



## Researcher Recommendations for the CFLRP

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Since the early years of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), researchers have been conducting investigations to understand a range of dynamics, including: how groups use science and identify desired conditions, strategies to collaborate while effectively navigating legal requirements, collaborative trust-building and accountability, and factors that support success under the CFLRP. In November of 2017, researchers convened for a workshop hosted by Florida State University's College of Social Sciences and Public Policy to discuss lessons learned and policy implications of their collective work.

### Key Findings and Recommendations

**The multi-year commitment of funding for implementation and monitoring was essential to supporting landscape-scale projects.** A key goal of CFLRP was to increase the pace and scale of restoration. A commitment to support landscape-scale projects for 10 years of implementation and 15 years of monitoring was essential to leveraging partner capacity and investment. The focused investment encourages partners to raise money, invest time, and work through conflict.

**The mandate for collaboration through all stages of the project effectively legitimized and supported collaboration. CFLRP participants did not suggest a need for more formal legal requirements.** CFLRP participants designed collaborative processes that were tailored to local collaborative histories and existing relationships. Requirements for transparency and inclusivity highlighted the importance of engaging a wide variety of interests and ongoing communication among agency personnel and collaborative stakeholders. In practice, project participants generally desired more active, timely, and transparent venues for sharing agency budgets, work plans, performance measures, and planning activities. While most groups felt communication was adequate, this was not uniformly true or consistent. There were cases where the Forest Service planned activities on CFLRP landscapes without clear communication, creating tensions between collaboratives and the agency.

**Capacity and staff turnover were widespread, consistent challenges.** Researchers found that inadequate capacity and staff turnover were significant challenges to working at the pace and scale envisioned under the CFLRP. Turnover of key personnel undermined collaborative momentum, trust, and agreement. Researchers concluded that a program like CFLRP requires an updated business model—one that moves high-quality leaders to priority projects and rewards them for effective collaboration, supports focused investments with adequate capacity, and limits personnel turnover. The agency and its partners should continue to seek effective approaches to ensuring smooth transitions and a consistent commitment to collaboration.

**Leadership, facilitation, and coordination were essential to success and the ability of collaborative groups to support restoration projects.** Leaders who were committed to collaboration helped champion the process, guide agency personnel to more robust involvement and communication, and steered agency units to take collaborative recommendations seriously. They also supported strategic planning and worked to ensure adequate capacity was in place to support projects. Having a designated project coordinator to serve as a liaison and agenda setter for the CFLRP project improved communication and interaction between agency personnel and collaborators. Third-party facilitation was generally effective at helping stakeholders work through conflicts and maintain strong communication processes between the agency and stakeholders.

**Funding should be allocated to capacity building and planning, as well as maintenance of treatments.**

Project participants found the funding approach of the CFLRP challenging. Local units struggled to support planning and maintenance of treatments. With funding allocated to implementation and monitoring, project planning had to be funded from other sources. Research suggests that: 1) Investments for implementation need to be coupled with adequate planning dollars; 2) More needs to be done to maintain treatments to ensure return on investment; and 3) There is a need to build collaborative capacity where it does not exist on landscapes with high-priority restoration needs.

**More guidance is needed to support collaboration, especially in relation to FACA.** Some staff were unsure about legal requirements related to collaboration. Some agency personnel withdrew from collaborative interactions unnecessarily, citing legal constraints as a reason. This created tension and uncertainty among collaborative groups. Transparent guidance on this matter would support trust-building with collaborators.

**All-lands approaches are a high priority.** Participants suggested that more could be done to identify how to couple approaches like the CFLRP, with work on adjacent lands. This might mean allowing CFLRP funding to be used on non-NFS lands, or educating staff about the multiple authorities that can be used to support work on adjacent lands.



**Monitoring and adaptive management processes could be improved through additional guidance and education.** Researchers suggest the following improvements: 1) A need to support effectiveness monitoring for long term adaptive management, not just implementation monitoring; 2) A need to clarify the distinction between monitoring and research, so that staff understand they can use scientific principles that are essential to monitoring without crossing a line into conducting research; and 3) Emphasis on identifying specific strategies for incorporating monitoring data into future decision making.

**External accountability and review is essential for programs like the CFLRP that are innovative and require effective collaboration with external stakeholders.** Accountability might include reviews like Washington Office site visits, greater involvement from a FACA committee, or third-party evaluations. All of these processes, were valuable for supporting transparency, evaluation, and trouble-shooting under CFLRP. Some have suggested that ongoing review should be built into program legislation.

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