

## Collaboratives: Opportunities

### ***Existing Collaborative Infrastructure***

- The region has a strong and proven collaborative infrastructure: the Recreation Coalition, South Yuba River Public Safety Cohort, Pines to Mines Alliance, a new Resilience Project with a governing board, and a quarterly park district conference serving five districts
- The South Yuba River Safety Cohort has operated for eight years, meets weekly during summer, and has received CSAC award recognition — a model of durable, functional collaboration
- ESSRP and Sierra Works regional working groups are cited as helpful models of successful collaboration worth studying and replicating
- SBTS operates under master challenge cost-share agreements with the Forest Service, providing a durable structural foundation for ongoing collaboration

### ***The Power of Relationships***

- Strong agency partnerships, particularly with U.S. Forest Service management, are fundamental to project advancement
- Long-lasting personal relationships with trusted Forest Service staff are currently the most effective tool for navigating policy barriers creatively
- Relationships consistently accelerate projects — no instances of relationships causing slowdowns have been observed
- Cultural relationships with Indigenous tribes on ancestral lands and multi-generational community members form the social and cultural foundation of projects alongside their physical landscape
- Building relationships with federal partners early and continuously is one of the highest-leverage investments a project can make

### ***Coalition Building & Political Viability***

- Recreation crosses political boundaries and is difficult to politicize, making it a uniquely strong platform for broad coalition building across diverse stakeholders
- Rural regions have a strong desire for collaboration; stakeholders are willing to build regional collaborative infrastructure on a volunteer basis if necessary
- State-to-federal coordination around recreation and recognition of its role in rural economic development is an area ripe for strategic investment
- Research on 6,500 organizations during the Great Recession found that all 29 organizations that survived and grew cited strategic partnerships and collaboration as their top success factor

## Collaboratives: Opportunities - *continued*

### ***Neutral Convening & Institutional Roles***

- Nevada County plays a critical role as a neutral convener — not an operator — allowing it to align multiple jurisdictions and land managers around shared priorities without overstepping
- Jobs First's greatest contribution has been creating a container for people to meet who would not otherwise connect, generating new relationships, resources, and projects
- The organization excels at convening stakeholders across cities, counties, and state and federal agencies, including challenging partners

### ***Emerging Partnership Models***

- An emerging opportunity exists for collaboration between recreation and forestry groups that have not previously seen themselves as partners
- The Arts Nature Trails project itself emerged from collaborative discussions and is now being integrated with the Great Redwood Trail, demonstrating how collaboration produces new projects
- A practical division of labor between partners maximizes what each partner does best
- The park's nonprofit partner funds 80–90% of the needed work, demonstrating the significant leverage a strong nonprofit-agency partnership can provide
- Private donors writing checks directly for trails on county land with master plan approval represents an effective, low-friction funding model worth replicating
- Encouraging smaller organizations to team with larger partners built long-term capacity while improving the competitiveness and impact of Catalyst investments

### ***Funding & Structural Alignment***

- Investment in collaboratives as a standing regional function produces outsized value relative to cost
- Nationally, 73% of nonprofit revenue comes from earned income, yet organizations disproportionately focus on donations — a structural misalignment this collaborative is positioned to address
- Grant programs should explicitly include convening and coordination as fundable line items, recognizing them as essential infrastructure rather than optional overhead
- Strong committee membership enhances the collaborative's credibility and long-term sustainability prospects
- Technical assistance, grant writing training, and active introductions between organizations were integral to the collaborative's model, improving proposal quality and building long-term organizational sustainability

## Collaboratives: Challenges

### *Collaboration Is Unfunded Infrastructure*

1. **No dedicated funding exists for collaboration infrastructure**, even though it functions as a core regional asset
2. **Coordination requires significant ongoing time and facilitation capacity** that is not formally resourced
3. Collaboration is the region's greatest strength, but it is **treated as informal work rather than funded infrastructure**
4. Working groups must continue to receive funding — they are **essential connective tissue for rural communities, not optional add-ons**
5. **No funded, durable regional body currently exists** to anchor ongoing collaboration, leaving the entire system vulnerable

### *Volunteer Sustainability Risk*

6. Volunteer-run collaboratives are **prone to collapse over time due to participant exhaustion**
7. Rural regions have strong collaborative intent **but lack the capacity to sustain coordination without dedicated resourcing**
8. Skilled NGO facilitators and expeditors have been essential for braiding state and federal funding together, but **ongoing capacity to hire and retain them is not secured**

### *Federal Partner Instability*

9. Dismantling of Forest Service agency structure — not individual staff — is the primary collaborative challenge; **supervisor positions do not pay enough to attract and retain talent**
10. The state needs to maintain confidence that the federal government and Forest Service can **follow through on commitments to partners**
11. **Healthy, well-staffed partner agencies are essential**; resources are narrowing in the short term, requiring increasingly strategic thinking about how to use partnerships effectively
12. **Higher-level state-to-federal coordination capacity is needed** but does not currently exist

## Collaboratives: Challenges - *continued*

### ***Complexity of Multi-Jurisdictional Work***

13. **Decision-making authority is distributed across many entities**, which can slow progress significantly
14. A **complex web of relationships spans multiple land ownership types** — National Park Service, Forest Service, BLM, State Parks, and private landowners — each with different timelines, priorities, and decision-making processes
15. **Partners operating on different timelines creates variable progress speed**, even when forward movement continues overall
16. Expansion into Lake County federal lands is being **deliberately deferred due to the additional regulatory complexity** that federal land involvement introduces

### ***Process & Timing Risks***

17. True project roadblocks occur when a key stakeholder is not engaged until late in the process and then blocks progress — **early and ongoing inclusion is essential but not always practiced**
18. **Prevailing wage requirements are inconsistently triggered depending on how money flows** — private funds going directly to one partner may avoid the requirement, while the same funds routed through a different partner may trigger it, complicating project planning and cost estimation