Monitoring Subcontracting Trends in the Southwestern Crown of the Continent

Final Report

For 2014, the BBER proposed to undertake a study to collect business location and financial data for all subcontractors on CFLRP contracts and a sample of non-CFLRP contracts in the SW Crown region to better understand and quantify the benefits of CFLRP funds on rural, forest-based communities. To-date contracting trends had only been characterized at the prime award level; BBER researchers hypothesized that the hiring of subcontractors to conduct at least some of the project deliverables would be common, especially under certain contract types: namely timber and stewardship contracts.

Prime contractor data were downloaded for FY12 and 13 and added to a database of restoration contracts let in the 5-county region dating back to FY2005. A stratified random sample was then generated, including each of the following contract categories: service, stewardship and timber. In June, this sample of contracts was shared with contracting officers within the Forest Service along with a Data Collection Plan (see attached) to begin the data collection process. Multiple follow-up attempts were made to schedule a meeting or phone call to discuss the data request over the next 2 months.

After meeting the new Timber Contracting Officer, Dan Castillo, in person at the pre-bid meeting for Colt Summit and Horseshoe West in August, a meeting was finally set up to collect data on timber sales and IRTC stewardship contracts. At this meeting I learned that the Forest Service is not required to collect data on subcontractors used for Timber Sales. However, a reasonable work-around was discussed which involved using the names of authorized representatives for the contract and tracing these individuals back to their business associations. In addition, Dan suggested that for timber sales sold in the recent couple of years, the sale administrators would likely be able to recall the subcontractors used and could be queried for this information. Over the course of the next few months, data were successfully collected for two timber sales and one stewardship contract. Some of the timber contracts were too old and had been archived, and a few others were non-traditional sales such as settlement sales at ski areas and not representative of the population.

The service contract data proved much more difficult to acquire, in part because a response was not received until September and a meeting not set until October. During this meeting it became clear that the Forest Service was not likely to allow BBER access to the project files to collect the needed data. In addition, the Forest Service contact, Loren Ebner,
informed me that subcontractor data were not collected uniformly for all contracts, except construction contracts. Loren suggested that if I chose to move forward with data collection, I would need to first obtain approval from the Director of Acquisition or higher, who would then allow Loren to collect the requested data. It was determined that since the existence of subcontractor data would be patchy and inconsistent, the process would not result in a robust data set.

Given these documented challenges, further work on this project was halted. BBER did pursue collecting subcontractor data separately through a mail survey, the results of which will be shared with the SW Crown Collaborative.