Ruckelshaus INSTITUTE

A DIVISION OF THE
HAUB SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Convening a Collaborative County Advisory Committee
Wyoming Public Lands Initiative

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is the act of people with differing views and interests working together in an organized way to find workable solutions to shared problems.

Collaboration…

…Is inclusive

- All relevant interests are represented
    - Those who are affected by the decision
    - Those who can affect the decision
    - Those who have resources to carry out the decision
- Full representation strengthens the durability of agreements.

…Is transparent

- All who have an interest in the decision have access to the process
    - Access to information
    - Access to documentation
    - Access to participants
- Transparency creates public trust

…Is accountable

- Members are accountable to their constituents
    - Agreements are made with concurrence of those not at the table
- Members are accountable to the decisions they make
    - Follow through on agreements
- Collaborative processes are supported:
    - Politically
    - Logistically
- Collaborative outcomes are honored by decision makers

Collaboration can lead to many positive outcomes

- Bridging seemingly insurmountable differences to craft agreements that are creative, fair, informed, effective, and stable.
- Involving citizens in a process where they participate in decisions that directly affect them.
- Increasing the level of knowledge and understanding of complex, technical issues and the values and principles held by others who have a stake in the issue.
- Enhancing the familiarity and trust in governance among community members and others close to the issue.
- Creating the capacity of people and communities to participate in public decision making and solve problems.

…Requires full participation by members on the Committee
- Every member contributes
- Every member listens
- All members speak their minds and are willing to raise difficult issues
  - Members have "space"
  - It is "safe" to say what needs to be said

…Involves shared learning
- Members learn from one another
- Members learn together from others
- Shared learning includes:
  - Scientific and technical knowledge
  - Experiential or local knowledge
  - Acknowledging uncertainty and ambiguity

…Results in shared solutions
- Every member is a part of the decision
- All tradeoffs and options are fully considered
- Quality decisions are reached
  - Solutions are based on the best available information
  - Solutions are based on what's important to people
- Solutions are stable
  - All participants are willing to implement the decision

How to Make the Advisory Committee Inclusive

An inclusive advisory committee is one where all interests are represented at the table. This doesn't necessarily mean that every stakeholder group has a seat at the table. Rather, every stakeholder group has <u>access</u> to the people at the table.

Advisory Committee members must:
- be seen by their constituents as legitimately representing their interests;
- have active and effective communication links with their constituents; and,
- be able to bring their constituents' ideas, desires, and concerns to the table.

How large should an Advisory Committee be? The size of the committee should not be set arbitrarily. A committee of 10 people may not be as effective as a committee of 11 or 13. It is true that a smaller committee will be more efficient in their deliberations, but there is no magic number above which a committee is "too big." The size of the committee should be determined by:

- the number and variety of stakeholder groups involved in a particular Wilderness Study Area;
- the number of interest groups that can legitimately be represented by any single individual; and,
- the effectiveness of communication links between committee members and other interests.

Who should be on the Advisory Committee? When considering who should be on the Advisory Committee, the "rule of three" is a good guide from which to start. The rule of three means that stakeholders comprise people and organizations who:
1. will be affected by decisions made by the committee;
2. can affect decisions made by the committee (e.g. lobby for or potentially block decisions at the congressional level); and,
3. have the authority and/or resources to carry out the decisions made by the committee.

The "rule of three" is a helpful start to identifying who should be on the committee. The next step is to identify people and organizations with substantive interests in the Wilderness Study Areas and/or resources and associated uses under consideration. A ***Stakeholder Matrix*** is a useful tool to identify potential members of the Advisory Committee with substantive interest in the issue. Using a stakeholder matrix, you can generate a comprehensive list of the interests that might potentially be involved in decisions, identify people and organizations who represent those interests, and identify gaps in representation.

A stakeholder matrix consists of a list of interests along the top (the columns), and a list of people and organizations along the side (the rows). To create a stakeholder matrix, do the following:

1. Generate a list of interests along the top row to create the matrix columns. Interests are values, perspectives or concerns that affect peoples' responses to how the landscape will be designated or managed. Brainstorm as many interests as you can.
2. Next, identify people and/or organizations that you believe have a stake in how the landscape will be designated or managed and potentially represent one or more of the interests you listed on the top. List them down the side to create the rows on the matrix.
3. Cross reference the interests with the people/organizations you listed along the side by placing an "X" in the cell that corresponds to each person/organization and each interest.
4. Now analyze it. Are there some people/organizations that represent multiple interests? These are potential candidates for the Advisory Committee. Are some interests not represented? How will you fill those slots?

Once you have identified the people and organizations that can represent the range of interests, you should consider who among them that would be good candidates for the Advisory Committee: Other selection criteria include:

- People who are seen as legitimate representatives of others' interests;
- People who can speak knowledgeably about public land management, WSAs, and the landscapes associated with them; and
- People who are willing to engage in the give and take of negotiating land designations and management recommendations.

Committees can be structured in many different ways. You don't need to limit your committee to just one group. Alternative committee structures might include:

- Subcommittees that focus on specific WSAs (for those counties with more than one WSA under consideration);
- Task groups that are set up to focus on a single issue, such as travel management or specialized uses;
- A multi-county committee that works across county boundaries to address WSAs that span county lines.

How to Make the Advisory Committee Transparent

An Advisory Committee is transparent when all who have an interest in the decision have access to the process. This means that Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public, and the public has access to the information that the committee is using to make decisions. Some best practices for transparency include:

- Opening the advisory committee meetings to the public. Place specific times on the agenda for the committee to hear public comments.

- Provide a web portal where people can find meeting agendas and summaries. You can also post documents, presentations, and other information on the site.
- Post meeting announcements and other information on social media.
- Encourage committee members to hold regular meetings with their constituents.
- Provide time on meeting agendas for committee members to report how they have kept their constituents informed and what they have heard from their constituents.

How to Make the Advisory Committee Accountable

A county's Wyoming Public Lands Initiative Advisory Committee is accountable to the public. Members of the committee keep their constituents informed of discussions and proposed actions. Agreements are made with concurrence of those not at the table. Members are also accountable for the recommendations they agree to and are expected to follow through on agreements they make. Decision makers and elected leaders are also accountable for supporting the work of advisory committees, both logistically and politically.

Each Advisory Committee should create and adopt a ***Group Charter*** to define and codify accountability. A group charter defines the committee's, purpose, rules, and guidelines and gives committee members a framework to follow. It is an agreement between the members of the group, and as such it acts to bind the group together in a common language and working union.

A group charter may provide information and guidance on the following subjects:

Background
Provides a summary overview of the issue, including the events that have lead up to the meeting.

Definitions
Defines terms and acronyms used in the stakeholder process

Purpose
Explains why the group has convened and what it intends to accomplish.

Nature of the final product
Describes the type of product (such as a written report) the group will produce.

Stakeholder groups and participants
Lists the individuals that will participate in the collaborative process and the interests that each participant is expected to represent. Identifies alternates. Describes the process by which new members are added, and existing members are replaced.

Responsibilities of working group members
- Conduct – Expectations for how stakeholders will conduct themselves during the process
- Attendance – Expectations for attendance and participation
- Preparation for meetings - States that participants should read all appropriate materials and arrive prepared to work.
- Informing constituents – Expectations for how and how often stakeholders are to keep their constituents informed of the process

Responsibilities of the facilitator
- Describes the responsibilities of the facilitator during, and outside of, the meeting.
- Agendas - Identifies who is responsible and how they will be drafted.
- Meeting Summaries – Identifies how meeting summaries will be prepared and distributed.

Decision Process
Describes how the group will reach decisions. If consensus is the decision rule, the charter should outline the method by which consensus will be defined. It should also describe what will occur if consensus is not reached.

Ground rules for interaction
Lists the rules that will be followed during meetings.

Enforcement of ground rules
Describes how rules will be monitored and enforced.

Consequences of violating the charter
Describes consequences if stakeholders violate the charter.

Input from and information to the public
Identifies how the public will be informed, if meetings will be open to the public and how the group will interact with the media.

Schedule and duration
Describes how often the group will meet, how long meetings will be and when the group intends to complete its work.

Amendments to the charter
Describes how the charter can be amended by the working group.

Getting to Full Participation, Shared Learning, and Shared Solutions

Collaborative problem solving is the process where full participation and shared learning results in solutions that are fair, wise, and acceptable to all involved. A *Collaborative Problem Solving Process* can be defined in five basic steps as shown below.
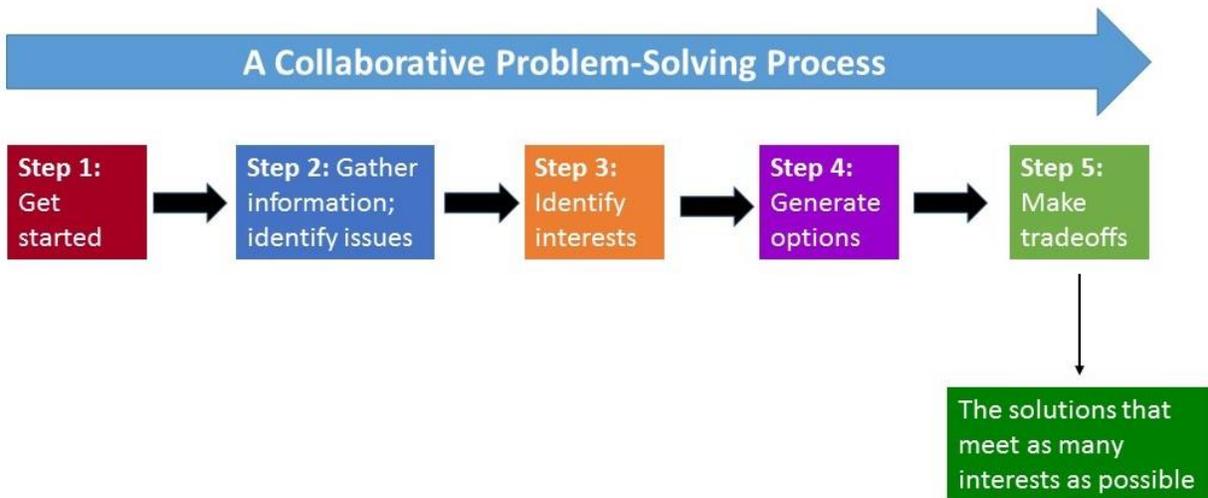
Step 1: Get Started

The "Getting Started" phase begins when the Advisory Committee first meets and begins to define its work. In this phase, the Advisory Committee should:

- ✔ Establish joint expectations and group goals.
- ✔ Define roles and responsibilities of committee members, County Commissioners, facilitators, resource advisors, and other people associated with the group.
- ✔ Identify areas of expertise within the group, and potential resources each member brings to the committee.
- ✔ Define how the group will collect and use data.
- ✔ Define how the group will make decisions.
- ✔ Define guidelines for group interaction.
- ✔ Adopt a group charter.

Step 2: Gather Information and Identify Issues

In Step 2 of the collaborative process, the Advisory Committee focuses on the task of learning together to define and clarify the issues to be deliberated. This allows participants to learn how different stakeholders perceive the future desired conditions of the WSA and associated landscapes, and gain clarity on the scope of work ahead. Once the issues are clearly articulated and defined, participants can gain insight into what options are going to be most feasible. In this phase, the Advisory Committee should:

✓ Gather and share information about the Wilderness Study Area and associated landscapes under consideration.

✓ Identify unique supplemental, or other features that should be considered.

✓ Assess current and anticipated future uses of the WSA and associated landscapes.

✓ Define existing administrative directives that govern use and management of the WSA and associated landscapes.

Step 3: Identify Interests

In Step 3, Advisory Committee members identify their interests – the wants, needs, desires, and concerns that motivate their choice of land management preferences for the WSA and associated landscapes under consideration. Articulating interests provides the opportunity for committee members to learn what is important to different stakeholders and why. This will help participants gain insight into what trade-offs are going to be most feasible and identify potential areas of agreement. In this phase, each Advisory Committee member should consider the following questions <u>with respect to the WSA and associated landscapes under consideration</u>:

✓ What about this particular land and landscape do I and those I represent care about? Why? List the reasons.

✓ Which of my interests are most important? Which are of lesser importance? Put them in order from most important to least important.

✓ What are the concerns of others who may be significantly affected? If I were in their shoes, what would I care or worry about?

Step 4: Generate Options

Options are the potential solutions that exist that can satisfy the interests of stakeholders and create value. In Step 4, Advisory Committee members should brainstorm all the possible solutions that exist. During option generation, participants are aware of differences among Advisory Committee members and consider how these differences might be put to work to create more value for all parties. When generating options, Advisory Committee members should:

✓ Generate and explore as many options as is possible to consider.

✓ Generate options that satisfy the interests of others as well as yours.

✓ Be creative. Consider an array of options, for example:
  o Expanding the range of opportunities by thinking outside the WSA boundary.
  o Considering a range of management approaches for lands within the WSA or landscape.
  o Considering changes in management or designation of neighboring parcels within the landscape.
  o Considering targeted transfers, exchanges, or conveyances.

Step 5: Make Trade-Offs

The final step of the collaborative process is to evaluate the consequences of choosing any particular option. The principal evaluation criterion is whether a particular option satisfies stakeholder interests. It is rare that any option can satisfy all interests. Therefore, the task of the Advisory Committee in Step 5 is to determine how well each option satisfies the range of stakeholder interests, and to *choose the option or options that maximize the joint gains of all parties*. This is the hard work of the collaborative process and where agreement will emerge if it exists.

- ✔ Explore the consequences of each option with respect to how well it satisfies each interest.
- ✔ Modify options if possible to increase support.
- ✔ Find as many options as possible that meet as many interests as possible.
- ✔ Consider other evaluation criteria such as technical/legal feasibility, fairness, etc.
- ✔ Explore the *level of agreement* for each option (see *Making Consensus Work*).
- ✔ Select the options that maximize joint gains.

The Role of Facilitators

A facilitator's role is essentially "to support everyone to do their best thinking". When a situation is routine and well-known, the stakes are not high and all participants trust the information, a facilitator is not needed to support "best thinking". In cases that are complex, when stakeholders are undertaking a subject collaboratively for the first time, there is low trust among stakeholders, the stakes are high, or there are strong emotions involved, a 3rd party neutral is critical to creating a process that is trusted and can lead to solutions.

To do this, a facilitator will:
- Create a "safe" environment where all values, opinions and ideas can be exchanged.
- Help a group overcome fixed positions
- Create a process that allows all options on the table and all trade-offs to be deliberated in order to avoid a win/lose mentality.
- Enable diverse stakeholders to share responsibility for the success of a process and the sustainability of its outcomes.

A facilitator does this by:
- designing a process that will allow diverse stakeholders to go through the five steps efficiently;
- acting as neutral to ensure a process is considered legitimate by all interests;
- allowing trust to be created when little or none exists;
- ensuring support for collaborative outcomes through consensus-building;
- making all relevant information accessible to all interests; and
- documenting progress and agreements.

A Facilitator is Most Helpful When…

- there is little or no trust between stakeholders;
- a situation is conflictual, value-laden and/or emotional;
- the stakes are high for all interests;
- a group of people wants to explore meaningful changes to the status quo;
- lasting, sustainable solutions are needed;
- issues are very complex, and very interrelated.