

# **Qualitative Interview Guide for the Research Project “Community-Based Organizations, Social Networks, and Conservation: Strategies for Rural Economic Development in the West”**

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This file contains the semi-structured interview protocols used to guide qualitative interviews associated with the research project “Community-based organizations, social networks, and conservation: strategies for rural economic development in the West.” The project was designed to understand the contributions to economic development made by a particular class of rural non-governmental associations referred to as community-based organizations (CBOs). For the purpose of this study, CBOs are distinguished from other organizations in that they are: 1) based in rural areas that have recently experienced substantial economic decline, social dislocation, or other problems associated with a loss of access to natural resource benefits; 2) committed to a “community forestry” model in which local communities play a strong role in the governance of local natural resources, and in which stewardship and restoration of those resources creates community social and economic benefits; and 3) focused on the implementation of projects that help to realize this vision, rather than primarily on deliberative processes meant to build social capital and arrive at agreements on resource management plans and practices (though it should be noted that CBOs are often important in facilitating or leading these processes as well).

Construction of the interview guides was informed by both prior research on CBOs (conducted as part of this research project and other prior projects) and by the many years of combined participation in CBO networks and operations on the part of several members of the research team. While some questions in the interview guide are of an exploratory nature, others are designed to probe specific strategies or gather information to test preliminary hypotheses generated as part of this prior research and practical experience. Because the researchers took a semi-structured approach to interviewing, not all questions were asked of all interviewees and some additional, spontaneously generated questions were asked to further probe key emergent themes in individual interviews. Interviews were conducted with the staff of CBOs as well as with other community partners that work with or alongside CBOs in the chosen case study communities. Separate protocols were used for CBO staff and for individuals associated with public, private, and non-governmental entities that partner with CBOs in their respective communities. A separate process (not detailed here) was used to gather information on the social networks of CBOs and partner organizations. Interviews were conducted in the fall of 2012.

## 1. Protocol for CBO Staff

### A. What are the different ways that CBOs organize and govern themselves (and in what ways are these differences significant in understanding what a CBO is able to accomplish)?:

First off, as you know, we were doing some background research on your organization and based on that, we saw X major programming areas that you are working in: [list them as appropriate]. Does that sound right? Did we miss any?

Great, we'd like to ask you some follow up questions about each of these areas. But first, I wanted to ask you about this portfolio of program areas as a set. One of the really interesting things about CBOs is that they do such diverse work. Can you tell me about how the mission and strategies of your CBO has evolved over time?

1. What factors helped shaped what your CBO has chosen as its focal areas?
2. Tell me about the most important initiative of your organization right now (repeat until you get three)
  - a. How did you settle on this as a primary area of emphasis?
    - i. Prompt: who helped you figure this out?
  - b. What external resources did you draw upon to build the capacity to focus on this area?
  - c. How has your community been affected by your focus on this area?
3. How does your organization's structure (*program areas, staffing, overall approach*) help you carry out your work and achieve your goals effectively? How does the structure impede your efficacy? (*efficacy at conservation-based economic development*)
4. How does your organization's decision-making process help you carry out your work and achieve your goals effectively? How does your decision-making impede your efficacy?
5. How does your funding situation/the funding environment help you carry out your work and achieve your goals effectively? How does funding impede your efficacy?
6. A common challenge for organizations is being able to step back from day to day operations and strategically reflect upon what is working, what is not and what you are learning that can inform future operations. This is often referred to as adaptive learning. Tell me about your organization in this regard.
  - a. How would you evaluate your organization's current capacity for adaptive learning?
  - b. What structures or strategies have you put in place to facilitate this kind of learning?
  - c. What are your strengths in this area?
  - d. Where do you see areas for improvement? What are the greatest challenges you face in promoting this kind of learning?

- e. Any best practices you have discovered that other CBOs might benefit from?

**B. What specific strategies do CBOs use to facilitate conservation-based economic development in public lands communities?**

*Building agreement/addressing social conflict over forest management*

- 7. Next, I wanted to ask about your organization's involvement in conflicts related to forest management. Has your organization been involved in any conflicts related to land or forest management? If so, in what way? There are many roles an organization can take in conflicts related to forest management. Some organizations join in these discussions as advocates who work to advance a certain policy outcome. Some emerge as advocacy leaders—focused on organizing other stakeholders of like mind toward a common agenda in order to increase the political power of the group. Other organizations attempt to position themselves as bridgers who try to facilitate dialogue and find common ground among opposing interests. You may have seen other roles played as well.
  - a. How would you characterize your organization's involvement in forest management issues?
  - b. What roles has it played? (for each)
    - i. Facilitating collaboration—formal groups or shuttle diplomacy
    - ii. Obtaining financial or technical resources to support collaboration
    - iii. Obtaining federal agency support or some level of respect for collaboration
    - iv. Performing any other relevant activities?
  - c. What led to your organization taking on this role? (for each)
  - d. Moving forward, what do you see is your organization's primary role (if there is one)? Why is that?
  - e. Overall, how important would you say that building agreement is in your program of work?
- 8. What advantages/assets/strategies do you think you, as a CBO, have brought to processes that build agreement?

*Supporting federal land management agencies in the development and implementation of restoration activities*

- 9. Please describe to me how your organization has been:
  - a. Conveying collaborative priorities to land managers, and ensuring that collaboration remains consistent through planning processes
  - b. Helping land managers design projects and plans that provide ecological and socioeconomic benefits, including biomass utilization and timber
  - c. Providing technical assistance such as surveying, ID team leadership, multiparty monitoring protocols...
  - d. Performing any other relevant activities?
- 10. Overall, how important would you say that supporting federal land restoration is in your program of work?

11. What advantages/assets/strategies do you think you, as a CBO, have brought to federal land management?

*Fostering restoration and biomass-based businesses*

12. Please describe to me how your organization has been:

- a. Considering local restoration contractor capacity when helping land managers design projects
- b. Helping businesses understand federal procurement processes and opportunities
- c. Reducing risk for businesses, e.g. by purchasing goods under a contract (e.g., Wallowa Resources on the Reservoir Biomass project)
- d. Accessing external capital that is matched to small business needs and scale
- e. Seeking other resources such as grants to support aspects of project planning and implementation for businesses, themselves, etc.
- f. Developing markets ...
- g. Performing any other relevant activities?

13. Overall, how important would you say that fostering businesses is in your program of work?

14. What advantages/assets/strategies do you think you, as a CBO, have brought to fostering businesses?

*Advocating for federal natural resource policy that achieves both conservation and community goals*

15. Please describe to me how your organization has been:

- a. Participating in broader networks (RVCC, National Rural Assembly)
- b. Actively contributing to working groups, issue papers, trips to D.C.
- c. Sharing or working with intermediaries (e.g., EWP, SNW) to document and share specific examples of their successes, policy impacts on their communities, etc.
- d. Performing any other relevant activities?

16. Overall, how important would you say that policy advocacy is in your program of work?

17. What advantages/assets/strategies do you think you, as a CBO, have brought to policy advocacy?

## 2. Protocol for CBO Partner Businesses, Agencies, and Organizations

### A. About the partner and their work

1. What does your organization do?
2. What are your organization's primary program areas?
3. How long have you been involved in this work? What is your role at \_\_\_\_\_ organization?
4. What does natural resource-based economic development mean to you?

### B. About the case study CBO

5. What is the nature of your relationship with (case study) CBO? How did you come to work with them? (elicit stories) Can you give me an example of a project ? (get an example or two)
6. How would you describe the work of (case study) CBO and its mission?
7. What are its greatest successes?
8. What are its greatest challenges?
9. How does it work on the challenges of natural resource-based economic development—market development, supply, etc.?
10. How effective has it been at helping advance natural resource-based economic development in this county?
11. What are its limitations?
12. Is there anything that they are not doing that you wish they were doing?