

## **Sustaining Collaboratives: Assessing the Capacity of Maintaining an Adaptive Management Role**

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Across the United States, collaborative approaches have become a common approach to addressing many land and water management problems. Over the past fifteen years, diverse sets of stakeholders have come together to identify common goals and objectives and to work on issues ranging from watershed restoration, nonpoint source pollution control, habitat conservation, and growth management. These efforts are now beyond the stage of being innovative or emerging examples to becoming part of accepted management approaches.

One of the overlooked factors important for collaborative approaches is the ability of a group of stakeholders to sustain their effort over time, in particular, to sustain their efforts after the initial consensus building phase is complete and the group has shifted to implementation. Whether the effort is based around a community of volunteers, a network of agencies, or a combination of participants, the capacity and sustainability of the group has an important influence on group outcomes.

Based on a review of the literature and research of collaborative efforts in Australia, Oregon, and other parts of the United States, this presentation will review some of the critical factors that appear to be important for sustaining these groups. These factors are divided into 2 categories: those related to the collaborative group and those related to their corresponding networks.

For the collaborative group, one factor includes "board" leadership and capacity, such as leadership, management, and technical skills. While more readily available for collaboratives with agency participants, this can be a critical weakness for some community-based groups in rural or remote regions. Second, collaborative stability is important for maintaining the momentum of the group and ensuring stable relationships with the community and partners. Third, the capacity of the group to gather, assemble, store, and analyze data is an important factor in sustaining their role. Finally, it is critical to have commitment from stakeholders and organizations to maintain the collaborative as a forum for decision making.

The other category of factors relate to the networks associated with collaboratives. For groups focused more on the action level, such as community-based collaboratives, their ability to connect into social networks is critical. For groups focused more on aligning organizational activities, such as agency partnerships, the ability to develop clear and robust organizational networks is critical.

In reviewing these factors, the presentation will also present criteria for assessing and evaluating these factors. The goal in developing these criteria is to help participants and funders of collaboratives improve their performance.

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Richard Margerum is Associate Professor and Department Head of the Department of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. He received his Ph.D. in 1995 in Urban and Regional Planning, with an Environmental Planning major and a Law minor, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his M.S. in 1992 in Environmental Studies from UW-Madison. He also has an M.C.P. from the University of Cincinnati and a B.A. in Geology from Wittenberg University. Rich was a Fulbright Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia, in 1995. He has taught at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia and at the University of Colorado. Since 2001 he has been a member of the Department of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. He has numerous publications on the collaborative process in planning and management and is a member of the American Planning Association, the Long Tom Watershed Council, and is an Advisory Committee Member of the Southern Willamette Groundwater Management Area for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.