

Initiation and Management of a Science Partnership

The following guidance identifies a series of steps for developing and maintaining successful science partnerships. These steps should be considered during the initiation of any new partnership or at the outset of a new project associated with an existing partnership. These steps will ensure that the BLM creates partnerships that result in high-quality products and help inform decision-making.

Initiating and managing a science partnership is an interactive, ongoing process between the BLM and the science partner. The BLM has the responsibility of initially defining the purpose and need for the partnership, as well as the type of deliverable or performance goals the BLM is seeking, and flexibility to allow the science partner to clarify and refine the objectives throughout the science investigation process through regular communication and evaluation. BLM managers, staff, and science partners must continually engage throughout this process to ensure objectives are being met.

Initiation of a Science Partnership

1) Identify the Purpose

Defining a clear purpose for a science partnership is key to ensuring the end product is most useful for BLM land management. It is important that the deliverables assist BLM managers to enhance decision-making. This could include, for example, providing additional data to support land-use planning decisions/analysis, exploring the success of different mitigation options or best management practices, evaluating the status and condition of land health, and/or providing information on strategies for restoration.

Before developing a scope of work, the BLM should consider the following questions to ensure the purpose of the partnership is aligned with management objectives. The project manager will provide a brief statement to the BLM responsible official addressing the following questions, as applicable to the partnership/project. This information will assist managers in determining the benefits of the proposed partnership or project.

- How will the partnership/project assist in management of public lands?
- What key management questions will be answered as a result of the project?
- What land-use planning or resource management plan (RMP) goals and objectives, or law, regulation, or policy does the partnership or project support?
- What information will be gained to inform decisions?
- Will the project identify information that improves our standard or best management practices?
- Will the data collected be useful for multiple resources or resource uses? If so, how?
- Is the project timely and relevant for decision-making?
- How will the product be implemented or included in BLM decision-making?

2) Leverage Partnerships by Searching Directory of Science Partners

Once a purpose has been identified, the project manager should visit the BLM Science Partnership webpage found at <http://web.blm.gov/sciencepartnerships>, and is a resource for finding science partners. Review the BLM Directory of Science Partners for relevant and/or similar partnerships or projects. Next, determine if existing partnerships meet the needs identified, or if an existing product answers the management question that has been raised. An existing partnership may provide the vehicle for the science needed or a project the BLM is considering. Existing contracts and inter- or intra-agency agreements may also be available to use as examples for developing project objectives.

3) Develop Project Objectives

Once a need has been identified and reviewed and approved by the responsible BLM official, the BLM project manager will develop a scope of work for the partnership or a statement of work for the project. Visit the Science Partnership webpage for examples of the components included in a statement of work. Depending on the type of partnership, the format for this document may vary (see Determine the Type of Instrument, item 4 below), but the general content should be similar to the fields identified below. The project objectives should address the following components:

- a) Descriptive title – The title should identify the focus of the partnership and be descriptive enough for anyone unfamiliar with the project to understand the general scope of the work. If the work is being performed by a cooperative ecosystem studies unit, use CESU as the first work in the title.
- b) Purpose – Include the purpose statement generated by answering the questions in “Identify the Purpose” (item 1 above).
- c) Benefits to the BLM and the public – Identify how the partnership and objective will provide benefits to public land management.
- d) Objective – Further refine the purpose by identifying SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) objectives for the partnership.
- e) Desired outcomes - Identify successful outcomes of the partnership and how those outcomes will be measured.
- f) Format of deliverables/performance goals – Define how the results of the science partnership will be delivered to the BLM. Follow the guidelines provided in “Identify Deliverable Criteria” (item 6.d below). This should be developed for all individual projects.

The BLM Science Partnership website provides example language for each of these components. Examples can also be found in the relevant existing partnership agreements and statements/scope of work.

4) *Determine Type of Instrument with Your Local Grants Management or Contracting Office*

Depending on the partner and work product needed, different types of partnership agreements or contracts will be most appropriate (see BLM Science Partnership website for information regarding partnership and collaboration mechanisms available within the BLM). The process begins with filling out the Statement of Programmatic Involvement (SPI). Work directly with your science coordinator and grants management officer, or contract specialist, to determine the most appropriate instrument for the project being proposed. The most common types of formal agreements are:

- a) Inter- or Intra-Agency Agreement – Used for partnerships with and between federal entities.
- b) Contract – Used when the purpose is for the direct benefit to the government.
- c) Financial Assistance Agreements (FAAs) - Used to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to a partner that is not another federal agency. The primary purpose of an FAA is to provide *public support or stimulation* rather than to acquire goods or services for the *direct benefit or use* of the government. Two types of FAAs are:
 - o Cooperative Agreement: Used when substantial BLM involvement is required during the course of the agreement. For example, both the BLM and recipient perform the work together.
 - o Grant: Used when no program involvement is needed by the BLM. The BLM only has administrative oversight of the work effort to ensure that the funds are spent for the intended purpose.
- d) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – Used to document a mutually-beneficial relationship between two or more parties, or to document a framework for cooperation between the parties to plan, support, and/or achieve mutual goals. MOUs cannot obligate or exchange private or Federal funds, supplies, equipment, or services; although, they detail the responsibilities of each party.

5) *Enter Partnership Information into the Directory of Science Partners*

Once you have entered into a formal contract, financial assistance agreement, MOU, or amendment/modification to an existing instrument, go to the website (<http://web.blm.gov/sciencepartnerships/>) and enter the following information: agreement number, title, BLM program officer or COR name, Partner Name, State, Field or District Office, start and end dates, agreement amount, research/science permit number, and whether the work is

being completed under a heritage program, sponsored site stewardship program, and/or cooperative ecosystem study unit (CESU). This submission to the BLM Directory of Science Partners will allow others in the BLM to benefit from any products developed from the partnership or to inform similar agreements.

6) Develop Project Management Plan

Developing a project management plan should be driven by the BLM management questions and needs, but refined through interactions with, and submitted by, the science partner. For each partnership, the partner is required to propose how the project will be completed along with milestones. For each new project or product, a project management plan will be developed that:

- a) Defines how the project will meet the overarching purpose of the partnership:
 - i) Further refine or expand on the questions outlined in “Identify the Purpose,” item 1 above, specific to the project being developed.
 - ii) Include a proposed workplan for accomplishing the project (submitted by the partner).
- b) Develops a communication protocol. Identify the following:
 - i) Who are the main points of contact?
 - ii) What formats of communication will be used?
 - iii) How often will the BLM and the partner meet or check in?
 - iv) What tools will be used to ensure schedules and milestones are met?
 - v) Are the data or products confidential? If so, identify the protocol necessary to maintain this requirement.
 - vi) Is a permit required for the work?
- c) Sets schedule and deadlines
 - i) Identify interim deliverable/performance goal deadlines.
 - ii) Schedule key milestones for the project (included in partner submission).
- d) Identifies criteria for deliverables using:
 - i) Clear language (understandable to non-scientists).
 - ii) Discussion of how deliverable will meet BLM purpose and objectives.
 - iii) Determine if executive summary of results is needed.
 - iv) Define if Technology Transfer Product (TTP) for BLM managers is needed - TTPs ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users who may further develop the technology into new products, processes, applications, materials, or services. Include a briefing document or presentation on

the project summarizing how the findings could impact various management issues. This should be easily shared among varied audiences, but focused toward BLM managers.

Management of a Science Project

Following initiation of a partnership or project, the guidelines below will help ensure that objectives are being met and progress is made toward final deliverables. Setting a common understanding between BLM and the science partner from the beginning and to reaffirming that understanding at several milestones throughout the process is important. At the end of each project, the BLM will ensure the product met the purpose and will share results across the BLM.

1) Follow Management Plans and Check In Regularly

Ensure that projects and partnerships are meeting the objectives and purpose outlined in the project objectives by following the communication protocol and schedule defined in the project management plan. Use the appropriate tools for each type of agreement to ensure that quality standards and deadlines are met.

2) Hold a Close-Out Meeting for Each Project

For each completed project under a partnership, the BLM and the partner will have a close-out meeting in which the partner should present the results and/or products (TTP) to the BLM. This meeting should include the BLM responsible official and appropriate staff representatives. The BLM must determine if the purpose and objectives have been met. The BLM should consider if additional work is needed or if the management questions have been answered sufficiently based on the project objectives. Modifications to the agreement or a follow-up project may be necessary to ensure the objectives are met.

3) Use a Peer-Review Process (if applicable)

For projects that identify peer reviewed scientific journal articles or agency reports or white papers as deliverables, a peer- or policy review process may be necessary. Follow the requirements outlined in IM 2013-137. The BLM needs to ensure that peer review is conducted on all influential scientific information the agency disseminates. The WO plans to issue additional guidance for meeting this requirement. Peer review provided by other partner agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey or peer review that was required to publish articles in scientific journals may meet this requirement.

4) File Relevant Materials with the BLM Library

Once products are received or results are identified, file completed deliverables with the BLM Library (www.blm.gov/library) to allow others in the BLM to access the results. A link to

submit the final product to the BLM library is available on the Science Partnership website. The executive summary should include the purpose of the project and a summary of results.

5) Include a Highlights Summary on the BLM Science Partnership Website

Every statement of work for a science partnership should include a requirement for a summary report that would be easily distributed and understood by BLM managers and staff. At the completion of the project or other milestone, develop a short highlights briefing for inclusion on the BLM Science Partnership website (see website for latest example). The summary should convey findings in layman's terms, and should include how this scientific partnership leveraged work to assist in answering a management question or to influence policy. Include any relevant materials posted to the library as a link in this highlight section. Select the update agreement icon on the website and indicate in the date section that the project is closed.