power/influence dynamics between groups and individuals
- Listening
- Asking the right questions
- Breaking a problem apart
- Knowledge of technical issues (e.g. understanding ecology, economics, legal frameworks)
- The collaborative learning process
- Systems thinking
- Visioning
- Understanding FACA and other legal boundaries on collaboration

Available Training

There is a rich body of theory and methodology in the area of framing issues, which can be taught in a course setting. However, many may find it easier to learn this skill by actually working on issues under the guidance or tutoring of an expert. Here master performers as well as hired consultants familiar with the culture and procedures of the Forest Service, and somewhat understanding of local issues, can play an important role in walking managers through the process of framing issues.

- CDR Associates: environmental conflict/alternative dispute resolution, mediation
- University of Michigan EMI
- Interaction Associates: facilitation training
- Resolve, Inc.
- Greg Walker and Steve Daniels: custom-designed courses
- Consensus Institute (Mike Lunn and Bob Chadwick): custom-designed courses
- Pinchot Institute: leadership workshops, "Mobilizing People to Act"

- Todd Bryan (University of Michigan) and Barbara Gray (Penn State University): “Frame This,” a course on framing

STAGE 4: Making Collaborative Decisions

Once issues and perspectives have been put on the table, a manager needs to be able to work with communities of interests to develop a solution with which all parties feel comfortable. The desired outcome of this stage is for the parties to agree to the next steps. This may mean agreeing to a collaboratively derived decision, a formal working agreement, or work plan. There are many well-documented tools and processes that can be used in this stage. Some of these the parties may be able to manage on their own, while others may require the assistance of an external facilitator or mediator. A Forest Service manager must be able to determine what kind of process is appropriate for the task at hand as well as have access to skilled support if needed.

Skill Needs

Facilitation/Mediation Skills (some of the skills that might be drawn upon in this stage):

- Group problem solving
- Negotiation
- Consensus building
- Interest-based bargaining (separating issues and interests from positions)
- Understanding areas of compromise for developing mutually acceptable solutions (mutual gains development)
- Dispute management
- “Giving up power”
- Getting to the bottom line
- Keeping everyone at the table
- Multi-party decision-making

Group Management Process Skills:

- Designing meeting agendas
- Writing mission statements
- Developing joint problem statements that incorporate the multiple interests
- Documenting others’ comments (includes capturing information and summarizing it)

NEPA Scoping Skills

- Framing
- Convening
- Meeting facilitation
- Communication
- Listening
- Outreach

Available Training

There are more available training courses for facilitation, mediation, and conflict resolution than probably any other skill set in the collaborative/partnership process. These are skills that can be learned in a classroom, but practice is imperative in order to become an effective process facilitator. It would be possible for Forests or Districts to train one employee as a specialist in facilitation, who could lend a hand on a variety of issues and projects. Alternatively, outside facilitators can be contracted to help a process along, especially if the Forest Service has taken a strong interest in an issue and is concerned about maintaining objectivity in the process. Below are some sources of both training and actual facilitation.

Facilitation/Mediation Skills

- CDR Associates: environmental conflict/alternative dispute resolution, mediation
- University of Michigan EMI
- Interaction Associates: facilitation training
- Resolve, Inc.
- Greg Walker and Steve Daniels: custom-designed courses
- Consensus Institute (Mike Lunn and Bob Chadwick): custom-designed courses
- U.S Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution: roster of environmental conflict resolution professionals

NEPA Scoping

- Shipley Associates

STAGE 5: Implementing Decisions

In this stage, the parties must support the agreed plan of action. They develop partnership agreements, follow through with the plan's execution, and provide necessary monitoring and evaluation. For this phase, the agency must have adequate capacity for project planning, adaptive management, partnership administration, contracting, and creating grants and agreements.

Skill Needs

Project Planning Skills

- Translating agreements into detail project plans
- Performance specifications
- Measuring and monitoring
- Cost estimating

“Business” Skills:

- Understanding the agency's basic authorities and the restrictions on activities associated with them
- Expertise in using, crafting, and maintaining contracts, grants, and agreements
- Financial management
- Determining accountability
- Innovative contracting

Adaptive Management Skills:

- Indicator monitoring
 - Biophysical
 - Economic
 - Social
- Documentation
- Qualitative analysis
- Multi-party monitoring processes
- Thoughtful consideration of goals (making sure they are measurable)
- Evaluation of outcomes

Available Training

The agency already has a number of training resources in project planning and business management that should give Forest Service staff the basic information they need for this stage. However, many of the successful “master performers” are those who go beyond the normal bounds and look for creative solutions to process barriers. This is not easily taught in class and therefore those “master performers” themselves will be particularly helpful in this stage to inspire others with new ideas and creative problem solving approaches. In addition to managers, training in this stage should be available to contracting officers and grants and agreements specialists.

Project Planning Skills

- USDA Forest Service
- BLM National Training Center – Land Use Planning Training Series, Partnership Series

Business Skills

- USDA Forest Service: existing coursework on contracting, G&As

- USDA Graduate School: web-based course, “Federal Appropriations Law (FAL) Fundamentals
- Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs: management courses
- International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC): training in grants and agreements.
- University of Montana School of Administrative Leadership: various courses
- George Washington University/ESI: project and contract management training
- The Woods Institute: seminars on policy and budget issues pertaining to natural resource management.

Adaptive Management Skills

- University of Michigan, EMI: adaptive management workshops.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife National Training Center: “Monitoring and Adaptive Management for Endangered Species”
- BLM National Training Center: “Successful Land Use Planning” (1610-09)

Links to Partnership Task Force Resources & Initiatives

- Simplification of Grants & Agreements Processes and the Development of Related Tools.
- Development of new policies that clarify the role of the agency and employees when working with nonfederal partners who are fundraising to support agency projects and programs.
- Change to current Forest Service Challenge Cost Share policy to allow partners to participate at any level rather than meeting the current 50:50 challenge match requirements.
- Contemporary desk guide (on Grants and Agreements with the Forest Service) that serves as an easy reference tool for practitioners and external partner organizations.
- Contemporary partnership guide that serves as an easy reference tool for practitioners and external partner organizations.
- Identification of core competencies for administering agreements and related complementary training courses and on-the-job experiences.
- Simplification of agreement templates.
- Mapping of Grants & Agreements and Financial Management agreements tracking, payment, and reporting systems.
- (related to monitoring) Inventory of partnership data and reporting systems and improvements that capture the value of all partnerships (including partners contributions in dollars, in-kind, and volunteer hours).

STAGE 6: Maintaining Relationships

Relationships between parties must be actively maintained not only while partnerships are active but also after they have completed the tasks at hand. The agency must ask whether it is building collaborative relationships that will support change. The Forest Service, in particular, is plagued by relationships that fail when managers are transferred, policies change, and/or offices are consolidated. There are techniques for institutionalizing relationships with partners so that trust is not lost in these situations. Additionally, as collaborative projects come to a close, managers should be looking for additional opportunities for partnering, or at the very least, keeping channels of communication open.

Skill Needs

- Transferring knowledge
- Creating an institutional memory
- Identifying opportunities for future partnerships
- Facilitating the transition of key players into and out of the partnership

Available Training

No specific training currently available.

While there is little training available solely for this stage, many of the training and coaching offerings mentioned in previous stages (e.g., facilitation, convening, and issue framing) are helpful in preparing for it. Skills in relationship maintenance need to be developed at all staff levels because leadership often changes while institutional relationships continue and support staff must be closely connected to maintain them through transitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GETTING STARTED

In order to effectively implement the Learn While Doing model, the following steps should be considered:

- Key project personnel from the Partnership Task Force and the Collaborative Resource Teams should design the approach for applying the Learn While Doing model to the National Fire Plan.
- The In-Service “Collaborative Resource Teams” should be assigned to one or more of the selected demonstration teams (see description below).
- The Partnership Resource Center should be initiated and made available to each selected team.
- “Just-in-time” outside expert services should be arranged to be on a retainer-like contract for use by the units when needed.
- Overseers should be identified (at the Washington and Regional Office levels) and should develop their charter.
- A kick-off workshop should be held with field staff that are interested in trying out the model to discuss how it would apply to their work, share ideas, listen to case examples, and refine specific plans for moving forward in the field.

Implementing the Model in the Context of the National Fire Plan

The authorizing legislation for the National Fire Plan (P.L. 106-291, FY 2001 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act) explicitly presents a key opportunity for the Forest Service to develop core partnership skills and collaborative processes through real life projects. The Conference Report for P.L. 106-291 indicates that “successful implementation of [a long-term strategy to deal with the wildland fire and hazardous fuels situation]...will require close collaboration among citizens and governments at all levels.” In addition, the report *mandates* the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to “engage...in a collaborative structure to cooperatively develop a coordinated, National ten-year comprehensive strategy” with key partners.

In response to these directions, the Secretaries joined the Western Governors’ Association, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Association of Counties, the Intertribal Timber Council, and other stakeholders in the development of “A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: A 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.” The 10-Year Strategy was officially endorsed in August 2001, and in May 2002, an accompanying Implementation Plan was released. The Implementation Plan lays out a collaborative, performance-based framework for achieving the goals outlined in the 10-Year Strategy.

In order for the Forest Service to demonstrate good faith in carrying forth the National Fire Plan via the Implementation Plan for the 10-Year Strategy, it *must* work effectively and in collaboration with the full range of concerned stakeholders. Identifying the sources of core skill training, removing current perceived barriers, and encouraging collaborative approaches and partnership formation will help with current project and program challenges regarding the National Fire Plan. However, without assuring that institutional processes and procedures, internal to the agency, are first examined and reinforced to support collaboration, fundamental and long lasting changes may not be made.

The Learn While Doing model for collaboration and partnerships allows for an examination of the Forest Service institution *as learning takes place*, with the objective of facilitating institutional adjustments as needed. Applying the model to the National Fire Plan could give collaboration and partnerships the "organizational home" they previously lacked. Functional areas of the Forest Service such as engineering, hydrology, wildlife, recreation, and timber management determine and deliver their own training -- the tools and skills of resolving issues collaboratively are not addressed or housed by the organization in any centralized way.

Given this reality, there are a number of reasons why applying the Learn While Doing model to the National Fire Plan makes sense:

- The need for action regarding fire protection is ripe in the minds of many stakeholders - this is a teachable moment.
- The effort calls for stakeholders to be engaged in decisions and action plans.
- The effort is already funded.
- The effort is high profile and the annual fire season will reinforce the sense of urgency and help maintain the "holding environment" (i.e. keep parties at the table - A holding environment consists of any relationship in which one party has the power to hold the attention of another party and facilitate adaptive work).
- The same problem or challenge is being addressed in hundreds of locations, which will provide lots of usable and recognizable lessons learned.
- The effort engages the role and mission of the National Forest System and State & Private Forestry deputy areas jointly -- the authorities and processes available through S&PF can be especially useful in collaborative partnerships.
- The effort utilizes the training delivery expertise of the agency's fire organization, which has a long history of training and already has technical educational materials available.

Selecting Demonstration Teams

One way the agency could test the Learn While Doing model on the ground is by soliciting volunteer units of a National Forest or a Ranger District and working with them and the surrounding communities to create "demonstration teams."^ψ Two to three of these teams from each Forest Service Region could be selected, perhaps using the following selection criteria:

(For the Forest Service line officers)

- Supportive of collaborative learning.
- Pragmatic.
- Able to work well with other people from the very beginning of the process.
- Believe that the public has something valuable to offer.
- Able to share power.
- Able to communicate well.
- Energetic.
- Innovative.

^ψ The solicitation effort could be headed by an intern in the Executive Potential Program or the Mid-Level Development Program, under the guidance of program managers in the National Fire Plan office and/or Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry or the National Forest System.

(For the community)

- Willing to face the possible threats of wildfire.
- Open to considering and/or addressing a number of value-laden issues, such as those related to municipal watersheds, forested scenic backdrops, sensitive or endangered plant or animal species, multiple jurisdictions.
- Able to ripen and frame issues of concern (may be leaders in this area).
- Relatively high level of private investment in the wildland-urban interface.

All of the training, mentoring, and facilitation resources connected with the model would be made available to each of the teams. The outcomes of the process would vary depending on the needs of the community and forest unit. The use of the model in multiple locations working on similar issues would provide an excellent opportunity to evaluate, compare, share lessons learned, and make adaptive changes to the basic model.

CONCLUSION

As it learns to respond to increasing public interest and changing demands regarding public land management, the Forest Service has recognized the value of collaboration and partnerships as tools for converting that interest and energy into meaningful and mutually acceptable solutions. Collaborative approaches that were once considered risky and contrary to old models of leadership are slowly gaining acceptance throughout the agency. At the same time, the Forest Service is learning that collaboration is not simple and requires a variety of skills that are not yet in the toolbox of many employees.

While the capacity building challenge is great, there are important resources now available to help. A large body of experiential knowledge exists with master performers – “battle-scarred” Forest Service employees who have struggled through intractable problems by working closely and tirelessly with communities of interest. Additionally, the Partnership Task Force and other agency initiatives have developed resources specifically to assist the institution in building its capacity to collaborate. Meanwhile academia and the private sector, recognizing the increased demand for expertise in collaborative natural resource management, have made available a host of services to help land management agencies work better with communities, local governments, private industry, and other stakeholders.

With so many resources and experiences to draw upon, it is a *framework* that is needed to connect these resources to the appropriate stage in a collaborative or partnership process. The Learn While Doing model for collaboration and partnerships is the Pinchot Institute’s recommendation for applying relevant information and expertise directly to ongoing processes of partnership development involving the Forest Service and its key partners. It presents a systematic way of thinking about the stages, skills, capacity building, and resources of a collaborative or partnership process. While it is recommended that it be tested in the context of the National Fire Plan, that is not to say that the model is not applicable in other situations requiring collaboration between the agency and outside stakeholders. In fact, the Learn While Doing model applies broadly to the realm of multi-stakeholder collaborative efforts undertaken by the Forest Service to achieve any number of goals. It is hoped that its implementation will facilitate the transformation of the agency into one that is truly competent in and supportive of collaborative decision making regarding natural resource management.

For more information on the Learn While Doing model, please contact:

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Spring Mountains National Recreation Area

- **Stages highlighted by this example:** *Framing Issues; Making Collaborative Decisions*

Located in the desert valley of Southern Nevada, approximately 20 miles east of Las Vegas, the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area was established in response to pressures upon surrounding natural areas caused by a rapidly growing urban population. Increased recreation was damaging wildlife habitat and riparian zones while at the same time, leading to conflict, vandalism, and fires. Due in large part to the efforts of a collaborative grassroots citizen coalition, Citizens for Spring Mountains National Recreational Area, the region was designated a Recreation Area by Congress in 1993.

The Forest Service, charged with developing a management plan for the newly formed National Recreation Area, involved the citizen's coalition as well as a number of other represented interests in drafting the plan. Maintaining the collaborative atmosphere already established for the creation of the National Recreation Area, the Forest Service invited state, local, and federal agencies, along with tribes, non-profit organizations, universities, and user groups to bring their concerns to the table. After working through many disagreements, the stakeholders gradually began to recognize a common interest in a special place, ultimately leading toward consensus on a management plan.

Highlighting several stages in the collaborative partnership process, the experience in Spring Mountain is a particularly good example of Framing Issues, and Making Collaborative Decisions. Because a diverse, grassroots citizen coalition had already formed around the designation of the National Recreation Area, the Forest Service worked with those interests, broadened the field of stakeholders, and challenged them to come to agreement as to how the regions would be managed. The issue was framed collaboratively, allowing stakeholders to identify the problems and their solutions. The Forest Service played the behind-the-scenes role of facilitator, using open houses, focused discussions, workshops, and field trips to help stakeholders present their values and then develop goals and make decisions based upon them. This collaborative process built many strong relationships between stakeholders, which later contributed to the plan's implementation.

Newberry National Volcanic Monument

- **Stage highlighted by this example:** *Preparing*

Long regarded for its scenic and cultural values, the Newberry Volcano in Central Oregon was targeted by industry as a site for geothermal power plants in the late 1980's. Fearful of damaging impacts, environmental organizations proposed designating the site a national park. The Forest Service and other federal agencies agreed to participate in a decision-making process in which 30 different interests, including concerned citizens, environmentalists, and industry representatives, reached a decision for the designation of a National Monument through a process of interest-based bargaining.

In order to find success in this collaborative process, the Forest Service found that it had to first define and engage the community of interests and build trust and relationships with them. It was

quickly discovered that closed, issue-based meetings of subcommittees were not nearly as effective as personalized contacts and one-on-one discussions. Furthermore, before collaborative decisions could be negotiated, the agency had to set rules and operating guidelines for the planning process. The agency also provided professional facilitators for meetings, including specialists in mediation and collaboration. It took time for the issues to ripen, but doing so led to a cooperative process in which concessions were made to protect core values and interests.

Swan Ecosystem Center

- **Stage highlighted by this example:** *Implementing Decisions*

Concern over the Forest Service management of a 120-acre old growth ponderosa site in the Mission Mountains on the Flathead National Forest led to the formation of a local citizen's group called the Swan Valley Ad Hoc Committee. This group of citizens, with diverse interests began to meet regularly to talk about a unified vision for the management in their region. Forest Service employees participated as stakeholder in these meetings. Budget cutbacks in 1990's had diminished the Forest Service's capacity to fulfill its ecosystem management roles of monitoring, inventory, backcountry patrol, and old growth preservation. Therefore, the citizen's group established the non-profit Swan Ecosystem Center, to serve as a link between the National Forest and the public and involve the community in ecosystem management activities. In partnership, the Swan Ecosystem Center and the National Forest have been able to fill some of the void left by staffing reductions in the Forest Service while at the same time improve ecosystem management in the forest and generate economic activity in the community. The Swan Ecosystem Center ultimately took over the management of a facility that the Forest Service no longer had the funds to maintain.

Highlighting the importance of relationship building, the strength of the partnership between the Swan Ecosystem Center and the Flathead National Forest lies in the trust that has been built between the agency and a host of other stakeholders. By participating in the Ad Hoc Committee's meetings as a stakeholder and paying attention to community needs, the Forest Service has been able to establish working relationships with a wider community of interests, including private landowners. The result has been new-found support for the agency that was once demonized by the local community for its land management.

Charles Dean Wilderness Area

- **Stages highlighted by this example:** *Framing Issues; Making Collaborative Decisions*

Located on the Brownstown Ranger District on the Hoosier National Forest, the Charles Dean Wilderness Area became a site of conflict between horseback riders and hiking and environmental groups concerned with the impact of heavy horse traffic. Forest Service attempts to address the problem of overuse were repeatedly met with polarization and opposition. In 1991, the Ranger Districts employed a planning model called Limits of Acceptable Change. This multi-stakeholder process sets sideboards on the decision making space and then requires parties to come to a consensus on a variety of issues ranging from easy to contentious. The resulting plan was more restrictive to recreation than what the Forest Service had been proposing, and yet it had the support of all parties involved.

Horseback Diplomacy on the Camino Real Ranger District

- **Stages highlighted by this example:** *Preparing; Maintaining Relationships*

Using skills in personal communication and listening, Crockett Dumas, former District Ranger on the Carson National Forest's Camino Real Ranger District was able to build trust in a divisive community and develop innovative programs that avoided being paralyzed by appeals and litigation. This model of adaptive leadership has earned Dumas national recognition and awards.

In the late 80's and early 90's, Dumas arrived at a forest in which environmentalists were concerned about declining forest health and local communities were frustrated by strict permitting regulations for fuelwood gathering and the lack of local employment opportunities. The forest's policy of large volume timber sales ignored the interests of both the environmentalists and the local communities and the district had lost touch with those whom it was supposed to serve.

Dumas initiated what became known as "Horseback Diplomacy" by which he and his staff rode on horseback to people's homes to talk with them one on one and listen to their concerns with forest management. Visiting the 32 rural communities surrounding the forest, the Forest Service staff learned how people relied on the forest for fuel and construction materials and that the location and timing of permits caused difficulty. The district changed their permitting policies and reconfigured timber sales to help small, local businesses. By directly engaging the community, listening and learning to community concerns, and then involving the community in policy making, Dumas was able to open channels of communication and build the trust needed to reduce conflict on the Camino Real District. Horseback Diplomacy provided the Forest Service with a means to establish relationships, identify real issues, and form the foundation of collaborative decision-making.