

THE CONSTELLATION GOVERNANCE MODEL

for the

DOWNEAST FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP

The problems of our time are becoming increasingly complex. Such complex problems cannot be solved by individual organizations working in isolation. In response, increasingly organizations and individuals are working collaboratively, each bringing their respective skills and resources to bear on the problem in a more focused, coordinated way.¹ The assumption is that by working in coordination the complex problem is far more likely to be solved—that the impact of the whole (the partnership) will be far greater than just the sum of the parts.

A challenge of a collaborative approach to problem solving is governance of the collaboration itself. How do you take an array of independent organizations, each with their own mission, each with their own internal governance, and each with their own funding challenges and goals, often in competition with each other, and get them to work together effectively? The challenge of governance of the collaboration must be addressed and solved, or the collaboration will not produce added value. It can even be counterproductive.

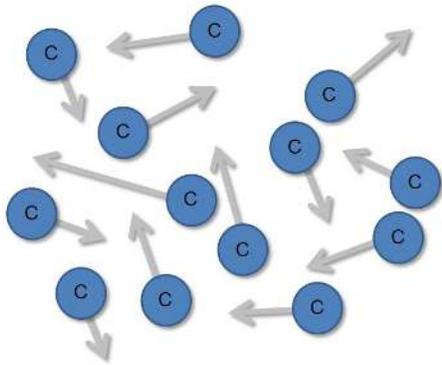
This document describes a governance model for collaboration called the Constellation Model.² Organizations and individuals could choose to participate at one of three levels of engagement; each would entail signing a Memorandum of Understanding acknowledging a commitment to DFP’s organizational principles. Early participants of the Downeast Fisheries Partnership believe this model is a good one to test in the formative years of the partnership. While they took the initiative to create a draft governance structure, the goal is to include a wider array of participants before creating a final design. For instance, an approach to partnership decision making is included in the governance model that follows; it must meet with the approval of a wider participant circle before being adopted. It is designed to increase the likelihood of achieving the shared vision.

The Constellation Model provides “lightweight governance.” It is lightweight because it allows organizations to participate in whatever way and at whatever level feels right to them. The obligations to the collaborative can be light or heavy, whichever is appropriate for an organization. At the same time, organizations willing to invest more time and accept more responsibility can participate on the Stewardship Committee. This committee meets regularly to manage and maintain the overall focus and work flow of the collaboration, to coordinate any fundraising efforts that are needed, to support timely and effective management of opportunities and challenges and to ensure that “sight lines” among all organizations and initiatives in the collaborative are clear and open. This group also serves as trend trackers and model the behavior of extracting and applying lessons learned to increase the ongoing effectiveness of DFP.

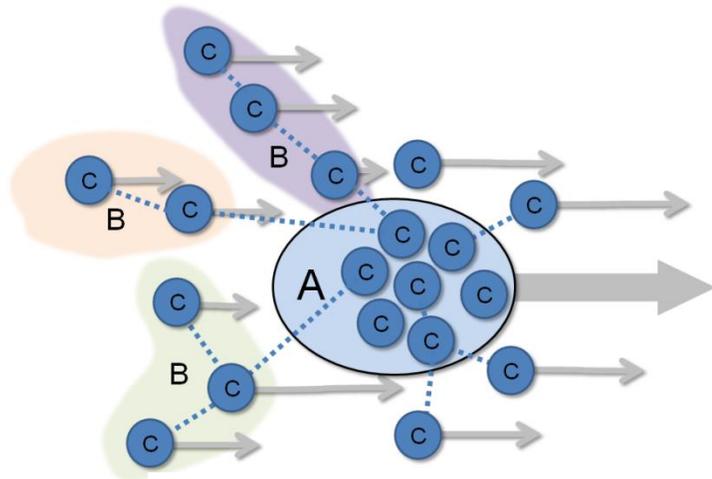
¹ Kania, J., and M. Kramer. 2011. Collective Impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Winter 2011 issue. Available on line: http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

² Surman, M., and T. Surman. 2008. Listening to the Stars: The Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change. Social Space. Available on-line: [click here](#).

Downeast Fisheries Partnership Collaboration Model



Without coordination



With collaboration and shared priorities

A = DFP Stewardship Committee
 B = Topic/Project Workgroups or Existing initiatives
 C = Individual Organizations

The Stewardship Committee is responsible for communications, overall works focus, cultivating healthy collaboration and helping with fundraising, as needed, throughout the whole collaborative.

Topic Workgroups are made up of organizations and individuals – or existing initiatives - interested in working together to advance a particular DFP strategic goal.

Individual Organizations are those organizations working alone or mostly alone, but aware of their vital role in advancing the DFP vision and are committed to its priorities and ways of working.

Some of the key characteristics of the Constellation Governance model are:

- Maximum flexibility for partners to participate
- Responsive to new opportunities and interests
- Variable levels of responsibility are possible
- Not run by a single overarching NGO or government
- Lightweight governance
- Open to new partners
- Shared leadership among partners
- Leadership is open and voluntary
- Focus is on meaningful, measurable action, not solely on the partnership itself
- New areas of work can be introduced by any partner for potential collaboration with others
- High level of transparency among partners
- Far more bottom-up than top-down

- A spirit of mission over organization, but respectful of self-interest
- Has a goal of bringing greater resources to the shared vision of the partnership

There are three ways (or levels) to participate in DFP through the Constellation Model. All start with a threshold expectation of having a MOU in place in order to vote.

A. Stewardship Committee partners; responsibilities include:

1. Lead and coordinate the goals and priorities setting process
2. Implement and conduct DFP governance
3. Develop and coordinate ongoing DFP communications among existing partners
4. Oversee project coordination of DFP
5. Identify and engage new DFP partners and support participants in identifying them
6. Assess overall DFP funding needs
7. Help secure funding for DFP coordination and for specific projects
8. Schedule and attend routine DFP Stewardship Committee meetings
9. Ensure accountability throughout DFP
10. Support reconciliation of any conflicts that arise within DFP
11. Lead the effort to create and maintain metrics to measure impact of DFP
12. Ensure routine reporting of the status of, progress and lessons learned by DFP
13. Adhere to the written DFP Principles and support participants in doing the same
14. Actively participate in a minimum of one project that contributes to the goals of DFP

B. Topic Workgroup, project or existing initiative partners; responsibilities include:

1. Actively participate in a minimum of one project that contributes to the goals of DFP
2. Participate in relevant Topic/Project Working Group meetings and existing mission-related initiatives
3. Identify and engage new DFP partners
4. Remain knowledgeable of overall DFP activities
5. Contribute to communications and publishing efforts related to DFP
6. Adhere to the written DFP Principles

C. Individual organization and individual partners; responsibilities include:

1. Have at least one active project that contributes to the goals of DFP
2. Remain knowledgeable of overall DFP activities
3. Identify and engage new DFP partners
4. Contribute to communications and publishing efforts related to DFP
5. Adhere to the written DFP Principles

Individual organizations choose for themselves the level of participation and leadership (A, B, or C above) that suits their interests and abilities. An organization can switch from one level to another, so long as they meet the requirements for partnership of and contribution at that level.

A for profit, a non-profit, government agency, or an individual may be a member at any level of DFP. To become a member, the participant must sign a 1-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the DFP, and responsibilities of participants. The MOU is not a binding document and can be terminated at any time, but it codifies, for purposes of transparency, the roles and responsibilities of the DFP partners.

APPENDIX 1- DFP VISION

Our vision is that communities of eastern Maine will be able to sustain themselves fishing forever.

APPENDIX 2 - Downeast Fisheries Partnership GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. To achieve the Downeast Fisheries Partnership (DFP) vision of “fishing forever” in Downeast Maine, we will need to combine the skills and expertise of many organizations (for profit, non-profit, agencies, individuals).
2. Each partner organization has an important role to play in solving the problem. Each partner is committed to bringing their particular skills to bear on achieving the vision of DFP.
3. DFP will not compromise the pursuit of individual organizations' missions.
4. DFP will not jeopardize the ability of any single organization to raise revenue for its own mission. Rather, the collaborative will strive to increase the revenue for partner organizations.
5. The missions and intellectual property of all the partner organizations will be respected by the other partners.
6. Each DFP partner organization will be attentive to the needs of the other organizations in DFP, and provide help and support whenever and wherever possible.
7. DFP partners are motivated by a “mission over organization” philosophy.
8. DFP places the highest value on human relationships based on openness, honesty, and respect.
9. When DFP is discussed with external entities, the fact that many other organizations are participating will be referenced.
10. Partners recognize that achieving the vision will take a long time, perhaps as much 10 to 20 years. Stewardship is forever.
11. To the extent possible, partners are committed to long-term participation.

APPENDIX 3 – DFP FUNDRAISING PRINCIPLES

Coordinated funding may allow DFP to build support for its work and attract substantial new support for fisheries restoration in eastern Maine. DFP will advance its coordinated funding efforts at a pace consistent with the level of trust that exists to support it. Information sharing and exchange is an important early step.

1. Partners with an express interest in coordinated fundraising will identify, and share with DFP, funding opportunities with the potential to advance DFP’s vision, goals and principles.
2. Partners will review funding opportunities in light of what would create the strongest proposal(s).
3. Prior to proposal development, a short summary of any proposed proposal, including funder restrictions and requirements and geographic and programmatic focus, will be forwarded to the Stewardship Committee, which will determine if the proposal will be submitted by DFP.
4. The Stewardship Committee will not knowingly interfere with any partner’s long term and significant relationship with a funder.
5. Partners choosing to participate in coordinated fundraising will work together and with the DFP Coordinator to develop proposals agreed to by the Stewardship Committee. A timeline for proposal preparation will be developed that provides sufficient time for review by the Stewardship Committee prior to submission.
6. Proposals will be submitted by the most appropriate partner or partner willing to serve as fiscal agent for reporting and accounting on behalf of DFP and may include funds to support coordination of DFP and overhead in general. Manomet will assume responsibilities for grant management and reporting.
7. Partners choosing to participate in coordinated fundraising agree not to submit competing proposals to the same funder and/or request for proposals.
8. Partners are encouraged to refer to the DFP vision, goals and objectives in proposals that are not submitted by DFP but may not indicate that they are representing DFP unless expressly agreed to by the Stewardship committee. In order to utilize the DFP affiliation in funding pursuits, partners must have a DFP Memorandum of Understanding in place and be in alignment with the vision.
9. DFP will cultivate ongoing relationships with funders likely to be interested in coordinated fundraising, including those at a national scale that have no giving history in the region but whose funding strategies align with DFP priorities.

APPENDIX 4 – DECISION MAKING APPROACH

1. All decisions (except those specifically delegated to individuals) shall be made by groups at meetings that have been publicized in advance and when a quorum of partners is present, as determined by the Stewardship Committee.
2. Throughout the partnership, at every level, we strive for consensus, which means:
 - We begin with openness to creative solutions
 - We try to understand the issue and each other’s perspectives
 - We encourage ideas from everyone
 - We collectively develop proposals without individual credit or blame, both in and after our discussions
 - We hear and acknowledge all concerns and try to factor them into solutions whenever feasible
3. In the case of the group decisions, we generally discuss issues more than once before deciding.
4. When consensus cannot be achieved, the person facilitating the discussion will call for a vote. At least 80% agreement is required to make a decision.

5. All decisions will be recorded and the actual words approved in the moment or at a subsequent meeting. Records of all decisions will be available to all.

APPENDIX 5 – CONFLICT RESOLUTION

It is everyone's responsibility to:

- Work on conflict prevention and management by honoring the DFP principles
- Resolve conflicts by:
 - Making sure you understand first before judgment or accusation
 - Giving each other the benefit of the doubt
 - Refraining from spreading conflict-related issues or discussion with those not actively engaged in DFP and the issue in need of resolution
- Ask the Stewardship Committee to resolve a conflict only after:
 - You have worked on it in your heart and considered what you can do to make things better
 - You have tried to resolve the conflict directly
 - You believe that the conflict jeopardizes DFP's work or relationships important to its success

APPENDIX 6 -CONSTELLATION MODEL DIAGRAM

(see accompanying document)

APPENDIX 7 – SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

[to be written]