



Alberta  Government

Social Network Analysis Pilot Project – Phase 2: Interviews Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, the Government of Alberta Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) conducted the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project (SNAPP) ¹Phase 1, as part of a Cumulative Effects in Action (CIA) prototype, where the objective is to develop and implement a Phosphorus Management Plan (PMP) for the Bow River to address phosphorus loading issues between the Bears paw and Bassano Dams. To build on this work, ESRD contracted Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. to gather supplementary information for the SNAPP for the Bow River Phosphorus Management Plan (PMP). Supplementary information was gathered by conducting 21 semi-structured interviews with consenting internal and external project stakeholders, and coding interview responses using thematic analysis.

Based on the findings from the SNAPP Phase 1, it was recommended the social network analysis (SNA) results be supplemented with more detailed information about stakeholders. More specifically, information on stakeholders’ particular interests and expectations in phosphorus loading issues in the Bow River (among others that may arise); criteria stakeholders use to participate in the project and judge its performance; and, the culture of the network, such as why relationships are formed with others, how relationships are formed, and what this means to them as individuals, their organization, and the achievement of environmental outcomes.

The table below presents the main findings, and suggested uses in the PMP.

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
1. Roles	Participants’ organization types were as follows: 4 government, 7 non-profit, 5 municipalities, and 5 agriculture.	Explore opportunities to further engage existing participants, and identify areas of future engagement based on possible gaps in organization type.
2. Organizational Goals and Values	Many similarities among responses of participants across different organization types. No participants from industry or academia, so difficult to assess to what extent their goals and values might differ from other organization types. Emerging themes described below.	Explore goals and values of different types of organizations in future work, particularly those from academia and industry. Determine if goals are shared/common, and identify opportunities to collaborate.
a. Environment and	All participants expressed goals and values related to	Identify opportunities to explicitly

¹ Refer to the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report for more information, available at: <http://www.environment.gov.ab.ca/info/posting.asp?assetid=8767&searchtype=asset&txtsearch=social%20network%20analysis>.

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
Sustainability Goals	<p>the environment and sustainability.</p> <p>Goals of sustainability must be balanced with other goals and values such as development, operating within a budget, or making a profit. Achieving this balance is possible, and it can be emphasized that a healthy ecosystem also supports a healthy economy.</p>	<p>interconnect and balance environmental sustainability goals with other goals (e.g. a healthy ecosystem supports a healthy economy, etc.).</p>
b. Collaboration Goals	<p>Most of the participants expressed that their organizational goals and values were related to collaboration. This included valuing practices which enhanced collaboration or ensured collaboration was effective, such as honesty, transparency, respect, and avoiding blaming and confrontation.</p>	<p>Ensure collaboration with others explicitly incorporates principles such as honesty, transparency, respect, and avoiding blaming and confrontation, formally in working agreements (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, etc.).</p>
c. Information and Advocacy Goals	<p>Some participants described goals of gathering information, to ensure that adequate and relevant information was gathered and interpreted, to enhance awareness, and to influence decision making.</p>	<p>Ensure that open and transparent information sharing is formally recognized in working agreements (see above for examples).</p> <p>Seek to identify and track information sharing (e.g. through web-based portals)</p> <p>Seek to ensure that interpretation of information is consistent (e.g. key messages) and that decisions are communicated.</p>
3. Collaboration	<p>This is a key section of this report. Emerging themes described below.</p>	<p>-</p>
a. Frequency of Collaboration	<p>Overall, responses indicated that collaboration was common in the SSRB.</p>	<p>Seek to maintain a high degree of collaboration.</p> <p>Identify trends in collaboration over time through, for example, an ongoing social network analysis (SNA).</p>
b. Nature of Collaboration	<p>Some participants described their relationships with other organizations as "positive", "friendly", "strong" and "open".</p> <p>Participants also described relationships and collaborations in terms of the type of work being done, which were grouped according to: 1) operations and project-based work, 2) information-related work,</p>	<p>Through an SNA, explicitly identify purposes, goals, etc. of collaboration, to ensure performance of collaboration.</p>

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
	and 3) administrative and regulatory relationships.	
c. Benefits of Collaboration	Two main benefits of collaboration identified: 1) stronger outcomes, and 2) pooling of resources.	<p>Identify how collaboration assists outcomes (e.g. in developing outcomes statements or achieving outcomes?).</p> <p>Identify how and where collaboration assists in pooling resources (e.g. increase staff capacity or access to information or infrastructure?).</p>
d. What Hinders Collaboration	<p>1) Different goals and values. Lack of shared goals identified as a main barrier to collaboration.</p> <p>2) Process issues. Collaboration can be hindered by poor communication, not stating goals, being disorganized, not having a well-laid out process, and communicating in a “top-down” way.</p>	<p>All collaborative efforts should begin with an exploration of goals and values and an attempt to find common ground, particularly among organizations that seem to have very different values. Intentionally seek to include stakeholders that may have different goals and values, especially academia and industry, and proactively explore common ground.</p>
e. What Helps Collaboration	<p>Responses were grouped by the following themes:</p> <p>1) Common goals and shared work. Common goals and values were key for collaboration. Many emphasized the need to be proactive and to actively establish common ground in all collaborative efforts. For example, emphasizing how environmental sustainability supports a healthy economy and good business.</p> <p>2) Active and intentional process. Collaboration was enhanced through processes including regular meetings and communication, leadership in a facilitative rather than directive style, and helping participants see common ground in terms of goals and values.</p> <p>3) Trust. Building trust and credibility is part of an active intentional collaborative process, and was associated with being perceived as neutral, transparent, and genuinely interested in collaboration.</p> <p>Other ideas that emerged in terms of trust were that:</p> <p>1) being seen as credible ensured that organizations sent staff who were right for the work being done, 2) trust was based on belief that something would be</p>	<p>Effectively communicating how a healthy ecosystem supports a healthy economy (as discussed above) may assist profit and development-related organizations see common ground and collaborate.</p> <p>Ensure all collaborative work includes an active and intentional process which is adequately resourced and clearly laid out (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, etc.).</p> <p>The process of collaboration should include opportunities and processes (facilitated or informal) to build and nurture trust and credibility between stakeholders.</p> <p>In cases where organizational barriers might get in the way of successfully leading a collaborative effort, time</p>

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
	<p>done with that work or that the work would lead to a successful outcome or change, and 3) there was importance in relationships that went beyond the more formal structures of work and were more “personal”.</p> <p>4) Norms and expectations. Collaboration is also helped by a shift in norms, in which collaboration is more accepted as common practice or as an expected way to work.</p>	<p>may be better spent joining collaborative efforts that are properly resourced with organizations that have shown themselves to be credible. However, this is based on what credibility means to each individual; thus, performance measure of social capital (e.g. credibility measures) could be developed to help guide decision-making.</p> <p>Consider the role of norms and expectations in collaborative work (e.g. working towards an organizational culture or a culture within one’s field). Open discussions on expectations in collaborative work, on roles and responsibilities, etc. and document for future use (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, etc.).</p>
4. Information-Sharing	Emerging themes described below.	-
a. Where Participants Get Information	In addition to government and industry websites, Google searches, and internal information resources, the majority of participants indicated that they relied on their contacts and relationships to get the information they needed. Some emphasized more informal relationships as being more important than formal channels.	Make use of networks, including more informal professional networks, when sharing or obtaining information.
b. Sufficiency of Information	While some indicated having enough information, others indicated that it was difficult to have enough information and others indicated that it was hard to access the information that was most useful for their work. Others indicated that there was too much information, and that it was hard to sort through all of it.	Use SNA as a process to determine information needs, over time.
c. Criteria to Use or Discard Information	Participants used the following to sort through information: 1) relevance of the information for their work, 2) quality of the information, including whether it is based on sound science and the age, source and	Track the relevance of information through an SNA process (e.g. collect data through survey questions).

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
	how well it can be understood, and 3) collaboration, in terms of making use of people in their network to help them locate information and sort through information.	
5. Support for Decision-Making	Emerging themes described below.	-
a. How Participants are Involved in Decision-Making	Participants became involved in decision making by preparing documents, attending meetings, bringing the right information to the table to influence decisions being made, and, especially, being part of committees or groups. Some mentioned the importance of collaboration in this process, and others mentioned the need to be invited to the decision making process.	Determine participation in decision-making through SNA (e.g. directionality of communications on a particular topic, in a decision-making context).
b. Feeling Heard and Expectation of Change	<p>About half of participants indicated that they felt heard and had an expectation of change as a result of their involvement in the decision making process, while the remainder were more mixed.</p> <p>Considerations for involvement in decision making were: 1) getting information to those who are more likely to have a hand in the decision making; 2) the importance of not having an expectation that one will influence all decisions; and 3) the importance of receiving feedback from decision makers regarding how information was used and why decisions were made.</p>	<p>Identify the key individuals with decision-making authority; and, lay out clear expectations of how input will be used in decision-making.</p> <p>Commit to communicating how and why decisions have been made, in a clear and concise format.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) conducted the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project (SNAPP)² Phase 1. This project was initiated as part of the Cumulative Effects in Action (CIA) project, to assist in identifying the social network of key stakeholders interested in and actively working on addressing point and non-point sources of phosphorus loadings in the Bow River. Findings from the SNAPP Phase 1 would be used to help develop and implement a Phosphorus Management Plan (PMP) for the Bow River, as a means to address phosphorus loading issues between the Bearspaw and Bassano Dams. Within the PMP, outcomes include increasing awareness of phosphorus loading in this reach of the river and engaging stakeholders in the implementation of effective management tools.

The social network analysis (SNA) revealed the core and periphery structure of the stakeholder network in the PMP study area, as well as the relatively low levels of network ties of individuals and organizations in the periphery. Whereas Government of Alberta (ESRD, more specifically), non-profit, and municipal-urban organizations were shown to be well-represented and well-connected in the core of the network, organizations in the municipal-rural, agricultural sector, and academia were shown to be largely isolated in the periphery of the network. See the Glossary of Key Terms in Appendix C for definitions of Core Network and Periphery Network.

Based on project findings and information learned, it was recommended the SNA results be supplemented with more detailed information about stakeholders. More specifically, information on their particular interests and expectations in phosphorus loading issues in the Bow River (among others that may arise); the criteria stakeholders use to participate in the project and judge its performance; and, the culture of the network, such as why relationships are formed with others, how relationships are formed, and what this means to them as individuals, their organization, and the achievement of environmental outcomes.

To complete this work, ESRD contracted Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. to gather supplementary information for the SNAPP for the Bow River Phosphorus Management Plan (PMP). This supplementary information was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with consenting internal and external project stakeholders, using an interview guide (see Appendices A and B). Information collected through the interviews will be used to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of the social network in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB);
- Strengthen existing relationships between stakeholders; and
- Inform how new relationships might be built, based on key findings.

METHODOLOGY

Prior to developing sample interview questions, Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. met with the Project Manager by telephone to discuss the project's supplemental information needs. The Project Manager indicated that more information about the nature of the relationships between stakeholders surveyed during the Social Network Analysis was required. While much was learned about the strength of

² Refer to the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report for more information, available at: <http://www.environment.gov.ab.ca/info/posting.asp?assetid=8767&searchtype=asset&txtsearch=social%20network%20analysis>.

the relationships between organizations (by sector), and the individuals (by title) within these organizations, little is still known about the quality of these relationships and the factors that drive their existence. The Project Manager referenced Robert Putnam's Social Capital Theory and suggested that some of this theory's underpinnings would be helpful in unpacking these relationships further.

Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. used Putnam's theoretical framework as a starting point for the formulation of the sample interview questions below. Putnam defines social capital as the features of social organization, such as norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. This definition is helpful in the context of this project, given that existing information gaps are directly related to these features of social organization. Understanding how common activities, purposes, and values bind organizations and individuals across the South Saskatchewan River Basin will fill in many of these gaps. The notions of trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and coordination are also important to assess as they will shed further light on the depth and integrity of the relationships that currently exist. Further, understanding these features will allow the project to determine how best to support fledgling or struggling relationships between organizations and individuals in the future. Ultimately, this knowledge will enhance the social connectivity in the South Saskatchewan River Basin and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work that is being undertaken.

METHODS

Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. developed the interview guide in collaboration with ESRD, and piloted it with four Government of Alberta staff. ESRD then identified an additional 22 participants from the SSRB that could provide valuable information about the stakeholder network, relative to questions around relationships, collaboration and information sharing. Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. emailed 21 of these individuals at the end of January 2013, and one individual was phoned (no available email address). In the following weeks, interviewees were telephoned as follow-up, and after a scheduled date and time was confirmed, Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. conducted the interviews in-person and/or over the telephone. Refer to Appendices A and B for email and telephone scripts.

Including the four pilot interviews, a total of 21 interviews were completed (81% response rate). Of the five individuals that did not complete an interview:

- One individual refused to participate. This person reported being worried about the length of the interview and reported not having much to offer in terms of information due to "operations" nature of their job.
- One individual was unable to be reached, though five phone attempts were made and messages were left several times.
- One individual retired during the time that the interviews were being completed.
- One interview was scheduled, but the individual had a family emergency and was unavailable during the interview period.
- One individual expressed some confusion about whether he or she was the right person to conduct the interview. After several email exchanges, including sending the interview questions, the individual reported that he or she would contact the interviewer. The individual did not follow up.

Interview length for pilot interviews ranged from 55 to 100 minutes, with an average length of 50 minutes. Similarly, length for non-pilot interviews ranged from 20 to 165 minutes, with an average length of 65 minutes.

Interviewers took detailed, hand-written notes while facilitating, and then cleaned notes afterward to correct errors and clarify where possible. Interview notes were more or less verbatim (except in a few cases, which were documented in point form), but were not transcribed.³ Excerpts of notes have been included in the results to demonstrate how participants discussed ideas and themes, but should only be considered as supporting evidence and not as direct quotes.

Data analysis was conducted using Dedoose⁴, an online qualitative software program. Dedoose is used to help facilitate the exploration of data in order to improve the efficiency, reliability, validity, interpretability, and presentation of the analysis and interpretation of data. In addition to Dedoose, data was exported into Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel as needed to further explore selected themes and ideas. Note that analysis, interpretation and reporting were done simultaneously, in an iterative manner.

Data was analysed by first sorting responses by interview questions and sub-questions, then re-organizing according to broader themes. As well, many questions or sub-questions were combined into broader categories for analysis and reporting because they contained similar ideas or themes. After this, categories were unpacked and broken down further, by carefully reading all interview excerpts corresponding to that category, identifying the main themes or ideas emerging within them, and sorting excerpts based on sub-themes identified. In order to link SNAPP Phase 2 results to Phase I results, in terms of illustrating the differences between connectivity of individuals from different types of organizations, an attempt was made to assess whether there were any differences in responses among participants from different organization types (urban or rural municipalities, agriculture, Non-profit, and government). While some differences are noted in some cases, and all interview excerpts in the findings section note the organization type of the participant, the relatively small number of participants made this difficult to fully complete.

Though there is necessarily an element of subjectivity in processing qualitative data, the following methods were used to minimize bias in the analysis and reporting:

- Use of a constant comparison method of analysis. In other words, in order to avoid forcing categories or using preconceived notions or pet theories, data was analyzed line by line, data was coded for as many categories as might fit, and all data was coded.⁵
- Providing as much information in the findings section as possible, in order to allow readers to make their own judgments about whether the interpretations represent the data.⁶ These practices

³ Interviews were not audio-recorded. Due to late start of data collection as a result of internal government procedures, there was not sufficient time available to complete full transcription of interviews.

⁴ Dedoose, Version 4.5.91, web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method data (2012). Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC.

⁵ Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Further advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

⁶ Richards, L. and Morse, J.M. (2007). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

minimize bias and enhance neutrality. This included demonstrating clearly in the findings section which data was being used to make claims. In particular, explicitly stating which responses to which questions were being used for each section, and when question responses were combined. This also involved use of interview excerpts to support any claims being made.

- Review of findings section by a second colleague who was involved in interviewing and could ensure inclusion of all appropriate themes and verify any claims and links made during analysis.
- For many themes, approximate counts of responses were taken to get an idea of how common they were. Though frequency of being mentioned is not the only measure of how important an idea is, giving the reader an idea of the frequency allows them to make their own judgment about how to interpret the data. The table below provides descriptors that have been used when reporting how frequently themes were expressed.

Category	Criteria
A Few	Only one or two participants expressed a particular opinion or discussed a particular issue
Some/Several	Between one quarter and one half of participants expressed a particular opinion or discussed a particular issue
Many / Most	More than half of participants expressed a particular opinion or discussed a particular issue
Majority	All but a few of participants expressed a particular opinion or discussed a particular issue
All	All participants expressed a particular opinion or discussed a particular issue

FINDINGS

Findings will be discussed according to the following themes and sub-themes:

1. Roles
2. Organizational Goals and Values
a. Environment and Sustainability Goals
b. Collaboration Goals
c. Information and Advocacy Goals
3. Collaboration
a. Frequency of Collaboration
b. Nature of Collaboration
c. Benefits of Collaboration
d. What Hinders Collaboration
e. What Helps Collaboration
4. Information-Sharing
a. Where Participants Get Information
b. Sufficiency of Information
c. Criteria to Use or Discard Information
5. Support for Decision-Making
a. How Participants are Involved in Decision-Making
b. Feeling Heard and Expectation of Change

Roles

Participants worked for a variety of organizations. Among the 21 interviews, the organization types for the participants were as follows:

- Four Government of Alberta employees
- Seven from the Non-profit sector
- Five from municipalities (two from rural municipalities, three from urban municipalities)
- Five from agricultural organizations

Participants were asked to describe their roles within their organization. Participants represented roles across a spectrum of environmental, agricultural, and other technical areas of expertise that had some effect on water or land use. Several participants were involved directly in irrigation planning and delivery, storm

water management and wetlands conservation, while others dealt with environment and water issues as part of a more generalized role such as municipality planning or agricultural industry. Some were involved in roles within organizations that were more directly focused on environmental protection and conservation, for example, wildlife protection, protection of wetlands, and protection of river basins. Many participants described having backgrounds in engineering, agriculture, or conservation. The majority of participants were employed in their roles, but at least one participant was a volunteer position.

Many of the participants in these roles immediately began to describe a high amount of relationship building and collaboration as part of their work. There were also participants whose primary duty was that of bringing individuals and organizations together to collaborate. This will be explored more in the remainder of the report.

Only a few participants indicated how they got involved with the various collaborative projects within the SSRB, such as the Bow River PMP. Several indicated they had been invited to be a member of the steering committee, and one participant indicated they were identified during the original SNAPP project.

Organizational Goals and Values

Participants were asked about goals and values, specifically using the following questions:

- What goals has your organization set for itself?
- What does your organization value?⁷

The responses to these two separate questions overlapped substantially, and as such have been pooled for discussion in this section. Also note that though many participants answered in terms of their organization as a whole, many responded more specifically in terms of their department, unit or team (this was more common in the case of participants from government or municipalities). Some participants also gave more general responses related to doing quality work, both as an organization and an individual.

Further, it should be noted that all participants mentioned multiple themes in their responses and that there were great similarities among responses of participants across different organization types. Participants' responses to the direct question of whether they shared values with other organizations showed that many felt they did share values with other organizations, while also acknowledging that organizations of different types (particularly industry, but also academia) may have different values. On that note, it should also be emphasized that there were no participants included from industry or academia, so it was difficult to assess to what extent their goals and values are similar or different to the organizations represented by individuals in this study.

Participants' responses were grouped into the following themes for discussion: 1) environment and sustainability goals, 2) collaboration goals, and 3) information and advocacy goals.

⁷ Note that responses to the sub-questions for these questions were integrated into other sections of the report. In most cases, responses related to the collaboration section.

Environment and Sustainability Goals

Not surprisingly, all participants expressed goals and values related to the environment and sustainability, including healthy ecosystems, protection of water and soil, and developing longer-term management plans:

Primarily focus right now is on water – making sure we [reducing our negative impact on water quality as much as possible]. Also long term water management piece – 50 year planning process, start talking about water management ... we have lots of water in Alberta, but sometimes not there when we need it, sometimes there when we don't need it.

- Agriculture

We work on very specific water fowl-based goals. Our goal is for sustainable water fowl populations that provide sustainable environment. The primary driver from environment is the wetlands goals. Our goal for South Saskatchewan is no further loss of existing wetlands. The second goal is to achieve a level of restoration of loss of wetlands.

- Non-profit

Many participants also acknowledged that goals of sustainability had to be balanced with other goals and values. For example, participants from municipalities and government referred to working on environment-related goals while operating within the goals and values of these larger organizations.

Always looking at triple bottom line – looking at what we do on social, environmental, and economic perspectives, within guidance provide by council. Ultimately, it's the council provides us the direction. Making [our municipality] one of the best places to live for residents here. That's the goal of what we're doing, and in the process, trying to optimize those three pillars.

- Municipal (urban)

Similarly, in the case of agricultural organizations, goals and values of environmental sustainability existed alongside other agricultural goals of production and making a profit:

[Members of the organization] place value on the environment and [that is] the reason why the organization was created. [They are also] business people.

- Agriculture

Because we are engaged in farming increase production on less land, that will hopefully increase our returns. Secondary, I want my farming organization to produce healthy food. ... To keep farming operation sustainable, helping soil to be better and better and having more organic matter. Farming practices reflecting that to improve soil.

- Agriculture

Other participants acknowledged that goals among different organizations needed to be balanced. A key consideration mentioned by a few participants was the tension between development and profit on one hand and protection of the environment on the other hand:

Water quality branch, but also tied to the industry sector too; tough to find the balance between helping the environment improve while working with partners who are trying to make money; there

is competition for what goals reign supreme. Growth and development are the two key goals for the industries we support (e.g., oil and gas, forestry) – does not always mesh with environmental sustainability; the balance is hard to strike; try to keep in the back of my mind the producers are doing important things (i.e., producing food, natural resources), but encouraging them to do their work in a more sensible way that prevents the environment from being stripped. Don't want to put industry out of business, but we have to protect the environment too.

- Government

Need to be very careful – there is a lot of stuff on paper on values, hardly worth the paper it's written on – window dressing more than anything else. Need to understand the objectives of each other. Industry objective is to make money, have to be cognizant of that. To have healthy city need to have healthy economy, but should not come at [expense of social or environmental] pillars or life will suffer.

- Municipal (urban)

However, it was often emphasized that balance of these seemingly disparate goals was possible:

Development is not bad, but there is bad development. Want to work towards discriminating between the two. Live in a vibrant part of a vibrant province in a vibrant country. No one believes we are going to close the door, but want smart development.

- Non-profit

What's really important is ability to interact and work with each other.... If [you] look at this organization, half are free marketers, the other half are supply management groups - that could be divisive but is never ever discussed.

- Agriculture

One participant made the link between environmental sustainability and enhancing quality of life, again suggesting that the goals of development and profit and environmental sustainability may not be as much at odds as they seem:

To have a very healthy ecosystem and river throughout the Basin to support a strong healthy economy; socially we have a high quality of life we have the opportunity to be involved in the decision making as part of democracy. Goes back to the Water for Life of balance: Social, economic, and environmental. We can't have a healthy economy, without healthy ecosystem. The ecological system is the core support system which is the main core value.

- Non-profit

Collaboration Goals

Most of the participants expressed that their organization goals and values were related to collaboration. Some participants explicitly stated that collaboration was a goal of their organization, department, or team:

Our goal is to coordinate with others, become better managers of the watershed, hopefully encourage collaboration to improve outcome.

- Non-profit

Make sure [members of our sector] are properly represented at the following: attending meetings and session, government stakeholder sessions.... The goals are important; it is important to have clear goals and communicate clearly about issues [to] know where everybody else is coming from.

- Agriculture

Openness and collaboration to see better environmental stewardship to improve environmental quality.

- Government

Participants also stated goals and values of practices which enhanced collaboration or ensured collaboration was effective, including honesty, transparency, respect, considering the needs of other organizations and avoiding blaming and confrontation:

We have a different set of values – complementary – about how we work with people, each other. Honesty, transparency, mutual respect, [and] being helpful.

- Agriculture

We are very collaborative. We are considered principled and pragmatic in how we deal with people [organizations] and want to be perceived by people [organizations]. We take a common sense approach, a realistic approach; we consider other needs of organizations. Discussions on the environment can be finger pointing, blaming, and confrontational. We work with people; we work with society to come up with sustainable solutions.

- Non-profit

Information and Advocacy Goals

Many participants referred to goals and values in relation to information. This included goals of gathering information and ensuring that adequate and relevant information was gathered and interpreted:

Science based rigor is a key value, so that we can put evidence forward; the ability to apply the science on the ground is key

- Government

It's important to always try your best to make recommendations have solid evidence behind them and that have plans that are actionable so that progress can be made

- Government

Further, this theme also included goals and values related to enhancing awareness:

Through careful planning, programming, and awareness building. We think that we can get people aware and helping us to show that there are better ways to protect the environment.

- Non-profit

Really try to influence others, we are kind of marketers, we are trying to sell cumulative effects management as way to protect and improve the environment. We cannot directly influence; we focus on the linkage between cumulative effects management, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act and the

phosphorus management framework; we present to groups (e.g., irrigation community), to talk about phosphorus plan, but also how it links to the main goals.

- Government

Providing meaning and high quality information on beneficial management practices to residents related to introduction to plants, pests (biodiversity point of view).

- Municipal (rural)

Finally, several participants also explicitly stated that their organization's goal was to influence decision-making:

Make sure we are heard in the broader picture. We have opportunity to participate in the broader picture in which they meet our local planning goals. For example... we saw the need for a better regulatory process of getting land use changes.

- Non-profit

Our goals are to influence policy makers based on us speaking and rep our industry based on solid info, facts, science.

- Agriculture

Collaboration

Relationships and collaboration were a major focus of these interviews; therefore, this section should be viewed as the key section of the report. Most of the data from this section is made up of responses to the following questions:

- Does your organization have relationships with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If yes, how would you describe these relationships? What created these relationships? What keeps these relationships going?
- Does your organization collaborate with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If yes, what are some examples? What are the joint benefits for all parties involved in the collaboration? If there are no joint benefits, what is the motivation for the collaboration?
- Do you see other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin collaborating? How frequently does this occur? When collaborations do occur, what do you think made this happen? When collaborations do not occur when they should have, what do you think got in the way?

Responses to several other sub-questions related to collaboration have also been included as appropriate; for example:

- [Sub-question after Organizational Goals] How do these goals impact your work and your relationships with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin?

- [Sub-question after Organizational Values] Does your organization share these values with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If so, what types of joint work do shared values lead to? If not, how is joint work prevented by dissimilar values?

Responses to these questions (and any responses to other questions that related to the themes identified) were grouped for discussion in this section according to the following themes: 1) frequency of collaboration, 2) nature of collaboration, 3) benefits of collaboration, 4) what hinders collaboration, and 5) what helps collaboration.

Frequency of Collaboration

Overall, responses from all participants indicated that collaboration was frequent and common in the SSRB. Participants would often mention relationships and collaboration before any direct questions were asked.

Participants were also asked more directly to estimate the frequency of collaboration when asked whether they saw other organizations in the SSRB collaborating. All but a few participants provided direct responses to this question, and most of those who did answer directly indicated that collaboration was very common in the SSRB. Many also provided examples of collaborative organizations or activities:

Yes, all the time. There's, I can go to a meeting every day of the week if I want to. There are definitely opportunities for collaborating and being involved. There are opportunities to be in watershed planning advisory councils and hosting events for [Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs)].

- Municipal (rural)

In my observation, [there is a] huge spirit of collaboration in this basin.... Very high level of collaboration and goodwill among stakeholder groups involved in work around water or transit or economic development.

- Non-profit

Definitely there is collaboration with organizations involved in the South Saskatchewan River Basin. The watershed planning committee is excellent; there are "citizens from all walks of life" who are involved. The Bow River plan is an example that was very collaborative. The South Saskatchewan plan is also collaborative because based on multisectoral ... Collaboration occurs very frequently in Alberta. A model of [being] multisectoral, especially in the environmental area because people have commitment to being part of a solution and there are opportunities for people to collaborate.

- Agriculture

It happens all the time, WPACs are best example, and they facilitate other partnerships.

- Government

Only a few participants gave less positive responses in terms of frequency of collaboration in the SSRB. One individual from an agriculture organization reported that collaboration requires a lot

of expenses. Another participant from an urban municipality reported seeing lots of collaboration occurring, but also seeing activities that he referred to as “top heavy”:

Lots of collaboration happening – water management planning and everything associated with that. See a lot of top heavy things happening too – where there is probably a feeling in citizens and industry. Both province and municipalities – part of their public outreach. The moment they do outreach, the decision is set in stone, and “collaboration” is just a checkmark.

- Municipal (urban)

Two other participants provided little or no response to this question; one participant from the Non-profit sector reported having “no opinion” and one from an agricultural organization reported that “there is no answer, it occurs as needed”.

Nature of Collaboration

Participants reported relationships with a number of different types of organizations. When asked to describe relationships, some participants shared characteristics of the relationships themselves. In most cases, positive terms were used, such as “positive”, “friendly”, “strong” and “open”. In one case, a government participant used less positive terms to describe the relationships on his team:

Mostly, collaborations are internal, but within agriculture the culture is diverse and complex (i.e., crop producer vs. livestock); hard to get different groups together to talk water quality, [and] introducing others can be problematic (e.g., municipalities).

- Government

Participants also described relationships and collaborations in terms of the type of work being done. These responses were grouped for discussion in the remainder of this section according to the following themes: 1) operations and project-based work, 2) information-related work, and 3) administrative and regulatory relationships.

Operations and project-based work. Several participants described relationships that were based on actually carrying out work together or in collaboration with other organizations:

I think it's mostly project related and depending on the issues, usually the issue is identified and stakeholders impacted usually get together and start to resolve issues, South Saskatchewan River water quality allocations and licensing and issues with water quality in Bow River basin that affects irrigation, quality of water in fisheries, usually all of them are identified in the basin that is the reason for bringing in the stakeholder.

- Municipal (urban)

Point source matters, we work toward having the best technology available (e.g., waste water treatment) to set the best objectives (e.g., end of pipe concentrations) to meet the objectives.

- Government

Several participants also described working relationships that involved forming committees or being part of committees. For example, participants mentioned sitting on committees brought together to plan or to prepare planning documents.

I sit on the two councils for Old Man and Bow River in developing watershed plans.... We have [also] been invited to participate in other watershed activities. I've worked on Alberta Water Council project team for development of [the] framework of watershed management planning and shared government in water management.

- Non-profit

We also work with WPACs and airsheds to develop management plans; forest management plans too, we work with NGOs (e.g., Prairie Conservation Forum) and develop longer-term relationships.

- Government

Professional relationships are mostly project focused – in the work done around regional planning, land use planning, watershed, regional transit, and economic development – many projects with many stakeholders. [For] many projects province of Alberta is one of the stakeholders

- Non-profit

Information-related work. Another way in which participants collaborated was through information. First of all, participants described information sharing among different organizations in order to help work occur:

When I began running the farm, I had to learn a lot of things. I've been part of the farm all my life. I had to learn. Lots of the people who have shared information, helped me to be successful.

- Agriculture

We talk regularly with other irrigation districts, with other organizations at the BRBC. We talk to irrigation districts and Alberta Environment on a day-to-day basis.

- Agriculture

Another important information sharing activity is offering events such as training, workshops, or conferences. A few participants mentioned working collaboratively with others to offer these types of events, or offering these types of events because the need was identified:

We partner with the [municipality for] an annual week of training. It serves about 800 people a year.

- Non-profit

We collaborate with municipalities. They might want to change bylaw for land use management, for example, so we will undertake and run an education program on riparian for the community and the municipality will attend that. We bring in the expertise for the workshops to address where establishing these setbacks could be controversial.

- Non-profit

Participants also described working collaboratively with others to increase or improve the information available:

Really strong relationship with water and irrigation branch... and also with environment. That all came about with work started in 90s on Old Man and allegations about feed lots, chicken barns polluting water in southern Alberta. Worked with them then to make sure we had scientific evidence on strategies to deal with. Found out that the livestock industry didn't have near as much effect as people thought.

- Agriculture

Another important aspect of information sharing was that of advocacy, specifically, leveraging information to influence decisions:

Most projects we work on – most end up in a report that we write that will go to our executive committee for approval - maybe about regional policy, maybe about regional infrastructure systems like water or transit, maybe about region's point of view about issues that are of interest to the region that we want to bring to the attention of the province. A certain amount of advocacy and information sharing.

- Non-profit

Now, we have a committee involving different landowners and/or stakeholders. We decided that the public advisory committee should maintain a core group to continue on to monitor, work with government, and to ensure that government carried out plan. If the government was not meeting our requirements, this would be addressed through a community process. As well, the core group was responsible for getting phase 2 going.

- Non-profit

Administrative and regulatory relationships. Finally, a few participants described relationships that were more administrative in nature. One example was, regulatory or approval-based relationships:

Within the ESRD, relationships are based on our approvals for our storm, waste, and water approval within basin. The group from storm water perspective good relationships with other municipalities and councils.

- Municipal (urban)

Another example was funding-based relationships:

We have administrative relationships back to province, as they substantially fund our staff and projects – not the only funder, but the largest. We have financial accountability for our annual budget.

- Non-profit

Benefits of Collaboration

When asked about the benefits of collaboration, not all participants provided direct responses. Two main benefits of collaboration were identified: stronger outcomes and pooling of resources.

First of all, many participants reported that collaboration very often leads to a stronger outcome.

It just makes sense. In our interest to do so. The river gets managed far better.

- Agriculture

A particular idea discussed in relation to improvement of outcomes through collaboration was the emphasis by several participants that work was strengthened by including a variety of perspectives:

Created new relationships and broadened networks; added new insights and perspectives, diversity of thought.

- Government

Often when a sincere attempt is made at working together, final product is stronger and more robust for having a variety of perspectives going into the product, more comprehensive, more resilient. Much greater chance that if there was the possibility of something cropping up that would be problematic, greater chance that would be thought of.

- Non-profit

Well, all the stakeholders contribute and have impact on river basin, there is a cumulative effect in the health of BR basin. To really address negative impact, you need combined efforts of stakeholders to work together to reduce the impact. If one stakeholder take[s] on the role of improving condition and you still have 50-80% of groups not buying in, then difficult to achieve benefits. To protect river basin and health you need to address the cumulative effect of all the impact that's why you need a partnership approach.

- Municipal–urban

One participant discussed stronger outcomes as a result of collaboration in terms of leveraging other initiatives and helping to define objectives and tasks:

It helps to start conversations where there are inter-groups to leverage other initiatives. For example, storm water drainage initiative we are working with Alberta Environment. By having these relationships, [it helps] to set objectives and tasks for projects.

- Municipal (urban)

A second benefit of collaboration discussed by a few participants was the value in pooling resources:

Other thing is, if each organization were doing things they needed to do [separately] to represent issues we're dealing with, [would probably need] 5-6 times the resources.

- Agriculture

Shared costs, shared expertise, we couldn't do it if it wasn't joint, I wouldn't exist. The fact that we exist, it's because it's shared. Because [members] have kicked in a little bit of money [to start this organization].

- Non-profit

When more people are working together, you leverage more resources and can accomplish more.

- Government

What Hinders Collaboration

Participants were also asked what might hinder collaboration. These will be discussed in this section in terms of: 1) different goals and values, and 2) process issues.

Different goals and values. Many participants reported that different goals and values got in the way of collaboration. Data in this section included responses to the question of what hindered collaboration, as well as a more direct question of how joint work was prevented by dissimilar values. Many participants gave the impression that lack of shared goals was a major barrier (perhaps even the main barrier) to collaboration:

If in a situation where joint work was prevented by dissimilar values, it would result in never reaching shared conclusions, no moving ahead. There are always rivalries or competition, which [could all prevent getting to] a working solution.

- Municipal – rural

In many cases, participants described lack of shared goals or values as being about the difference between environmental sustainability goals on one hand, and goals related to profit or development on the other (as described in the Organizational Goals and Values section above).

If they don't have common goals, values, and principles, collaboration is not going to work. An example is the oil sands; the American groups are ran by lawyers who do not share common goals or agenda (non-environmentally sustainable solutions) and they do not come up with collaborative solutions.

- Non-profit

Some of them maybe have individual interest, stakeholder interest, such as economic interests – different interests. Another factor different is values that different stakeholders have. Those are the main ones, different economics and values.

- Municipal – urban

Another example of lack of shared goals and values was that of apathy or people not realizing that they might be affected by the work being done:

The challenge you have on that is how do you overcome apathy of people to be interested and informed on things. Lots don't come to table until personally affected. One [of the] biggest challenges I see is that a lot of the benefits accrue to community at large. So people see impact on their own actions, but don't see impact on their actions.... [See this] when dealing with public, and a lot of times business.

- Municipal (urban)

Another example of lack of shared goals and values was related to organizational constraints, for example, the need to work within a government mandate or proprietary data issues.

The government has mandates and ... we cannot go as far as we would like sometimes; sometimes goals don't always fit, so partnerships have a tendency to breakdown.

- Government

Sometimes propriety issues – organizations sometimes have practices with proprietary issues, so need to participate other ways.

- Non-profit

A final idea within this sub-theme was that not sharing goals or values related to collaboration would be more of a hindrance than differences among other types of goals:

If no one is going to make compromises, it doesn't work.

- Agriculture

Some other groups take a standoffish approach, don't align with organizations that are positional; work with groups that have a multi-stakeholder, collaborative approach; don't want to align with groups that are biased, as government we cannot be positional; we can take a stand on setting guidelines, but not when it is not for 'the public good'

- Government

There are two types of people that come to the table: There are those that recognize the issues and bring issues to table, but they are willing to do something, they are part of the solution. There are groups that are advocacy groups who like to point fingers at who should be doing something about that.

- Non-profit

When collaborations do not occur this is because misrepresentation, i.e., organization or representative misrepresents intentions and not trustworthy and does something differently than what was intended; breach of trust, unwillingness to communicate, and lack of commitment.

- Municipal - rural

Process issues. Several participants also discussed factors hindering collaboration that related to the process of bringing people together to collaborate. These included personality barriers, financial or resource barriers, and time constraints:

A number of things: personality conflicts, lack of time, lack of awareness (i.e., what your partners are doing all the time, you don't know activities or options that are available), resources (i.e., money and manpower).

- Municipal – rural

Financial questions, not enough money to put together meetings. Availability is an issue, organizations seek collaborations, and distance is a problem, sometimes you have to spread meetings out so that people are going to be involved.

- Agriculture

Other process issues that were perhaps more under the control of those attempting to lead a collaborative effort were things such as poor communication, not stating goals, being disorganized, or having a system that is too cumbersome for people to be heard:

Poor communication, poor statement of goals, disorganization - people need lots of notice.

- Agriculture

Sometimes where process makes it too cumbersome or frustrating to feel heard.

- Non-profit

Other participants specifically linked resources to the importance of process; i.e. emphasized that resources need to be devoted to the collaborative process:

A group needs to have a certain amount of professional understanding (i.e., scientific knowledge and expertise), which helps to link the group to other organizations. Further, this professional knowledge helps groups recognize from a scientific perspective and providing leadership, and providing leadership by making them aware of why they need to be connected in a bigger picture. You need some scientific leadership and lots of groups don't have that and cannot afford that. Most of these groups have minimal funding.

- Non-profit

Sometimes process themselves isn't well resourced, sometimes people want to work together, good leadership, but no resources to carry forward. People well intentioned trying to do it as an extra thing. Not because leadership isn't good or intention isn't good, but trying to bite off a piece too big to chew.

- Non-profit

In a more specific example, one participant talked about the importance of being sequential and having a carefully laid out process when determining what information to use and not use. This person described the use of such processes in their own organization, and suggested that it had not been used in the PMP:

It's key, having a professional person to help determine how to approach a particular task. You need to carry out a learning process in a sequential order that makes sense to the community you are dealing with. One of the criticisms of [the Bow River Basin Phosphorus Management] process that was not recognized, the process was poorly defined: They didn't know where they were going. Now having recognized that, that has been a learning process as well. It's been a good education process for government. The biggest difficulty they learned through the BRBP was lack of access and lack of information. Through this process, realized that projects don't take overnight working with community stakeholders.... The context of government lacked structure, which wasted time.

- Non-profit

Another specific example given in which process hindered collaboration was in terms of communication by government:

Government is very top down in communicating. They think that rural communities are on the website. Much of the rural communities are not in the social networking, which is more an urban character than rural. [This person highlighted the rural vs. urban divide with respect to communication and technology and how it is not accessible to rural areas specifically]. Government needs to recognize the electronic transition is still not there yet in rural communities. For example, I also serve on [another stewardship board] and the main purpose is to use that arm to speak to government for creating support for stewardship groups in rural communities. It is difficult for stewardship groups to form in rural communities to start up due to isolation.

- Non-profit

For example, one participant also emphasized that collaborations take time, which may not necessarily align with the political timelines.

With respect to timelines, it is reasonable to expect delays to get to collaboration and to work toward the “product”. However, it is not acceptable of government to pull the plug on projects for political reasons. Unreasonable delays over an election are not good enough, which leads to lack of commitment.

- Municipal (rural)

The need for a strong process to enhance collaboration was strongly reflected in terms of what helps collaboration, as will be seen in the Active and intentional process portion of the What Helps Collaboration section below.

What Helps Collaboration

Participants shared many factors that enhanced collaboration, particularly when asked what helps collaboration occur, what created their relationships and what keeps them going. Major themes that emerged in relation to what helps collaboration included: 1) common goals and shared work, 2) an active and intentional process, 3) trust and credibility, and 4) norms and expectations.

Common goals and shared work. The most common theme for these questions was that shared work and common goals was what helped relationships and collaboration to occur. This was conveyed by many participants, often multiple times in their responses to different questions:

In most cases, [relationships were created by] shared objectives and common issues that we worked together to solve. For example, with the agricultural sector we successfully work to have water on the landscape. With the government, the government identified the need to better manage phosphorus. We worked with government to better manage phosphorus, plus we are getting what we want: supporting our preservation and restoration of wetlands. It’s a “win-win” situation.

- Non-profit

[When asked what created relationships] I think it’s the common goal of protecting water sources in BR basin. Another area is regional storm water servicing, the storm water follows the topography of the municipal boundaries, water drains at different municipalities before receiving stream. The municipalities have to [work] together to come up with solutions.

- Municipal (rural)

In the question about goals of their organizations, participants were also asked directly how their goals affected work with others. The majority of these responses provided details about the relationship between goals and collaboration. In many cases, it was suggested that shared goals and values naturally lead to collaboration. For example, some participants remarked that the nature of the work itself necessitates collaboration:

We are integrated into a large region, anything that affects the region we are affecting because we have reservoirs, etc. [our infrastructure is in areas with roads, pipelines, etc.], Trans-Canada highway runs through [the region we deal with] for 100 miles. Every part of society is interacted

with our work in our district. Overlay that land use and everything people do – it's interconnected. It's a complex network.

- Agriculture

Other participants mentioned working together with others as a “win-win” situation, as working together helped both groups achieved their goals:

Yes, those goals directly related to some of the recommendations of watershed management plan. With the BRBP, goal is to protect riparian area and how it achieves those recommendations. Our work on managing total loading and phosphorus management helped achievement of water quality objectives in BR watershed management plan.

- Municipal – urban

We have a symbiotic relationship with our habitat goals and government phosphorus goals, in that we identified an overlapping common goal and have leveraged our efforts to achieve outcomes. There is the old adage, instead of working in isolation, we work together to have broader resources and success is much higher. Coincidentally, solutions to goals are complementary.

- Non-profit

My group focused on cumulative effects management and regional planning, including sub regional issues – focused on watersheds and broad scaling issues that involve multiple partners – the issues affect everyone, operating in isolation would not work in the long run.

- Government

Along this line, some participants mentioned that they are more likely to work with those who share similar goals and values:

People who share these goals, we work with more closely; there are many partners who fit this image; the government fosters these types of partnerships. Grass roots organizations that have similar values, we work with them when it makes sense

- Government

In the case of one Non-profit organization, it was suggested not only that it was more likely to work with those with similar goals and values, but to avoid working with those who do not share the all-important value of collaboration:

We'll work with any and all who will work in a collaborative manner on improving watershed. Those that don't... We'll decide case by case on what support we'll provide. We'll happily answer questions or direct them to other sources. May or may not be able to participate if process doesn't align with [organization]'s operating procedures. Sounds like a big barrier for participation is if an organization doesn't want to collaborate. We've built our reputation on being collaborative, we can't risk this reputation by working on something that focuses on one perspective. Want to focus on collaboration. At same time, we recognize that there are cases that [have to focus on one perspective], but we can't do everything so focus on cases that align with the way we like to work.

- Non-profit

A few participants brought up the interesting idea that goals, or the more specific objectives that underlie goals, can and should be shaped by the work being done. The argument was made that this might be necessary when work focuses on collaboration or when collaboration itself is an overall goal:

The fact that organization is based on collaboration means that all work we do with stakeholders and member municipalities is constantly trying to clarify where shared goals and interest are. That's our basis for working together, ... to find those common goals and visions. We have the extra step to demonstrate to province how plans we have at regional level are completely aligned with their expressed regional goals, provincial goals and policy. Aligned to provincial goals, within that regional goals created by partnership.

- Non-profit

Our goals are to influence policy makers based on us speaking and represent our industry based on solid info, facts, science, working collaboration. Lots of time you have to give up something to get something. Difficult with hard and fast markers, saying you're not going to deviate from them, that would create problems. Have to be adaptive. Opinions and policies can change, they better change. If you're finding that what you thought was the situation. When you talk about goals – our goals are very broad.

- Agriculture

Many participants also emphasized that although lack of shared goals and values may be a key barrier to collaboration, this can be overcome by coming to a deeper understanding or finding compromise.

When work with those who have different values, then that can really push us to have to come to a deeper understanding of exactly what's at stake. So that's a good thing – forces us to take harder look at assumptions we are making. Really look at fact that members have different values in same space. That's the good part of it. In other instances, where simply do not share values as those we are working with – can lead to shorter discussions. Can't find common ground, end up in stalemate, may be necessary for another party to weigh in.

- Non-profit

The elephant on the table. The only way, you don't let it be a barrier, you need to chip away [at] it. Need to find ways to deal with that

- Non-profit

For any relationship to thrive, have to be working from common ground. One of the key elements to relationship building is to find common ground amongst ourselves and with other organizations – government or NGO. You don't start relationship with an argument. The discussions and finding maybe you share some of the same values. That creates the basis for that relationship to evolve.... Sometimes you have to retrain people in how they think. We have to remind people to keep pet projects at the door, or any axes to grind. It takes a while.

- Agriculture

In this regard, a few participants emphasized the proactive nature of finding common ground. For example, one participant described helping those with seemingly different interests to listen to each other:

It's difficult to move forward [with] different values, the only thing you can do, explore and establish values that have not been recognized values. For example, in 2008 the provincial government was in the process of developing a new wetland policy. At the end when the policy was going to come into place, industry partners decided that the outcomes did not align with their goals and pulled out of the agreement. In 2013 they are working on developing a new wetland policy. [Our organization] has been proactive in this process approaching industry partners to better understand commonalities. Through this process, we have more areas of commonalities with the partners, but could only uncover these or we found that out by listening to each other.

- Non-profit

Another participant also emphasized finding common interests, and emphasized a need for structure and having terms of reference. This participant also linked this to creating trust, which will be discussed in the next section:

[I think what has made collaborations occur is] defining those common interests. One of the first things, I talked to everyone individually in the Basin and came to them with pre-written terms of reference. That's the way to do it to talk individually. It's about trust and finding out those interests: What's in it for you? What's in it for your organization? That's what I mean that collaboration needs structure [referring to terms of reference].

- Non-profit

Another participant emphasized that what often seems like different goals is often just operating under different timelines, and that working with industry stakeholders is helped by demonstrating how environmental sustainability actually supports good business.

In industry most objectives are short term, and serve internal stakeholders or shareholders, not necessarily their mandate to serve greater good in community. Their mandate is to survive and make money. Some see themselves as having social role, but a lot of that is to make their business role easier. Biggest challenge is that their timelines are short term – next 6 months or whatever. Not 30 years or whatever. ... We really have to do our homework so if we want to make changes in how do our business, [d]emonstrate that it is good business to be environmentally sustainable.

- Municipal (urban)

An active and intentional process. Many participants also emphasized that collaboration is a process and requires substantial effort even when there are shared goals and values. In this regard, some participants listed activities that helped keep relationships or collaboration going. In particular, regular contact through meetings or communication was emphasized:

[W]e have regular meetings, operations meeting on a monthly basis. The [irrigation] board and our town's council will meet quarterly; we've gone out of our way to sustain this relationship on an ongoing basis. Initiatives we are working on, we are keeping relationships intact.

- Municipal (rural)

A key aspect of the effort required for collaboration is a need for active leadership or guidance of the process:

I think it's up to the leaders and managers in the organizations to identify those potential problems and issues and get the key players together to developing solutions to those problems. The issues at

senior level, sometimes staff provide input and report to senior management, and they get a team together to get stakeholders to solving that problem.

- Municipal (urban)

Strong leadership of one organization and foresight. Leadership is shown by that organization and [through asking] opinions of other organizations.

- Agriculture

A few participants pointed out that not just any leadership style would work to enhance collaboration, but that there is a need for a facilitative style of leadership and a collaborative spirit or philosophy:

Common goals and objective, collaboration takes effort. Someone needs to step forward for collaboration, it's a concerted effort, and need[s] a facilitator. For example, the government has taken facilitator role getting a diverse group of stakeholders in the same room who may never have collaborated before. [Interviewer mentions that other participants mentioned the importance of leadership] Leadership, yes, but I used the term facilitator which is similar. I prefer facilitator rather than leader, because leader has connotation of someone "leading", whereas facilitator allows for people at the table to come to their own outcomes and decisions.

- Non-profit

I would want to repeat the point that inviting a bunch of people together and calling it a collaborative doesn't make it one. Not a process, it's a philosophy. If you enter into the process and it's restrictive and rule bound doesn't encourage thinking out of the box and people are convinced the outcome is determined before it begins, that's not collaboration. Could be a public relations thing, softening outcome for public before it comes out, but not collaboration. Joint process. Collaborations shouldn't have clear and established leadership; they do have leadership, but should be less authoritative and invasive.

- Non-profit

Trust and credibility. Another common theme that emerged with regard to facilitation of relationships and collaboration was that of building trust and credibility.

When you have been around and work on the landscape and get to be known and develop these relationships, we're well-respected, well known, and well trusted in the region.

- Non-profit

Some start out with lack of trust – not sure how information will be used. Fear of [the] unknown. Once they experience working with others and see benefits, realize they made the right choice.

- Non-profit

Credibility often seemed to be associated with individuals and organizations being perceived as neutral, transparent, and genuinely interested in collaboration. Many responses also showed an important relationship with the idea of collaboration as an active process, in two major ways: 1) Building trust and

credibility is part of that active process; and 2) People have trust in organizations that demonstrate intentional and successful processes to enhance collaboration.

That's a good question. I think because [our organization] has been [around] for a long time it's developed a reputation for being neutral and trustworthy and provide a forum to work together. Unless it's regulatory, if it's a general issue related to water quality and flow, the organizations will come to us [and say] "We sure would like some help to work through this problem".

- Non-profit

We work hard to gain the trust of people that we're working with, but being fairly open with our intentions, no hidden agendas. That doesn't happen overnight, the one thing about our success is that it's taken years of hard work and openness and working together and building trust. It is a long time, and frustrating experience but that road has to be taken.

- Agriculture

Very much to do with the tone of the relationships, how they communicate and how transparent they are. The process they shape for themselves. The example of the PMP is, in my view, a really excellent example of an intention to collaborate and a very good mutually respectful set of relationships among provincial stakeholders and staff, and some really good processes. In a second, I would hold up that process and relationships as a wonderful example of collaboration and leadership. And bow river basin council, would say the same thing.

- Non-profit

One interesting aspect of trust-building in relationships is that of organizations trusting a process and therefore being more open to encouraging staff to participate and to sending the "right" staff, i.e. staff who were right for the work being done.

Do organizations freely share their staff? Absolutely. Especially government organizations, municipalities, irrigation districts. Definitely become in kind contribution from organizations. They see a value in having their staff participate in our activities. I know that from talking with [urban municipal government] employees – they have to justify in kind volunteer time, [and I have heard from them that] the actions are valued and they value work that council is doing.

- Non-profit

We've been able to establish a reputation to think strategically. Now organizations don't just send a warm body, but send someone ready to contribute.

- Agriculture

Similarly, several participants described the idea of developing the credibility of their organization, in terms of helping those working with them to trust that something would be done with that work or that the work would lead to a successful outcome or change.

Success. That's the most important. If we weren't experiencing those levels of success, recognizing the importance of making a change and improving the system. We live here, we see what is happening, that is part of our driver, knowing that we do something it will get recognized and will be acted on (e.g., frameworks and reports feedback). A lot of groups need to realize, you have to develop

credibility, not just as an advocacy group, but you have to be credible; you have to develop knowledge and expertise to have something to bring to the table.

- Non-profit

When working with so many volunteers, who are so passionate, [it is] very rewarding to them to know that something being done with information. Good way to have volunteer burn out is to do work no one ever sees again. One of the greatest challenges is how to keep [them] ... energized and eager. [In order to do that, we try] to make sure there is something for everyone, and that work is meaningful. Aim to get actions and recommendations that can be carried forward through other organizations.

- Non-profit

Another interesting idea that emerged in terms of trusting relationships was the idea of the importance of relationships that were personal or less formal. Part of this appeared to be about relationships that had been built by frequent contact over time, but part of this also appeared to be about creating relationships that went beyond the more formal structures of work. This was mentioned by several additional participants in terms of using or discarding information, as discussed in the Information-Sharing section below.

Because we have members, the communication system is... formal and informal. Informal because there are hundreds of members... people inform each other because they know each other. People go to similar meetings so the BRBC comes up regularly.

- Non-profit

Great way to build relationships, for example not just looking at a name and email, but knowing a person, and can later pick up the phone and start talking to them, and likely get a favourable response.

- Non-profit

With that, important not just to have formal relationships, but also informal relationships and letting those in trenches talk to their counterpart on the other side of the fence. Lots of formal [relationships] are at a higher level, managers, etc. doesn't let trenches interact with each other. That is where the educational work we do, or do together with [Alberta Low Impact Development Partnership], comes in handy to understand each other.

- Municipal (urban)

In that regard, several participants talked about actively trying to ensure that participants viewed their involvement as "fun", which helped participants trust that they would find the process of participation enjoyable:

Make sure atmosphere in all things we're doing is positive. Serious issues and talk about them seriously, but can't have environment where people are afraid to put up their hand. Have several characters, who add interesting discussions. All types of personalities, really stimulate members. Some people like to read planning documents, may not be fun for me, - but people we attract are interested in these issues. For members, this is an area of interest, not just a job. Make sure we're focusing on what those groups are doing. Not all just [serious stuff]... we have reward dinners, recognition dinners, etc. We don't have unlimited funds, but like to recognize members where we can.

- Non-profit

Norms and expectations. A few responses indicated that collaboration is also helped by a shift in norms – i.e., that collaboration is more accepted as common practice or as an expected way to work:

Collaboration occurs very frequently in Alberta. A model of multisectoral [work], especially in the environmental area because people have commitment to being part of a solution and there are opportunities for people to collaborate. Collaboration is becoming an expectation and a norm in the province.

- Agriculture

Related to this theme, one participant mentioned the idea that the government seems to be working more collaboratively and in less of a “top-down” manner than in the past:

Paradigm shift from before, [ministry of] environment was nothing more than a regulator, now they are a facilitator for dealing with quality parameters, how do we deal with them collaboratively - no more top down approach, working together to come up with a solution that make sense..... [There are] people coming in that the education process is different than it used to be – [instead of] strictly science, people coming in who know collaboration is way forward.... Not to say deputy minister or minister level, but people in government responsible for change. They are saying they are going to move agenda forward better if working collaboratively with stakeholders.

- Agriculture

A government participant mentioned a similar idea, but seemed to suggest not that government was working more collaboratively but that it may be important for government to step back more to allow collaboration to occur:

Things have moved away from government thinking “we can do everything” to “we need to step back and let other groups help achieve environmental management goals”. This has been a big change in the past 12 years.

- Government

Information-Sharing

Participants were also asked about obtaining and sharing information during the course of their work. Responses to these questions are discussed in this section according to: 1) where participants get information, 2) sufficiency of information, and 3) criteria to use or discard information.

Where Participants Get Information

Participants were asked how they determine where to look and who to speak to when they need information. They were also asked where they look for information about what other organizations in the SSRB are doing.

There was substantial overlap in responses to these two separate questions in terms of sources of information, and many participants responded about information more generally when asked about how

they learn what others are doing. For that reason, responses to both questions have been combined in this section.

Responses indicated that information was a major consideration for most participants, and that where participants would look for information might depend on what it is being used for. Types of information being used included reports, raw data, research results, and maps. Several participants indicated that they conduct their own research and have their own data available.

When asked about where they look for information, participants listed places to look for information such as government and industry websites, Google searches, and internal information resources:

I need the Internet, check grain prices, comes off the Internet. Other info comes from people specialized in the services that I need. If I'm looking for machinery, I'm going to talk to various machinery dealers, talk to other farmers,...[also have] a specialist on the farm hotline. I also go to agronomy workshops, educational workshops. Crop works put on various seed companies, look at varieties of grain by researchers and look at them in plots. Producing in your particular area. I'll resource printed materials, they all have agronomic traits and compare them to different varieties. Get information from all over the place.

- Agriculture

[I collect] a lot of background on the issues related to the crop sector and [get] this information through email and online. Online information is usually from the [government] websites, Google search, and industry websites.

- Agriculture

Several participants also listed member websites, newsletters or email list serves when asked about obtaining information what other organizations in the SSRB are doing:

From being on a number of list serves and weekly updates via email, and peruses through the emails on a weekly basis to keep on top of what is going on.

- Municipal - rural

The majority of participants indicated that they relied on their contacts and relationships to get the information they needed, including obtaining information about what others in the Basin are doing:

We have contacts with expertise and knowledge in every part of the Basin. Because of that wide network of formal and informal side, we know them and they know us.

- Non-profit

In that regard, one participant emphasized that individuals and organizations seem to be moving toward sharing information more willingly:

Willingness to share information is a huge component. In the past, there has been guarding of information; but in this era of Google and information tools, information is made readily available in this day and age. I think willingness to share information from collaborations and sharing experiences without fear of critical analysis plus understanding other groups' perspectives.

- Municipal (urban)

Sufficiency of Information

Participants were asked whether they felt they had enough information about what others in the South Saskatchewan River Basin are doing. All but a few participants answered this question directly. Some of these indicated that they did feel they had enough information:

Having 20 staff involved in initiatives... Being government provides us with greater reach.

- Government

A few participants mentioned that there may be a lot of information available, but that it is difficult to get “enough” information.

I would say, you can never have enough information about what organizations are doing. We are doing a pretty good job, there are a lot of organizations working in South Saskatchewan River Basin, the more we know what other people and organizations are doing.... [T]here is so much complexity, it gets to be too much, we need “sound bites” of what people are doing, summary and relevant information. Folks fail to share relevant information with each other.

- Non-profit

Similarly, some participants indicated that they may have enough of some types of information but not enough of other types. In this regard, one participant indicated that they needed more “regional” information. A few other participants indicated that it was difficult to get the more detailed information that would be relevant and appropriate for their work:

No we don't have much information on what other partners are doing. We have a qualitative idea; but we don't have numerical or hard information of what other organizations are doing. We only have required information; we focus on the regulatory requirements.

- Municipal (urban)

There's probably two layers of info – one layer is info about what the organizations are doing.... Website or reports. That layer of info they make available and we have wonderful access. Beneath that, [there is] a layered of more detailed info that we use to do our analysis of issues. Details about land use, or water use, mobility, traffic and transit, economic development, Statistics Canada data about a community... Technical information used to do analysis that we use to do work doesn't normally surface. As our [organization's] research coordinator, part of what I do is figure out what data or info do they have, are they willing to share it, so that nobody has to spend money a second time around to get that info again.

- Non-profit

A few participants pointed out a lack of required information and limitations in the information available:

A large barrier for most groups.... It helps to have someone with technical experience. For us it has been a long-term process and the network we have developed has helped to look for information. In fact, what we have learned in our process, scientific information on watersheds are poorly documented, hard to access and is often inaccessible unless you have a lot of money to pay consultants. Even in government it is hard to find information and not accessible. We have pushed...the need for [an] information database that municipalities and stewardships can use.

- Non-profit

For example, Minister visiting, there is no monitoring, no data, so much more research needs to be done, monitoring but also in best practices, we don't have research that tells us how pollutants get into river.

- Agriculture

What is challenging is being able to extrapolate information from other jurisdictions and parts of the world and apply to our local... context.

- Municipal (urban)

Finally, some participants mentioned that there was a lot of information coming to them, and that this was a problem because it was often too much information and may not be packaged well or contain the relevant information:

It's always a challenge to extract information who are generally overwhelmed. We are quite specialized, much of it is interesting, but, and because we're urban a lot of attention is on more agricultural and regional kinds of things and urban theme is onto itself.

- Non-profit

I get a ton of email – people send me information this way; information not packaged terribly well; I really don't know what other municipalities are up to; I sometimes get rather frustrated by that, the 'information age' is providing a lot of little bits of information, we are generalists now, not specialists. ... My time is limited, I need the kernels of information I need to sustain my work and connections; too much information is bad because it takes time to discard information.

- Government

Criteria to Use or Discard Information

Participants were asked what criteria they use to decide what information to use and what information to discard. Participants were also asked who or what they rely on for the information about what others in the SSRB are doing, and some participants were asked whose information or what source they believed the most. This yielded some additional information about criteria to decide what information to use or discard. Themes for criteria to use or discard information included relevance, quality, and collaboration.

Relevance. One criterion identified by participants was relevance of information, in other words, participants indicated that they would use only information that related to the issues or tasks being worked on:

Depends what kind of information for example information on things that are really important to our organization or sustainability, we would take that information seriously, if it doesn't affect us, it's just for making decisions.

- Agriculture

Quality. Another criterion for deciding whether to use or discard information was the quality of the information. This included ensuring that the information was based on sound science:

Because we are science-based, we look for objectivity. If people are providing credible and objective information, we consider it valid. It's important to recognize that we have important decisions to make as a society, we can't afford to work on emotion, and we need to know. A lot of issues are from an emotional, subjective perspective. We come from a solid basis in fact, specifically in science. Most decisions that are made about environment are political or social decisions. You build that conversation around that solid, foundational, fact so you can have objective and valid conversations around the issues.

- Non-profit

Quality of information also included other considerations, such as the source of information, the age of the information, and how well it can be understood:

For me, it becomes a question of where did the information come from – reliable source, is it current or old, is it something that's understandable or ambiguous. If it [meets all those criteria], then I know it's good information. At the opposite end, not good if [doesn't meet those criteria].

- Non-profit

If we feel that information we received is not based on fact or a good background of information and is more of a perspective or a very generic body of work, we may give less credibility to that information. The determining factor is where the information is coming from and what it is based on. ... Information we get from Alberta Environment if it is related to water quality, for example, because they have sampling stations in the Bow River and regular monitoring data, data points and the supporting documented water quality information.

- Municipal (rural)

Another interesting aspect of quality information brought up by one participant from the Non-profit sector was the idea of balancing information from a number of different sources:

Part of the role [of our organization] is about balance. We are not afraid to use controversial information from another interest group and we ensure that we have countering information from other interest groups.... With respect to bringing information to the table, that aligns with your organization being neutral.... [A] healthy ecosystem is important, but people need to make a living, so we look at social, economic, and environmental.

- Non-profit

Collaboration. Not surprisingly, collaboration emerged again as an important tool for helping participants to decide what information to use or discard. This was not a criteria per se, but a method or process used to decide which information to use.

We rely on technical experts to go through and decide what is and is not appropriate. Some types of information will be useful in one type of application and not another.... [There is] a wide range of info, we are very lucky to have a wide range of resources with different expertise. Without that, it is hard to operate with all the information we have.

- Non-profit

As discussed in the *What helps collaboration* section above, the importance of informal networks was also emphasized in terms of criteria to use or discard information. In particular, participants

emphasized that they trusted information more when there was a more personal relationship with the person providing the information:

A lot of the information I get doesn't come from somebody's website, or from someone's communication department. It comes from the key contacts that are your network, and you can trust that information you get from them is what you need to clearly understand what you need to know. Not the stuff that comes over the airwaves, it's those personal key contacts you have within those organizations that you think are critical.

- Agriculture

Peer is good. If you know the people, I guess is also people you trust, organizations you trust or have a relationship with. The purpose for the information is to provide data or to support a cause. You're more likely to believe that type of information (e.g. information is to provide data or to support a cause)? It goes back to if you have a relationship with organization or person sending you information – information from someone within my business, I trust that. If it's information that is to promote someone's agenda or cause, you'd have to look at is this propaganda or isn't it. If it's to support a political opinion, you take it with a grain of salt.

- Agriculture

In that regard, one stakeholder expressed frustration of being in a more specialized field and not having more people to collaborate to help sort through information and pull out the most relevant and quality information.

There's a lot of poor information out there, unfortunately, really have to be able to get the bad part out of it. In order to do that, need a fair bit of experience to get through it.... Do a lot of it myself, the field is thin, not a lot of active people.... Sometimes I'm using junior professionals and train them up. But a lot of it I have to do myself, and try to utilize my network of national and international professionals to ask what has and hasn't worked for them. It's a lot of effort and there are no shortcuts.

- Municipal (urban)

Support for Decision-Making

How Participants are Involved in Decision Making

Participants listed different ways that they become involved in decision making, including preparing documents, attending meetings, or open houses. Several also mentioned gathering information or bringing the right information to the table to influence decisions being made. A key method of getting involved in decision making mentioned by participants was that of being part of committees or groups. For example, one participant in an urban municipal role mentioned task teams, steering committees and technical teams as ways to be involved in the decision making process. Several also mentioned being part of committees and initiatives such as the Bow River Basin Council or the Phosphorus Management Plan.

Many of the responses to this question demonstrated the importance of collaboration in the decision making process. For example, a few participants mentioned working with others to improve their own

understanding to either make decisions themselves and/or use the information to influence other decision makers.

I support staff by having the staff collect and analyze information. I try to support them to make the best possible decision based on information at hand and at the same time looking at the triple bottom line analysis, including the social costs and environmental considerations ... I'm on various projects and a contributor, so I present information from initiatives to senior management for decisions, make recommendations to the groups and initiatives I'm involved in that could be the best for our community.

- Municipal (urban)

I try to support and bring the expertise to the table to support the different views. It's not my opinion; I need to bring the experts to the table to discuss the issue. It's important that I understand the issues and what needs to be done.

- Non-profit

Several participants mentioned that they had been or would expect to be invited to get involved in the decision making process. In this regard, participants emphasized the need to establish credibility and a reputation to be helpful in the process:

Typically involved by invitation. Not always good to insinuate oneself in decision making without invitation. And hopefully we have established ourselves as being positive, valued in decision making, becomes easier for those making decisions to invite me or my organization.

- Non-profit

Feeling Heard and Expectation of Change

Participants were asked whether they felt they were being heard in the decision making process, and whether there was an expectation that anything would change as a result of their involvement in the decision making process. These responses showed a great deal of overlap and have been combined in this section.

Only a few responses appeared to indicate not feeling heard or not expecting change as a result of being involved in decision making processes. One partnership from the agriculture industry seemed to indicate not being involved in decision making processes at the provincial level that Alberta Environment was the regulatory body so they make the decisions. One participant did not feel heard as an individual farmer, and indicated a need for farmer's voices to be heard, a need for improved research and monitoring, and a need for improved mechanisms to share information to individual farmers in a way they can understand.

A few participants expressed a mixed opinion regarding feeling heard and expectation of change:

The expectation that anything will change is that 'there is always hope.' There is a little bit of skepticism, but there are opportunities for [my sector] to share their input and for the message to be heard, which then 'we have the ability to be heard.'

- Agriculture

Collaboration is great provided it results in outcomes... nice to have discussion, but need tangible changes or that process was a significant waste of time.

- Non-profit

At times feel that during consultation the decision has already been made. Sometimes we have positive influence and we have been heard.

- Agriculture

Almost half of the participants expressed more positive views, indicating that they had seen evidence that their involvement had resulted in change. An important distinction that emerged here was the sphere of influence. First of all, there was the idea of having an influence within their projects or within their organization (particularly if they worked within a municipality). Not surprisingly, this seemed to be more of an expectation among participants:

Yes because you can influence the direction in terms of the program developed and that being supported, but I think that is an individual action.

- Municipal (rural)

For the day-to-day operations of our organization, it is up to us to make those decisions.

- Agriculture

Secondly, there was the idea of having an influence on decisions being made regionally or provincially. Despite this being more outside of their immediate sphere of influence, some participants indicated that they felt they did have influence on decisions at this level:

Generally, yeah I think so internally and at the regional level, I hope. I definitely, because decisions are on consensus basis decision-making process, I'm a voice within, a voice that is being heard.

- Municipal (urban)

I think so, it's not me, it's the organization that actually has influence on what happens and what actually happened.... If you bring the right people together, then you can get something done.

- Non-profit

To be honest, I am fairly satisfied in how my organization functions in relationships with government usually at my level talking about decisions arrived at jointly. Talking about decisions made over time, usually the solution is fairly apparent. Haven't really experienced where someone has dug in their heels and done something that doesn't make sense from perspective of industry.

- Agriculture

Good mechanism for people to feel heard, generally they do. Elected officials and staff. Good systems for space to be heard. In regional context, depends on project and who is leading it. In projects like the bow river basin council work, excellent process to feel heard and decisions to be arrived at. Work in the province, happy to be involved in PMP, very good opportunity for everybody to be heard. Generally within region, between municipalities, good spirit of listening to each other.

- Non-profit

Two individuals from a Non-profit with reported success in influencing decision making emphasized several considerations in this subject. Firstly, getting information to those who are more likely to have a hand in the decision making:

When we work on recommendations and actions and planning guideline tools, pretty important not to just develop material, but get it to the right people.

- Non-profit

A second factor to consider when doing work to influence decisions was the importance of not having an expectation that one will influence all decisions:

Part of our work is expectation management - not just what information we send out can do, but what we can do. We believe that we will slowly move forward in the right direction. May not be big things, but we are moving in the right direction. Have to make sure folks participating know that we are not going to change actions and management overnight.

- Non-profit

A third factor to consider when doing work to influence decisions, the importance of receiving feedback from decision makers regarding how information was used and why decisions were made:

I have often reminded people that because advice isn't taken doesn't mean it isn't good advice. The decision rests with someone else. They may be seeking advice from others. What I have asked of government is that if advice isn't followed we would like to know why. If there were other considerations involved, we would like to understand that. That can only make us better advisors in the future. The government has been good about this.

- Non-profit

The importance of a feedback loop in the process of influencing decision makers was a view that was also expressed by a representative of municipalities:

I think part of where there is sometimes a sense of not feeling heard – or organizations don't feel heard – is when there has been an invitation for them to speak [their] point of view, then nothing comes of it, or if it's not reflected in a consistent way in what is decided.

- Non-profit

Summary

Overall, the 21 interviews conducted provided a very positive view of collaboration among stakeholders in the South Saskatchewan River Basin, relative to the Phosphorus Management Plan (PMP) stakeholder network. However, it should be noted that despite a larger sample size in the SNAPP Phase 1 work, SNAPP Phase 2 included a comparatively smaller sample, and did not include contacts from industry, development and academia given lack of ability, or other reasons, to participate. Participants from these sectors may have provided different viewpoints in terms of their perspectives on relationships and how to better involve stakeholders with similar or different goals and values.

Despite these limitations, a variety of viewpoints were included, and valuable information was gathered relative to collaboration and information sharing in stakeholder relationships. A summary of the main findings is shared in the table below, along with suggested uses for the PMP steering committee, or other collaborative efforts.

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
1. Roles	Participants' organization types were as follows: 4 government, 7 non-profit, 5 municipalities, and 5 agriculture.	Explore opportunities to further engage existing participants, and identify areas of future engagement based on possible gaps in organization type.
2. Organizational Goals and Values	Many similarities among responses of participants across different organization types. No participants from industry or academia, so difficult to assess to what extent their goals and values might differ from other organization types. Emerging themes described below.	Explore goals and values of different types of organizations in future work, particularly those from academia and industry. Determine if goals are shared/common, and identify opportunities to collaborate.
a. Environment and Sustainability Goals	All participants expressed goals and values related to the environment and sustainability. Goals of sustainability must be balanced with other goals and values such as development, operating within a budget, or making a profit. Achieving this balance is possible, and it can be emphasized that a healthy ecosystem also supports a healthy economy.	Identify opportunities to explicitly interconnect and balance environmental sustainability goals with other goals (e.g. a healthy ecosystem supports a healthy economy, etc.).
b. Collaboration Goals	Most of the participants expressed that their organizational goals and values were related to collaboration. This included valuing practices which enhanced collaboration or ensured collaboration was effective, such as honesty, transparency, respect, and avoiding blaming and confrontation.	Ensure collaboration with others explicitly incorporates principles such as honesty, transparency, respect, and avoiding blaming and confrontation, formally in working agreements (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
		Understanding, etc.).
c. Information and Advocacy Goals	Some participants described goals of gathering information, to ensure that adequate and relevant information was gathered and interpreted, to enhance awareness, and to influence decision making.	<p>Ensure that open and transparent information sharing is formally recognized in working agreements (see above for examples).</p> <p>Seek to identify and track information sharing (e.g. through web-based portals)</p> <p>Seek to ensure that interpretation of information is consistent (e.g. key messages) and that decisions are communicated.</p>
6. Collaboration	This is a key section of this report. Emerging themes described below.	-
a. Frequency of Collaboration	Overall, responses indicated that collaboration was common in the SSRB.	<p>Seek to maintain a high degree of collaboration.</p> <p>Identify trends in collaboration over time through, for example, an ongoing social network analysis (SNA).</p>
b. Nature of Collaboration	<p>Some participants described their relationships with other organizations as "positive", "friendly", "strong" and "open".</p> <p>Participants also described relationships and collaborations in terms of the type of work being done, which were grouped according to: 1) operations and project-based work, 2) information-related work, and 3) administrative and regulatory relationships.</p>	Through an SNA, explicitly identify purposes, goals, etc. of collaboration, to ensure performance of collaboration.
c. Benefits of Collaboration	Two main benefits of collaboration identified: 1) stronger outcomes, and 2) pooling of resources.	<p>Identify how collaboration assists outcomes (e.g. in developing outcomes statements or achieving outcomes?).</p> <p>Identify how and where collaboration assists in pooling resources (e.g. increase staff capacity or access to information or infrastructure?).</p>
d. What Hinders	1) Different goals and values. Lack of shared goals	All collaborative efforts should begin

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
Collaboration	<p>identified as a main barrier to collaboration.</p> <p>2) Process issues. Collaboration can be hindered by poor communication, not stating goals, being disorganized, not having a well-laid out process, and communicating in a “top-down” way.</p>	<p>with an exploration of goals and values and an attempt to find common ground, particularly among organizations that seem to have very different values. Intentionally seek to include stakeholders that may have different goals and values, especially academia and industry, and proactively explore common ground.</p>
e. What Helps Collaboration	<p>Responses were grouped by the following themes:</p> <p>1) Common goals and shared work. Common goals and values were key for collaboration. Many emphasized the need to be proactive and to actively establish common ground in all collaborative efforts. For example, emphasizing how environmental sustainability supports a healthy economy and good business.</p> <p>2) Active and intentional process. Collaboration was enhanced through processes including regular meetings and communication, leadership in a facilitative rather than directive style, and helping participants see common ground in terms of goals and values.</p> <p>3) Trust. Building trust and credibility is part of an active intentional collaborative process, and was associated with being perceived as neutral, transparent, and genuinely interested in collaboration.</p> <p>Other ideas that emerged in terms of trust were that:</p> <p>1) being seen as credible ensured that organizations sent staff who were right for the work being done, 2) trust was based on belief that something would be done with that work or that the work would lead to a successful outcome or change, and 3) there was importance in relationships that went beyond the more formal structures of work and were more “personal”.</p> <p>4) Norms and expectations. Collaboration is also helped by a shift in norms, in which collaboration is more accepted as common practice or as an expected way to work.</p>	<p>Effectively communicating how a healthy ecosystem supports a healthy economy (as discussed above) may assist profit and development-related organizations see common ground and collaborate.</p> <p>Ensure all collaborative work includes an active and intentional process which is adequately resourced and clearly laid out (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, etc.).</p> <p>The process of collaboration should include opportunities and processes (facilitated or informal) to build and nurture trust and credibility between stakeholders.</p> <p>In cases where organizational barriers might get in the way of successfully leading a collaborative effort, time may be better spent joining collaborative efforts that are properly resourced with organizations that have shown themselves to be credible. However, this is based on what credibility means to each individual; thus, performance measure of social capital (e.g. credibility measures) could be developed to help guide decision-making.</p> <p>Consider the role of norms and expectations in collaborative work (e.g. working towards an</p>

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
		organizational culture or a culture within one's field). Open discussions on expectations in collaborative work, on roles and responsibilities, etc. and document for future use (e.g. Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding, etc.).
7. Information-Sharing	Emerging themes described below.	-
a. Where Participants Get Information	In addition to government and industry websites, Google searches, and internal information resources, the majority of participants indicated that they relied on their contacts and relationships to get the information they needed. Some emphasized more informal relationships as being more important than formal channels.	Make use of networks, including more informal professional networks, when sharing or obtaining information.
b. Sufficiency of Information	While some indicated having enough information, others indicated that it was difficult to have enough information and others indicated that it was hard to access the information that was most useful for their work. Others indicated that there was too much information, and that it was hard to sort through all of it.	Use SNA as a process to determine information needs, over time.
c. Criteria to Use or Discard Information	Participants used the following to sort through information: 1) relevance of the information for their work, 2) quality of the information, including whether it is based on sound science and the age, source and how well it can be understood, and 3) collaboration, in terms of making use of people in their network to help them locate information and sort through information.	Track the relevance of information through an SNA process (e.g. collect data through survey questions).
8. Support for Decision-Making	Emerging themes described below.	-
a. How Participants are Involved in Decision-Making	Participants became involved in decision making by preparing documents, attending meetings, bringing the right information to the table to influence decisions being made, and, especially, being part of committees or groups. Some mentioned the importance of collaboration in this process, and others mentioned the need to be invited to the decision making process.	Determine participation in decision-making through SNA (e.g. directionality of communications on a particular topic, in a decision-making context).

Code	Summary of Findings	Suggested Use of Findings
<p>b. Feeling Heard and Expectation of Change</p>	<p>About half of participants indicated that they felt heard and had an expectation of change as a result of their involvement in the decision making process, while the remainder were more mixed.</p> <p>Considerations for involvement in decision making were: 1) getting information to those who are more likely to have a hand in the decision making; 2) the importance of not having an expectation that one will influence all decisions; and 3) the importance of receiving feedback from decision makers regarding how information was used and why decisions were made.</p>	<p>Identify the key individuals with decision-making authority; and, lay out clear expectations of how input will be used in decision-making.</p> <p>Commit to communicating how and why decisions have been made, in a clear and concise format.</p>

Appendix A – Introduction Email sent to Interview Contacts

Dear [Name],

In 2011, the Alberta Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development conducted a survey about the Bow River Phosphorus Management Plan. This survey was conducted in order to get information about the number and characteristics of individuals involved in this plan, resulting in a social network analysis.

I am writing on behalf of Objective Research and Evaluation, who have been externally contracted to carry on this project by doing interviews with selected individuals working in the South Saskatchewan River Basin. Interviews will gather in-depth information about how different individuals and organizations collaborate and how information is shared. This information will be used to develop plans for improving collaboration and information sharing in the future.

You have been identified as an individual who can provide valuable information for this project, so we are hoping to interview you. The interview consists of 10 questions, and usually takes about 45 minutes. You will be contacted by me or my colleague Mari Hidalgo in the coming weeks to request your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at rsachs@objective.pro.

Thank you in advance and we look forward to connecting with you soon.

--

Robyn Sachs, MSc., Consultant
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rsachs@objective.pro
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Appendix B – Telephone Script used with Interview Contacts

My name is [NAME] and I am calling on behalf of Objective Research and Evaluation. We sent an email on January 31 letting you know that you would be contacted to participate in an interview about your work in the South Saskatchewan River Basin. As mentioned in the email, information from interviews will be used to develop plans for improving collaboration and information sharing in the future.

The interview is 10 questions, and usually takes about 45 minutes. I am not an employee of the government of Alberta, but have been brought in as an external contractor. The information from all interviews will be summarized in an objective report provided to the Government of Alberta. All information will be shared as group information and no individuals will be identifiable. It is your choice whether you want to participate in the interview, and you can stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer certain questions.

I also want to mention that the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development of the Government of Alberta has asked to receive all notes that we take during the interview. Names and identifying information such as organization name will be removed. The information from the interviews is not invasive, but a way to get an idea of your information needs and how information is shared with other organizations. We will not be asking about your relationship with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development or your opinion of them. The Ministry is not likely to make use of or even review the notes, but wants to have all data from the project on their records.

Are you willing to participate in the interview and to share the notes of the interview with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development? Y/N

Do you have time now? Y/N

If not, what is a better time to contact you to complete the interviews (set aside about one hour):

When completing interview:

Do you consent to taking part in the interview? Do you consent to taking part in the interview? Y/N

Do you consent to sharing the notes from your interview with the Department of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Government of Alberta? Y/N

Identification number: _____

Time of interview start: _____

Time of interview end: _____

Interview Questions

Preamble to Q1: Everyone has a role and story behind how they got to where they are. I would like to learn more about your role and hear your story.

Q1: What is your role within your organization? How did you get involved in this work?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q1: What do you do and why?

Preamble to Q2: We all have relationships that shape our work. I am curious about the relationships that shape your work in the South Saskatchewan River Basin.

Q2: Does your organization have relationships with other organizations⁸ in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If yes, how would you describe these relationships? What created these relationships? What keeps these relationships going?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q2: Does your organization work with other organizations, and if so, how do you work together? Why do you work together? What are some specific examples of work?

Preamble to Q3: Information is essential to everyone's work. I am interested in understanding how information plays a role in your work.

Q3: How do you determine where to look and who to speak to when you need information? What criteria do you use to decide what information you use and what information you discard?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q3: What guides where you look and who you talk to when you need information?

Preamble to Q4: Information is useful in proper doses and the right 'packaging'. I would like to know more about the volume and form of the information that reaches you.

Q4: Do you have enough information about what other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin are doing? Where do you get this information from? Who or what do you rely on for this information?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q4: Do you know what others are doing, and if so, how do you find out? Whose information or what source do you believe the most?

⁸ Organization' refers to organizations in the private, Non-profit, academic, and government sectors. Stakeholders would be probed about each sector whenever questions were focused on organizations.

Preamble to Q5: Goals drive our work and motivate us to get involved in other people's work. I would like to know more about how goals shape your work and how they connect you with others in the South Saskatchewan River Basin.

Q5: What goals has your organization set for itself? How do these goals impact your work and your relationships with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q5: What does your organization want to accomplish and how does this affect your connections with others?

Preamble to Q6: Every organization has a core set of principles that guide their work. These principles are a reflection of an organization's values. I am interested in learning more about your organization's values.

Q6: What does your organization value? Does your organization share these values with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If so, what types of joint work do shared values lead to? If not, how is joint work prevented by dissimilar values?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q6: What is important to your organization and is this shared with others? What happens when organizations believe in the same things? What happens when organizations fundamentally differ?

Preamble to Q7: Working together should help all involved, but this is not always the case. I am interested in how working together in the South Saskatchewan River Basin looks from your perspective.

Q7: Does your organization collaborate with other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin? If yes, what are some examples? What are the joint benefits for all parties involved in the collaboration? If there are no joint benefits, what is the motivation for the collaboration?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q7: Does your organization work with others, and if yes, what are the benefits? If there are no benefits, why collaborate?

Preamble for Q8: Collaboration is not natural or common. It requires effort and the right circumstances. I would like to gain your insights on collaboration in the South Saskatchewan River Basin.

Q8: Do you see other organizations in the South Saskatchewan River Basin collaborating? How frequently does this occur? When collaborations do occur, what do you think made this happen? When collaborations do not occur when they should have, what do you think got in the way?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q8: Do others work together? If so, what are the facilitators? If not, what are the barriers?

Preamble for Q9: We all like to be involved in making decisions that impact our work. I am curious what your involvement in decision making processes consists of.

Q9: How do you provide support or information to become involved in decision making? Is there a need for you to be heard and are you being heard? Is there an expectation that anything will change as a result of your involvement in the decision making process?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q9: How do you get involved in decision making? Are your heard? Do you believe that you input is taken into consideration when decisions are made?

Preamble to Q10: We have covered a lot of ground, but we may have missed something that is important to you. I would like to know if there is anything else that you wish to add.

Q10: Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?

Alternative, simplified wording for Q10: Anything else?

Appendix C – Glossary of Key Terms (organized by topic, not alphabetically)

Social Capital: Generally, the concept of social capital has been associated with social and civic participation and with networks of cooperation, collaboration and solidarity. In addition, concepts such as trust, reciprocity, social cohesion and institutional effectiveness have been associated with social capital. Generally speaking, there are three major approaches to social capital: a micro-approach emphasizes the nature and forms of co-operative behaviour; a macro-approach focuses on the conditions, whether positive or negative, that can make co-operation possible; and, a meso-approach highlights structures that enable co-operation to occur. From the Measurement of Social Capital Reference Document for Public Policy Research Development, and Evaluation: PRI Project (http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/Measurement_E.pdf).

Social Network: Can be thought of as social structures comprised of individuals connected to each other based on similar features (e.g. friendship, participation in a committee, etc); these networks are often represented in a web or graph (Butts 2001; Wellman & Berkowitz 1988). Social networks have long been seen as an important aspect of an individual or group’s knowledge acquisition and learning (Burt 2001; Davidson-Hunt 2006; Raffles 2002; Valente and Davis 1999). From the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report.

Social Network Analysis: Social networks are comprised of actors (also referred to as ‘nodes’) who are tied to one another (through ‘edges’) through socially meaningful relations. These two relational data sets (nodes and edges) are the basic units of social network analysis (SNA). A social network can be represented as a graphical illustration of a social relationship among individuals in a bounded group; each individual is represented by a vertex (or node) in a graph, and an edge (straight line) represents the relationship that connects two vertices; however, the latter can only be shown if a relationship exists between two individuals or organizations. From the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report. For additional network terms and definitions, refer to the Phase 1 Report.

Core Network: Refer to a set of individuals or groups (or nodes or vertices in social network analysis) that are generally well-connected with each other and with the periphery of the network. From the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report.

Periphery Network: Refers to a set of individuals (nodes or vertices) that are connected to the core of the network but not to each other. From the Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase 1 Report. For additional network terms and definitions, refer to the Phase 1 Report.

RELATED INFORMATION

- [Social Network Analysis Pilot Project: Phase One Plan](#)

Knowledge Broker. people or organizations that move knowledge around and create or facilitate connections between others. From Meyer, M. 2010. The rise of the knowledge broker. *Science Communications* 32(1):118-127.