

WORKING TOGETHER:

A TOOLKIT FOR COOPERATIVE EFFORTS, NETWORKS AND COALITIONS

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Introduction: Why a Toolkit?

This Toolkit is for leaders and activists who are working to combine forces with multiple organizations to better accomplish environmental and social change goals. The Institute for Conservation Leadership wants to share useful ideas, models, and practices gleaned from our 16 years of consult-

ing with, coaching and training thousands of leaders and organizations; nearly all were cooperating in some way with other groups. We hope this Toolkit helps your cooperative effort start off on the right foot so you can avoid reinventing the wheel, evade common pitfalls, and travel well.

THIS TOOLKIT WILL HELP YOU:

- * Gain tools and insight into leadership in cooperative settings, as well as learn how to assist group development—the first task of leadership.
- * Clarify your organization’s reasons for joining a cooperative effort, assess risks and benefits, and find productive and focused common ground.
- * Learn to use three essential elements for inclusive, purposeful and active cooperation, and choose exercises for launching your group.
- * Select the most efficient and effective organizing model and structure to fit the purpose of your cooperative effort.
- * Anticipate predictable persistent tensions as the cooperative effort evolves, and use leadership and organizational practices that support success.

This Toolkit is based on the experience of conservation and environmental leaders from across North America. We are struck by how well some of these efforts work and are encouraged by their positive impact. We also realize how much time, energy and money cooperative efforts can consume. This Toolkit combines the experience and wisdom of seasoned leaders with ICL’s observations and perspectives, and adds information from the research literature to create a practical guide for cooperative success.



OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT

To help you meet the challenges of cooperative work, the Toolkit includes tips, ideas and tools. We often hear people talk about "putting on different hats", and the complexity of balancing their personal interests with speaking for their organization while paying attention to other organizations' needs and sustaining the cooperative effort. Leaders must pay attention to these different levels of action and the influence each has on the other. The Toolkit provides ways to succeed at each level, and balance them!

- * Individual: Leadership, communication, and group process skills and tools.
- * Each organization: Tools for clarifying the reasons to participate, and how to build trust and effectively share the work and the benefits of the cooperative.
- * Cooperative effort: Specific and pragmatic ways to form and sustain successful cooperative work.

Sequential chapters follow the typical steps necessary to develop cooperative efforts. The path of most starts with informal cooperation between individuals sharing ideas that support each other, and perhaps working in group settings. Over time, that relationship can grow into doing a project together, usually of limited scope. Moving beyond the individual relationships, a more formal agreement may be set up between the cooperating organizations to provide a supporting structure for the work. Sometimes a funding opportunity sparks a more formal initiative, and in a flurry of creative grant-writing a new coalition or project is formed. If these initiatives succeed and take on a longer-term task, maintaining and sustaining effective cooperation becomes the challenge. Change is inevitable and most cooperative efforts have a fairly short lifespan, disbanding after the task is complete or transforming into something new.

While every chapter can stand alone, each builds on the previous chapters' wisdom.



Chapter 1: Group Development — The First Job of Leadership

covers typical group behaviors and ways leaders and members can enable groups to work together more effectively. It includes ways to foster inclusive multicultural settings.



Chapter 2: Start on Sound Footing — Four Steps

guides you through the early stages, including three essential elements of cooperative efforts, assessment tools to determine whether your organization should participate and a risk assessment for the cooperative effort. Use field-tested group exercises and activities to facilitate success.



Chapter 3: Choose a Structure That Fits the Work — Six Models of Cooperative Efforts

describes six common archetypes of cooperative efforts, including examples and a checklist to help you determine which model best fits your situation. It describes each model's typical purpose, duration, structure, membership, and the processes for decision-making, resource acquisition, staffing and communication.



Chapter 4: Cooperative Work — Full Speed Ahead

addresses the dynamic tensions and offers field-tested best practices for working together over the long haul, with recommendations to get past some of the tough aspects of cooperative efforts.

- * Together, and Working Well tells how to build member groups and trust, establish good communication within the cooperative effort, and manage disagreements and conflict.
- * Balance Power and Benefits addresses how to use clear decision-making and be account-





able to each other, raise money together, and do joint publicity and media to get your message heard.

- ✧ Accomplish Shared Goals advises you to plan for constant motion and constant learning, be set to reflect and adapt to changing needs and make the impact you want.



Chapter 5: Time for a Change — Transform, Merge, or Close It Down recommends ways to help your effort

shift and change (a common occurrence in cooperative efforts) that is best addressed openly.



Bibliography and Resources lists some excellent books, guides and websites that we hope you will add to your own library.

We invite you to read this Toolkit and contact us at the Institute with your insights, successes and questions.