# Wildfire Crisis Strategy Roundtables: Breakout Discussion Questions and Worksheet

## Room 1: Science Supporting Wildfire Risk Reduction

Participants in this breakout may discuss how to develop and integrate the best available science, application of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge, use and sharing of data, challenges, and technology successes.

What we’ve heard to date:

* Tribes maintain Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK)[[1]](#footnote-2) that can support fire strategies, but knowledge is shared, maintained, and integrated into fire stewardship differently from conventionally accepted science strategies.
* Integration of ITEK requires partnership and collaboration with Tribes at all stages of fire stewardship.
* FS and partners must acknowledge and respect ITEK consistent with other approaches.
* Conventional/modern science is behind ITEK.
* Tribes should be integrated into research planning. Tribes (using ITEK and other methodologies) can help craft the focus of future science and research.
* FS must establish protocols for maintaining confidentiality and data sovereignty of ITEK and other Tribal data to ensure ease of sharing and use in planning.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What do you feel FS should do to ensure that science is used effectively to inform fuels and fire risk reduction?
   * 1. What do you see as current gaps and information needs in the science on fuels and fire risk reduction? (for instance, local fire history maps to inform treatments, smoke emissions and prescribed fire, best practices related to streams and fuels work, wildlife mitigations, etc.)?
     2. How can Tribes be engaged to fill those research gaps?
     3. How do we make science, research, and subsequent decision making more accessible to Tribes?
2. What are the elements of success or examples of projects that have incorporated Indigenous and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge? What do you feel is needed to build on those successes nationally/regionally/locally?
3. Is there anything missing from the above summary?

## Room 2: Cross-Boundary Partnerships and Project Prioritization

Participants in this breakout room will explore the work of partnerships, cooperative stewardship, and opportunities to achieve landscape-scale outcomes. Participants may also discuss how best to ensure Tribal priorities are incorporated into cross-boundary projects planning and implementation.

What we’ve heard to date:

* Tribes are integral partners in cross-boundary partnerships, but must be engaged early in project planning and identifying project priorities.
* FS needs to create greater opportunities for shared management, increase opportunities, and ensure the eligibility of Alaska Tribes.
* Fireshed and planning maps should incorporate Tribal needs and priority landscapes.
* FS must acknowledge that Tribal priorities for fire stewardship may differ from FS priorities and find opportunities for mutual benefit.
* Cross-boundary partnerships require an increase in the scope and scale of projects. This requires greater preparation by FS for work on the ground (completed NEPA or CatEx conducted in collaboration with Tribes, etc.)
* Collaborative work required for these partnerships requires significant staff capacity to facilitate dialogues that take Tribes away from time needed to address internal Tribal priorities.
* Good Neighbor Authority is a possible tool if the limitations to Tribes in funding sources are removed.
* TFPA could be a better tool with available funding for projects, FS preparation of NEPA in areas of need, and greater understanding by FS staff on agreements with Tribes.
* FS needs more grants and agreement staff that understand working with Tribes as sovereigns.
* Allocated funding for restoration and risk reduction work is needed to move projects forward and increase partnerships.
* Project prioritization should be more holistic, incorporating considerations for water supplies and water infrastructure, watershed health, critical ecological values, ecosystem services, economic values, cultural and historical significance, fire risk to communities, and areas of social importance.
* Projects how too long been prioritized based on what can get funded versus what is needed.
* Funding to Tribal priorities is often piecemeal based on specific FS priorities (climate change, specific plants, watershed, specific tools, etc.).
* FS grants and agreements processes are overly cumbersome for Tribal partners.
* Tribal capacity for partnering with FS is not a one-size-fits-all.
* It is unclear how all levels of Forest Service will communicate and coordinate with Tribes in defining priorities.
* See also comments on Workforce Capacity.
  + Liability protection and certification for Tribal workforces.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What are the short-term and long-term priorities for increased cross-boundary partnerships and/or co-management of natural resources? How can this work build on the foundation of these and other regional/national efforts to advance forest resiliency and wildfire risk reduction goals needs on a larger scale?
2. What support would Tribes like to see from Forest Service to incorporate Tribal priorities into project prioritization? What planning tools, monitoring tools, or metrics are you currently using or interested in, and why?
3. If you were in charge, what would be the first action you would take to address forest resiliency and fire risk or identified barriers? How do you prioritize treatments on the landscape?
4. What do you see as needed support or obstacles to overcome to increase communication and coordination between FS and Tribes?
5. Is there anything missing from the above summary?

## Room 3: Workforce Capacity, Markets, and Industry

Participants in this breakout room will explore what it means to build and sustain an inclusive and collaborative workforce while considering current and future markets and opportunities for innovation.

What we’ve heard to date:

* Tribes cannot all collaborate with FS to the level needed without additional financial and staffing support.
* FS does not have sufficient tribal liaison, tribal governance, and grants and agreement staff capacity to ensure collaborative partnerships with Tribes at the desired pace and scale.
* There is not enough completed NEPA for many areas where Wildfire risk reduction or restoration work is needed or desired.
* Tribes may want opportunities for their staff to work for FS. However, other Tribes may be struggling with building their wildland fire and forest stewardship workforces.
* Tribes and state and federal agencies do not have coordination agreements during fire suppression events. Workforce collaboration is not defined in advance of fire events. The chain of command is not clearly defined.
* Due to geography or legal access restrictions, many high-risk fire areas are difficult to access. These require hand crews and labor that exceed available resources.
* There are not sufficient markets for fuels reduction byproducts.
* Tribes have different capacity issues ranging from Tribe to Tribe and region to region, including:
  + Number of staff
  + Ability to certify fire suppression staff consistent with state and federal standards (e.g., red cards)
  + Liability insurance for tribal suppression teams
  + Meeting federal and state training requirements.
  + Availability of equipment
  + Maintaining work for trained staff year-round (i.e., retention)
  + Staff resources and time to address planning, fire suppression, and restoration work needed in the office and on the ground.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What needs to be done in the near-term and long-term to increase support of Tribes and Tribal capacity in cross-boundary fuels reduction work? What are the inherent challenges and/or barriers to first address, in developing a comprehensive workforce that is inclusive of Tribes?
2. How can the Forest Service help to address these capacity constraints? Where does the agency need to focus on being helpful in this fuels reduction work? What commitments would Tribes like to see from Forest Service to support increased Tribal capacity for cross boundary projects?
3. What are the challenges to healthy traditional and innovative forest products markets in your area? How can we overcome these challenges?
4. Is there anything missing from the above summary?

1. Also referred to as Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)