

THE CENTRAL GRASSLANDS ROADMAP

A Collaborative Strategy for a Working Lands Biome



**GUIDING US TOWARDS RESILIENT AND CONNECTED
GRASSLANDS AND HUMAN COMMUNITIES**

Updated June 21, 2022

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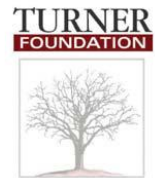
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Cover Photo: *Sunset near Ekalaka, Montana*

Footer photos (in order of first appearance): *Bison, Montana; Cattle, Montana; Tall Grass Prairie.*



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Field with soil cover



Rancher, Mexico



Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, North Dakota, USA

The Central Grasslands Roadmap Executive Summary

The Central Grasslands span across more than 600 million acres of North America and are home to both diverse ecosystems and equally diverse human communities. As it stands, disparate efforts are not adding up, and measures of human community health and healthy grassland ecosystems across the biome continue to decline. We must think, collaborate, and act differently, and that starts with us working together. We must agree to the directions we need to go and focus on what we need to do more of, what we need to know more about, and which new strategies are the most critical to save our grasslands over the next ten years.

As a collective of stakeholders from across the Central Grasslands, eight diverse sectors and three countries have come together to identify common principles and shared priorities to address these challenges. By increasing support for coordinated conservation and fostering mutual respect for the diverse people living and working across the Central Grasslands, we can ensure resilient and connected grasslands and thriving human communities, now and for generations to come.

The Eight Roadmap Sectors

- Indigenous Communities & First Nations
- Private Land Managers, Owners, & Ranchers
- Federal Agencies
- Provincial & State Agencies
- Industry, Agriculture, & Private Sector
- Academia (Scientists, Researchers, Professors)
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Foundations & Funders

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

The **Roadmap** is what you're reading here and describes the full scope of the cooperative process in detail. The **Roadmap Community** includes all stakeholders from the eight sectors and three countries across the biome - it identifies who is involved in the process (see Constellation Governance figure, p. 21).

The primary purpose of the Roadmap is to describe what the Community wants to achieve, what actions they will take to get there, and how they will work together to do so (figure 1). The **Vision** describes why the Roadmap Community is collaborating and the four **Principles** describe how the diverse Community should engage with one another when planning and implementing on-the-ground actions.

The seven **Scorecard Goals (the Goals)** describe what the Community will achieve, including goal-specific metrics, approaches to tracking progress, key questions, resources, and considerations. The three **Strategy Areas** each have four **Priorities**, which identify specific actions that contribute to achieving the Goals. Stakeholders in the Roadmap Community will report on their work and actions using a variety of reporting tools, which will be compiled in a bi-annual **Scorecard Report** to track overall progress and identify successes, continued gaps, and emerging needs.



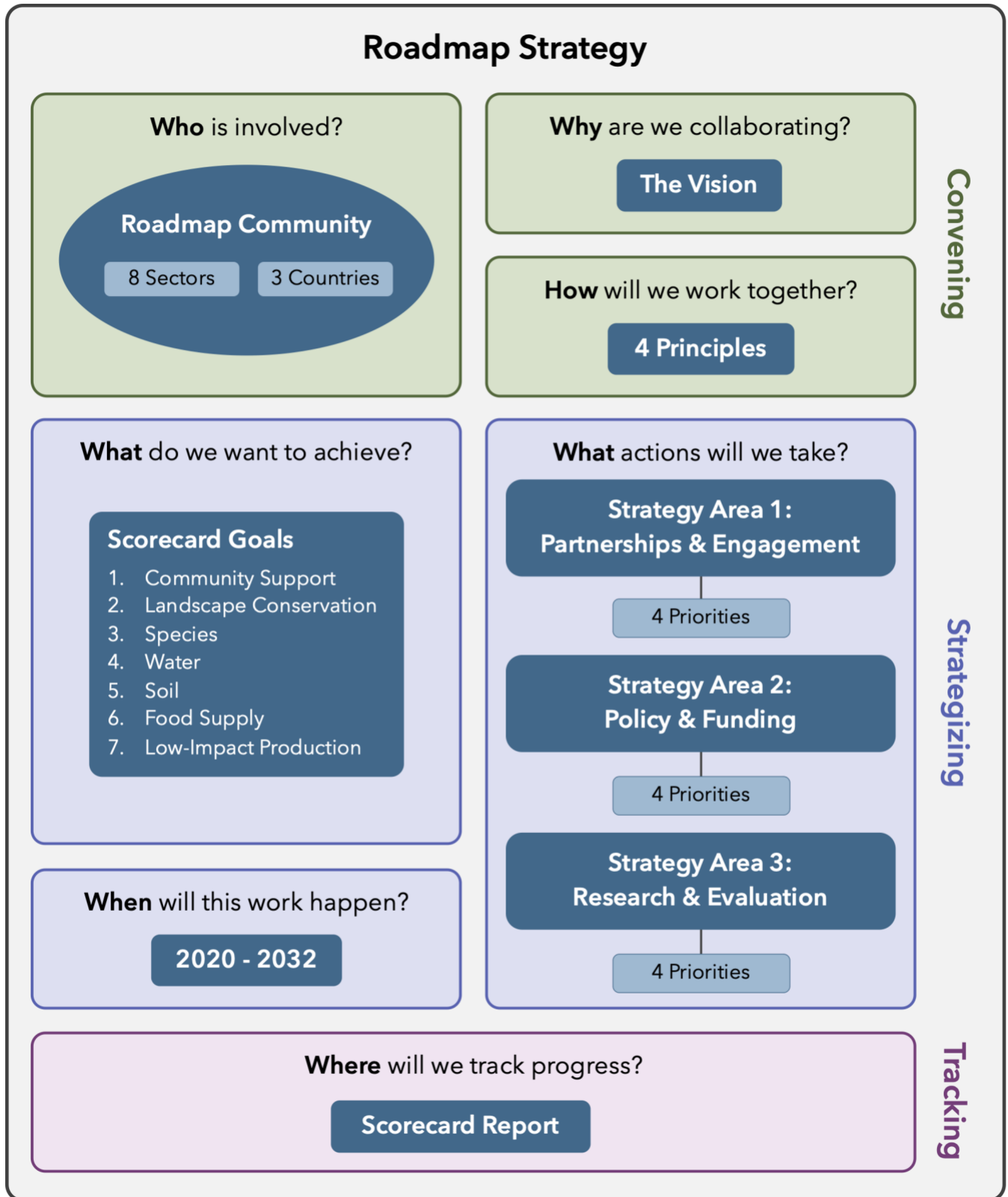


Figure 1. A visualization for how the many elements of the Roadmap fit together, and how each supports the overall goals of the Roadmap.

VISION: OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION

The Central Grasslands Roadmap will guide us towards resilient and connected grasslands and human communities. When we look out at the diverse Central Grasslands over the next ten years, we'll witness:

- Thriving Indigenous and rural communities and economies.
- Flourishing ecosystems of soil, plants, and wildlife.
- Working land with healthy grazing populations.
- Millions of acres of resilient and connected habitat.
- Dynamic and multi-faceted approaches to sustainable grasslands management.
- Policies and extensive investments to support grasslands conservation and local expertise.
- International recognition for grasslands commitments.
- Sustainable agriculture and energy development.
- Rivers and wetlands supporting habitat, aquifers, production, and people.

PRINCIPLES: HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

These Principles were developed throughout the Roadmap process to highlight fundamental approaches to the Roadmap's strategy. Any priority actions undertaken by the Roadmap Community should follow these four Principles:

1. Respect and honor diverse voices and rights when designing priorities.
2. Identify priorities that sustain Indigenous/First Nations, ranching, and rural communities.
3. Ensure priorities are science informed.
4. Focus on priorities that meet the needs of the eight sectors and three countries.

1. Community Support
2. Landscape Conservation
3. Species
4. Water
5. Soil
6. Food Supply
7. Low-Impact Production

SCORECARD GOALS: ACHIEVEMENTS

The Scorecard Goals will enable us to understand the cumulative impact the Community is having on the biome. Given that implementation and monitoring must happen at the local and regional levels, the Goals are designed to be broad, adaptable, and approachable for each sector. Goals are organized into three categories: Socioeconomic (Goal 1), Ecological (Goals 2-5), and Industry and Private Sector (Goals 6-7). A full description of each can be found in the Appendices.



Herding cattle, Texas

STRATEGY AREAS & PRIORITIES: ACTION PLANNING

The three Strategy Areas will improve conditions to enable conservation (such as public perception and policies) and provide support to scale effective practices (such as knowledge sharing and sustainable ranch management programs). The three Strategy Areas are:

Strategy Area 1: Create and Enrich Strong Partnerships

Sustain trusted commitments among a multitude of stakeholders to achieve the Roadmap's Vision and inspire buy-in from those with decision-making power. Ensure ongoing collective action, information sharing, expansion of the network, and ample space for innovation.

Priorities for Strategy Area 1

- 1a. Broaden communications to increase support.
- 1b. Share knowledge and resources across cultures.
- 1c. Create stronger partnerships across sectors and scales.
- 1d. Build collective action.

Strategy Area 2: Refine Funding and Policy Initiatives

Provide a stable policy and funding framework using a variety of tools, including those that address current and past financial inequities and injustices. Include voluntary programs and financial incentives designed to foster stewardship, collaboration, and flexible participation in conservation initiatives that improve grasslands.

Priorities for Strategy Area 2

- 2a. Strengthen existing policies to better support connected grasslands and human communities.
- 2b. Influence new major legislation.
- 2c. Focus funding to scale proven programs and support innovative solutions.
- 2d. Identify and quantify the true economic value of grasslands.

Strategy Area 3: Prioritize Research that Benefits Conservation and Communities

Work to ensure conservation is driven by a rich and nuanced understanding of local and regional biological, social, economic, geographical, and political factors.

Priorities for Strategy Area 3

- 3a. Reduce unnecessary redundancy in research and address critical gaps.
- 3b. Elevate community-centered approaches into grasslands research.
- 3c. Construct sustainability models to support scaling programs in grazing, regenerative agriculture, and industry.
- 3d. Refine shared core monitoring standards.

STRUCTURE: CONSTELLATION GOVERNANCE, COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The Roadmap is built on the best practices of **Collective Impact**. Highly collaborative, cross-sector efforts such as the Roadmap demand a well-organized structure with decentralized leadership to ensure that effective, mutually reinforcing activities are happening across the biome.

This well-organized yet decentralized structure is commonly referred to as **Constellation Governance**. The constellation model is a complexity-inspired governance framework for multi-organization collaboration and provides a way of organizing a group of interested parties to meet a need without having to create a new organization. In addition to topic- and initiative-based **Workgroups** (e.g., Public Messaging, Metrics, Canadian, etc.), the primary entities involved in the process include the **Steering Committee** and the **Backbone Organization** (currently the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies). These two entities are responsible for ensuring that the vision, purpose, and principles of the Roadmap are utilized, and that workgroups, committees, and participants keep this guidance at the forefront of their work in support of the Roadmap

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? GET INVOLVED

Sign up for communication updates, resources, cross-sector collaboration, and workgroups: info@grasslandsroadmap.org

Support this draft of the Roadmap with a [letter of support](#).

Be an Ambassador for the Roadmap by keeping this summary easily accessible as you participate in programs and collaborations that align with these strategies.

Align your deliverables and work with the vision and principles of the Roadmap; develop an action plan describing your contributions to the twelve priority areas and help us work towards the collective goals of the Scorecard.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Badlands National Park, South Dakota



The Central Grasslands Roadmap

The Executive Summary serves as the introduction to this document and the overall Roadmap process. The following pages provide in-depth information about each aspect of the Roadmap, and even more details can be found in the Roadmap Appendices document.

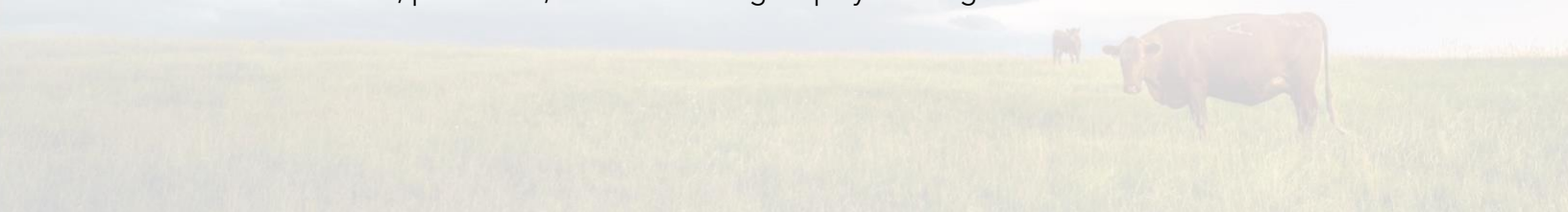
As a collaborative entity catalyzing this work, the Roadmap Community seeks not to be something new or separate, but to be the neural network connecting disparate efforts, reducing redundancy, highlighting gaps, and inspiring innovation and collective action. In this way, the Roadmap prioritizes reconciliation and trust building, as well as braiding Rancher and Indigenous knowledge and Western science. **As opposed to prescribing specific actions, the Roadmap provides a framework and suggested actions for everyone involved to contribute.** Actions listed here are not to direct or define all work, but to give the Roadmap Community a foundation for collaboration.

The Central Grasslands Roadmap will guide us towards resilient and connected grasslands and human communities.

Principles: How We Work Together

These Principles were developed by delegates, speakers, and leaders throughout the Roadmap process to highlight fundamental approaches to the Roadmap Strategy and to underscore the importance of trust-based relationships. They are reflected and expanded upon throughout the Roadmap, and any priority actions undertaken by the Community should follow these Principles:

- 1. Respect and honor diverse voices and rights when designing priorities, placing emphasis on listening more, giving back, and supporting.**
 - Support sovereign Nations by advocating for self-directed decision-making on their territories, addressing inequalities in conservation, and elevating the great work already happening on the grasslands.
 - Include Traditional Ecological Knowledge, cultural strategies, and generations of experience from Indigenous communities, ranchers, and ejidatarios.
 - Recognize policies regarding property rights, proprietary research, and mapping, especially for Indigenous communities and other historically marginalized groups.
- 2. Identify priorities that sustain Indigenous/First Nations, ranching, and rural communities.**
 - Improve the health of land and water to support resilient ecosystems and livelihoods.
 - Assist individuals and working lands communities to maintain their way of life and enhance their well-being.
 - Recognize that land stewardship takes many forms, and that Indigenous/First Nations, ranchers, producers, and land managers play an integral role in conservation.



3. Ensure priorities are science-informed.

- Draw upon research that is contextualized by on-the-ground practices and local needs.
- Use research that compels innovation and scales effective practices.
- Focus on research that will help achieve the vision of the Roadmap.

4. Focus the Roadmap on priorities that meet the needs of the eight sectors and three countries.

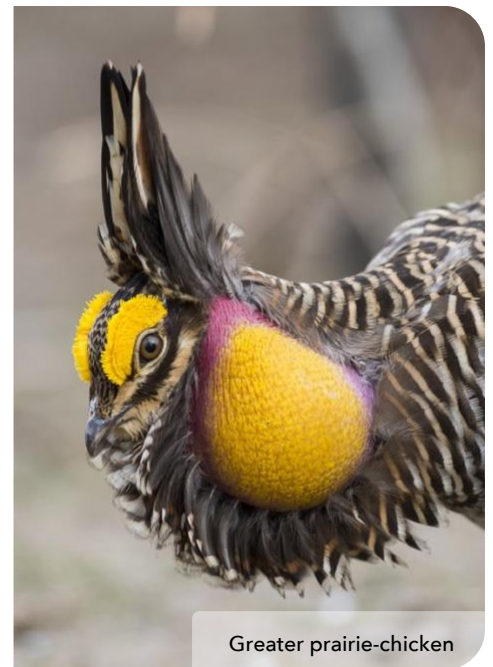
- Priorities are mutually reinforcing activities, applicable on a biome scale.
- Priorities are developed at the grassroots level locally and regionally.
- Priorities increase connectivity and coordination across the biome.



Painted turtle



Pronghorn



Greater prairie-chicken

The Scorecard: Goals to Catalyze and Track Progress

The Scorecard Goals and supporting metrics will enable us to understand the cumulative impact the Roadmap Community is having on the biome. Given that land management, mitigation strategies, conservation delivery, and monitoring must occur at the local and regional levels, implementation will result in a large diversity of approaches. Therefore, **the Goals need to be broad, adaptable, and approachable for each of the eight sectors.**

MAPPING: DETERMINING A BASELINE

Preliminary [GIS layers](#) were compiled by the Roadmap Metrics Workgroup and several delegates, leaders, and partners to visualize the biome. Layers include human communities, land use types, existing and historic rangeland, species distribution through full annual life cycles, and ecosystem health including soil stability, carbon sequestration, and water availability.

PROVIDING SUPPORT, MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS, AND REPORTING

Given the complexity of the Roadmap's biome-scale process, the ways in which leaders, partnering organizations, and delegates contribute will be diverse. Figure 2 describes the *Roadmap Participation Process*, which is designed to increase participation and iterative improvement over the next decade, and ensure basic levels of shared priorities from the outset.

In the early phases of this collaborative effort, partner contributions will recognize and elevate the *current work* of the three countries and eight sectors. As the Roadmap Community gains momentum, and as incentives and legislation improve the capacity for conservation delivery, partners can transition to reporting on their added capacity for conservation actions. Progress reports will be compiled and released bi-annually to document the successes and continued needs of the Roadmap Community, and to support continued alignment of actions to address these gaps over time.



CONSIDERATIONS

The Scorecard Report will be a complex undertaking that needs a first-year prototype to further establish a baseline and understand how the different commitment and reporting tools will function. The diverse approaches to reporting on actions are designed to best meet the needs of the equally diverse Roadmap Community, and ultimately increase participation in the collaborative. As aligning models and measuring outcomes become common currency, partners will see that their collective practice and programmatic efforts have positive impacts on the landscape.

Perspectives from the Metrics Workgroup

- Not all metrics are equal. Ease and frequency of data collection will vary.
- Data collection needs to be streamlined; tracking progress should not create additional burden.
- Efficiently collecting data for the social goals could be extremely difficult and lead to burnout among stakeholders and data collectors or result in gaps that limit the utility of the Scorecard.
- Tracking spatially explicit data and effort types is critical.
- The scale of the Scorecard is challenging. Some metrics are best observed or monitored at the regional or local levels, and later compiled to evaluate progress at the biome level. This is true for biological, ecological, and socioeconomic metrics.
- Measurable outcomes will take time (3-10 years); contributions now mean success in the future.
- Attribution is incredibly important to ensure that each reporting tool recognizes the entity responsible for acreage goals and progress, and that credit is given appropriately.

Roadmap Participation Process

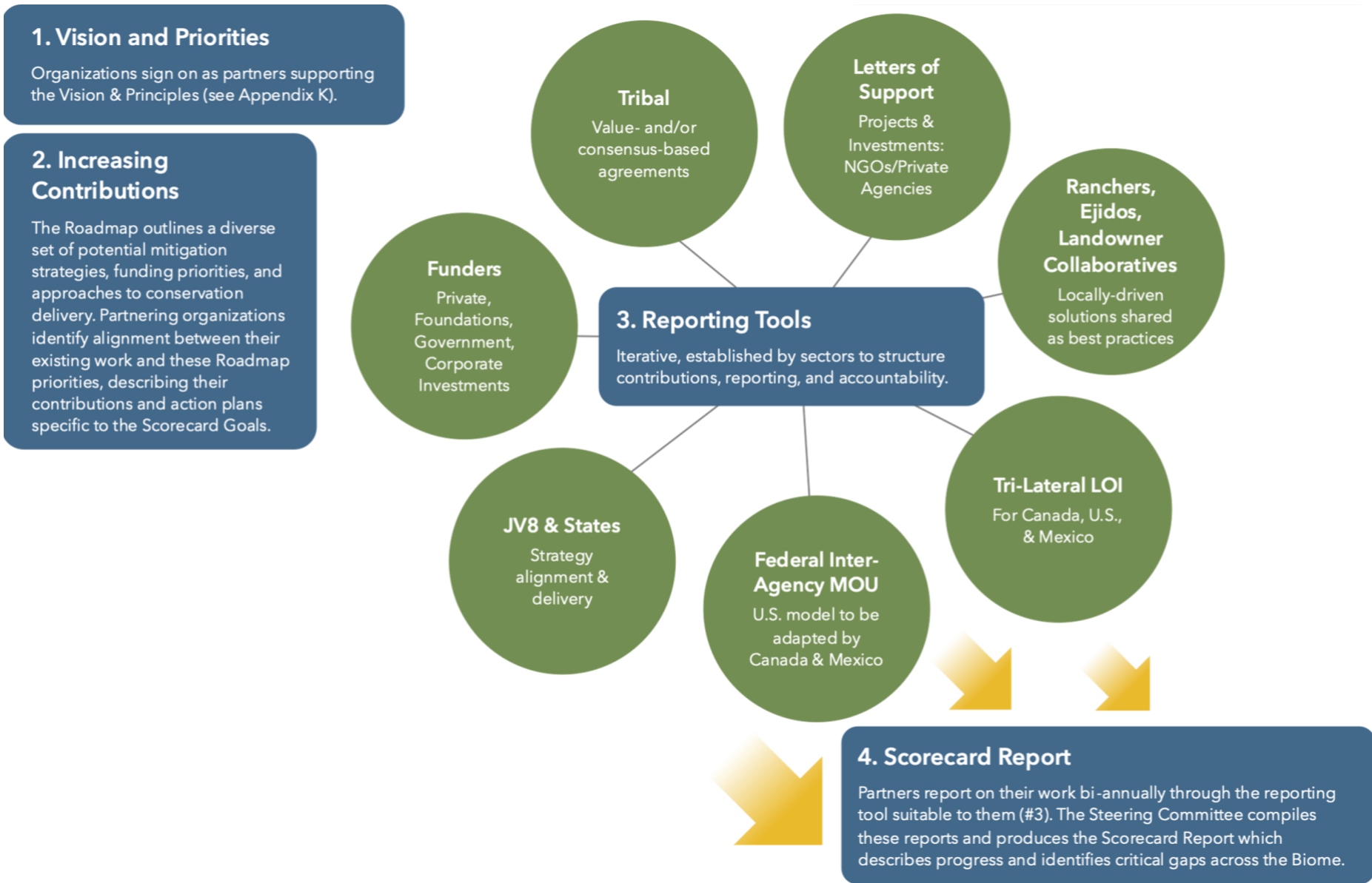


Figure 2. For any stakeholder wishing to become part of the Roadmap Community, this describes what that process would involve. After signing on as Roadmap partners (Step 1), members of the Community identify current and future work aligned with the Scorecard Goals (Step 2) and report on their actions using a variety of reporting tools (Step 3). A Scorecard Report will be released bi-annually as a summary of the work and actions of the entire Roadmap Community (Step 4).

SCORECARD GOALS

The language of each of the seven Scorecard Goals is listed below by category. See the Roadmap Appendices document for information about goal-specific metrics and additional context.

Socioeconomic

1. **Community Support:** Each year, Indigenous/First Nation, ejido, rancher alliance, and family rancher communities across the biome report the ability to both sustain their working operations and access sufficient financial and technical assistance resources that support their land management and stewardship decisions. (App. A)

Ecological

2. **Landscape Conservation:** By 2032, hundreds of millions of acres of grass will be improved, restored, or kept intact for the benefit of people and nature across the biome. (App. B)
3. **Species:** By 2032, wildlife populations will remain stable if common, become stabilized if declining, and have population trends reversed and recovering if in steep decline, understood through a chosen suite of insects, birds, herpetofauna, and mammals. (App. C)
4. **Water:** By 2032, extractions from groundwater and surface water sources will be reduced as necessary to sustain dynamically stable groundwater levels, baseflows, and lake levels. (App. D)
5. **Soil:** By 2032, comprehensive soil health will be improved to increase drought resilience, availability of livestock forage and wildlife habitat, and net carbon sequestration. (App. E)

Industry and Private Sector Partnership Contribution

6. **Food Supply:** Food companies, agribusinesses, and supply chain actors, immediately work to increase the positive impacts of agricultural production and stop grassland conversion. (App. F)
7. **Low-Impact Production:** Transportation and energy industry companies immediately work to ensure intentional siting of energy, transportation, and other commercial or industry developments for all projects including wind, solar, oil, gas, coal, and transmission. (App. G)

Bison, Wyoming



Strategy Areas: Achieving the Vision and Goals



Bumblebee

Given the deep interconnection between the seven Goals, the Roadmap establishes an array of priorities and actions that can be implemented to collectively meet them. The three Strategy Areas that follow serve as an organizing tool for large buckets of this work: Partnerships & Engagement, Policy & Funding, and Research & Evaluation. Combined, the actions in these three Strategy Areas will achieve the Vision and Goals of the Roadmap.

2022 Roadmap Summit Update. On May 23-25, 2022, the Roadmap Community gathered for a second Summit in Fort Collins, Colorado to collectively identify and prioritize immediate action steps to implement the Roadmap in the next 1-3 years. These actions, resulting from iterative and cross-sector dialogues, have been integrated into the existing Roadmap actions listed in each Strategy Area below. Note that only those actions identified by Summit attendees as high priority, or actions that have emerged recently from topic or sector workgroups, are included here (see the Roadmap website for more detail). Actions from the Summit are identified as follows:

- ✓ Existing Roadmap actions **affirmed** at the Summit, including minor language updates.
- ★ Existing Roadmap actions **strongly affirmed** (high votes) at the Summit, including minor and major language updates.
- 🌱 **New actions** emerging from the 2022 Summit.

STRATEGY AREA 1: CREATE AND ENRICH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Sustain trusted commitments among a multitude of stakeholders to achieve the Roadmap's Vision and inspire buy-in from those with decision-making power. Ensure ongoing collective action, information sharing, expansion of the network, and ample space for innovation.

Collaborative Priorities for Strategy Area 1

Priority 1a: Broaden communications to increase support. Work with partners across sectors and regions to develop a shared understanding of the importance of grasslands and establish a unified message about their importance to share broadly in rural and urban settings.

- ★ **Action 1:** Craft a [communication and outreach toolkit](#) for the Roadmap Community to use in various settings (K-12, community engagement, consumer education, etc.) to increase awareness about the importance of healthy grasslands. Whenever possible, engage liaisons and/or leaders from within communities to promote cultural and local relevance.

- ★ **Action 2:** Create and continue to adapt a [Grasslands Policy Statement](#) that can be used across sectors and nations to elevate the importance of grasslands in policy and funding.
- ✓ **Action 3:** Use social sciences to understand public values and further validate the communication toolkit (also see Priority 3a).

Priority 1b: Share knowledge and resources across cultures. Develop opportunities and systems to share science, success stories, best practices, trainings, and learning across the Central Grasslands.

- ✓ **Action 1:** Form a training bureau that prioritizes local knowledge, peer-to-peer learning, and intergenerational mentorship.
- ✓ **Action 2:** Continue using the [Roadmap website](#) (or other centralized data repository) to share ideas, resources, best practices, and toolkits.
- ✓ **Action 3:** Catalogue and celebrate current ranchers' and producers' efforts.

Priority 1c: Create stronger partnerships across sectors and scales. Strengthen collaboration between Indigenous/First Nations, agriculture, ranching, and industry, with conservation organizations, agencies, and funders.

- ✓ **Action 1:** Provide new opportunities for Indigenous partners, such as assisting with barriers to land access, and supporting and reaffirming sovereignty for food and resource management.
- ✓ **Action 2:** Further develop non-regulatory approaches to conservation and promote innovation through payments for ecosystem services.
- Action 3:** Utilize existing conservation easements where viable, expand capacity for easements, and explore new approaches to easements.
- ✓ **Action 4:** Leverage private dollars to fund proven programs and inform federal policy.
- ✓ **Summit Action:** Develop a Conservation Benefits/Needs Directory to connect funders to funding needs, for example connecting non-federal funds from industry and donors to partners needing funds to satisfy non-federal match.



Priority 1d: Build collective action. Strengthen existing collaborative networks and foster collaboration where there are gaps or innovative opportunities.

- ✓ **Action 1:** Utilize and expand local ranching, landowner, and community-based collaboratives to deepen engagement, amplify grassroots efforts, develop culturally and locally relevant tools, and build trust within traditionally underserved communities.
- ✓ **Action 2:** Support regional collaboration and planning led by Joint Ventures.
- ✓ **Action 3:** Identify bottlenecks (e.g., short grant cycles or loss of critical winter habitat) and inspire organizations in the Community to commit a portion of their resources to address those bottlenecks.
- ✦ **Summit Action:** Build local and community capacity for grasslands conservation by engaging communities where they're at, informing and educating in relevant contexts (e.g., insects and grazing management for ranchers), and promoting self-supporting and community-driven monitoring and management.



Dung beetles

Advice from the Roadmap Community

- **Recognize that when building collaboratives, we “work at the speed of trust.”** Trust can begin to be built through open dialogue focused on common ground and bottom-up processes among organizations, individuals, and communities working together.
- **Be willing to take the first step.** Collaborative action now will help inform continued collaborative action in the future.
- **Collaboration requires compromise.** Finding agreement and working collaboratively will likely involve changing organizational culture, skill sets, and behaviors.
- **Catalyze more neighboring and sharing successes over a meal.** Increase rancher-led initiatives and young rancher engagement.
- **Use human-centered messaging.** Connect conservation actions and outcomes to what individuals and communities value.
- **Strive to be nimble.** Learn from best practices, test, apply, learn, re-apply, and innovate.
- **Utilize data to promote discussion.** Data sets provide important baseline information, and conversation helps determine what works locally.

Photo: Big Bend National Park, Texas

STRATEGY AREA 2: REFINE FUNDING AND POLICY INITIATIVES

Provide a stable policy and funding framework using a variety of tools, including those that address current and past financial inequities and injustices. Include voluntary programs and financial incentives designed to foster stewardship, collaboration, and flexible participation in conservation initiatives that improve grasslands.

Collaborative Priorities for Strategy Area 2

Priority 2a: Strengthen existing policies to better support connected grasslands and human communities. Build policies at the local, tribal, state/province, and federal level that support grasslands conservation efforts, and make investments in climate resilience, human well-being, and economic sustainability for rural economies.



- ✓ **Action 1:** Recommend policy changes that support natural processes (e.g., fire, grazing), improve grasslands conservation outcomes, increase technical assistance for economically viable conservation, and secure a priority area designation across the Central Flyway.
- Action 2:** Support the work of the Canadian Wildlife Service regarding its mandate to develop a national agriculture sector action plan for wildlife and habitat conservation.
- ✓ **Action 3:** Elevate impact investment, ecosystem service-based markets, and market-based solutions that leverage available federal resources where applicable in all three countries.
- ✓ **Action 4:** Align programs and incentives to long-term land conservation goals (e.g., reduced or zero grassland conversion), ensure they are produced and employed equitably, and expand to all areas of the biome. Consider existing programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's *Working Lands for Wildlife Grassland Initiative*.

Priority 2b: Influence new major legislation. Ensure that new legislation supports the shared Vision and Priorities identified throughout the Roadmap.

- ★ **Action 1:** Support & influence the North American Grasslands Conservation Act to ensure alignment with grassland conservation priorities in Canada, Mexico, and Indigenous Nations.
- ✓ **Action 2:** Advocate for Recovering America's Wildlife Act, especially for increased regional collaboration across boundaries (e.g., better coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans).

- ★ **Action 3:** At the local, regional, and state/provincial scales across the biome, identify new opportunities to incentivize conservation and develop ecological, economic, and social resilience, while also providing flexibility for diverse local contexts and changing conditions.
- 🌱 **Summit Action:** Influence the US Farm Bill to remove crop insurance subsidies, reduce and remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to program participation, and better align policy to on-the-ground priorities (see Grasslands Risk Map).
- 🌱 **Summit Action:** Legislatively recognize the validity and importance of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous languages, in their own right and for the short- and long-term health of the Central Grasslands, and require consistent, meaningful engagement with Indigenous Nations from all cross-border entities.
- 🌱 **Summit Action:** Use federal-level legislation to legally define Grasslands, Ecosystem Services, and other terms to reinforce conservation efforts.



Priority 2c: Focus funding to scale proven programs and support innovative solutions. Seek novel funding opportunities and direct current funding toward innovative solutions that incentivize grasslands conservation for ranchers and producers.

- ★ **Action 1:** Fund resource gaps of Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas to build ground-up momentum, encourage connection to other intact grasslands landscapes, and restore Indigenous/First Nation sovereignty on their lands.
- ★ **Action 2:** Increase funding resources, disbursement flexibility, and long-term sustainability for programs that elevate sustainable grazing practices and increase conservation strategies on ranchlands across the biome.
- ✓ **Action 3:** Direct funding to address gaps in personnel (e.g., landscape scale partnership coordinators, researchers, monitors, or extension programs).

Priority 2d: Identify and quantify the true economic value of grasslands. Develop long-term security and predictability to make grasslands conservation economically viable.

- ✓ **Action 1:** Incorporate wildlife, ecosystem services, and land and water conservation into working lands valuation.

- ✓ **Action 2:** Formally recognize in MOUs and Policy Statements that grasslands provide critical cultural value to diverse human communities across the biome, and that these values are not economically quantifiable.
- ★ **Action 3:** Develop a new engagement model designed to support Indigenous/First Nations land management and associated economic and environmental sustainability efforts.

Advice from the Roadmap Community

- **Uphold Treaties.** Re-envision policies that describe collaboration with Indigenous/First Nations and prioritize their diverse cultural values and knowledge of the land.
- **Recognize and account for local policy adaptation.** Re-envision policies that provide for local flexibility and local variation in soils, water, and land conservation practices.
- **Focus on voluntary and incentive-based policies.** Voluntary policies are most approachable for producers and landowners.
- **Attract the interest of private foundations and philanthropic industry partners.** Develop and scale well-planned projects and initiatives.
- **Create funding streams** that provide additional flexibility and reduce restrictions by:
 - Reducing or eliminating streams contingent on matching contributions.
 - Reducing or eliminating funding opportunities limited by geography.
 - Extending project timelines beyond the typical 5-year funding windows to allow for proper planning, effective conservation work, and robust monitoring.
 - Using responsive feedback loops to allow grantees to adapt to changing conditions.

Photo: Rocky Mountain Front, Montana

STRATEGY AREA 3: PRIORITIZE RESEARCH THAT BENEFITS CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITIES

Work to ensure conservation is driven by a rich and nuanced understanding of local and regional biological, social, economic, geographical, and political factors.

Collaborative Priorities for Strategy Area 3

Priority 3a: Reduce unnecessary redundancy in research and address critical gaps. Local communities and sectors collaborate to identify and address crucial information gaps in research to support sustainable grasslands, wildlife, and human communities. (★)

- ★ **Action 1:** Develop a comprehensive, multilingual tool to share data, results, and implications from research to support future work.

Action 2: Establish a list of research gaps that when addressed will improve knowledge about species populations at risk, human dimensions, and ecosystems.

Action 3: Identify key stressors to grassland systems under threat, including climate variability, and research interventions to increase landscape resilience and productivity.

- ✔ **Summit Action:** In collaboration with local communities, strategically identify target core grassland habitat for active management using the Grasslands Risk Map (App. B).

Priority 3b: Elevate community-centered approaches into grasslands research. When communities want to be included, develop local capacity, and ensure Indigenous and rancher leadership in research proposal development.

- ✔ **Action 1:** Establish mutual respect between diverse research approaches and equitably co-produce research and learning between researchers and land managers, producers, Indigenous/First Nations, and working lands communities.
- ★ **Action 2:** Co-produce research questions, methods, and findings that honor Indigenous/ First Nations, producers, ranchers, and land-based cultures and understanding.



Willow Lake, South Dakota

Action 3: Develop a task force to study and improve communication mechanisms between researchers, communities, and government agencies.

- ✔ **Summit Action:** Use community-centered social science research to better understand the human dimensions of grassland conversion and conservation, and leverage this knowledge to build and enhance collaborative, locally relevant programs and actions.

Priority 3c: Construct sustainability models to support scaling programs in grazing, regenerative agriculture, and industry. Models should be informed by research and proven best practices and then adapted to local conditions.

- ★ **Action 1:** Prioritize landscape-level locations that if conserved or restored will increase connectivity and support high levels of biodiversity.
- ✔ **Action 2:** Develop industry standards that ensure grasslands conservation and support sustainable grasslands communities.
- ✔ **Action 3:** Identify gaps in current modeling and develop new models, (e.g., a prairie model for agriculture, management practices for invasive grass, or highly efficient water usage).

Priority 3d: Refine shared core monitoring standards. Apply research to evaluate and strengthen existing biological, ecological, and socio-economic monitoring practices; co-create these monitoring practices with local community members, focusing on issues most important to them.

★ **Action 1:** Develop best practices for taxon- and research-goal-specific monitoring that can be adapted for use in the field and at various scales across the biome.

Action 2: Ensure that cost, effort required, and access to data are not barriers to monitoring, while balancing concerns about privacy and sensitive species location information.

Action 3: Using long-term monitoring of key socio-ecological factors, establish a baseline and measure the progress of the Roadmap's Vision and Strategy (see Grasslands Scorecard).

Action 4: Share monitoring needs with technology companies to expand available monitoring methods (e.g., facial recognition equipment to ID species, or platforms for citizen monitoring programs).



Corn growing through rye and clover cover crop

Advice from the Roadmap Community

- **Incorporate human and economic dimensions** early in the research design and monitoring process (e.g., local, cultural, producer, and Indigenous).
- **Ensure that research translates to on-the-ground conservation:** adapt programs, systems, and models that address local context and value tools that work for landowners.
- **Use monitoring to deepen understanding** about species' responses to restoration and management practices.
- **Use research to define the benefits of grassland ecosystems and biodiversity to the public,** ultimately enabling purposeful policy and funding initiatives.

Photo: Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park, Saskatchewan

Establishing a Collective Impact Structure

This section provides an overview of how the Roadmap’s Backbone Support Organization and the Steering Committee will continue to implement the Roadmap beyond 2022. The Roadmap outlines the key strategies and priorities to be pursued by the biome-level collaborative to achieve the Scorecard Goals and supports the alignment of priorities across sectors (Figure 3). **This section provides the steps necessary to mobilize the structure and management of the Roadmap Community** to enact biome-wide strategic action planning.

Aligning Points of Collaboration Among Eight Sectors

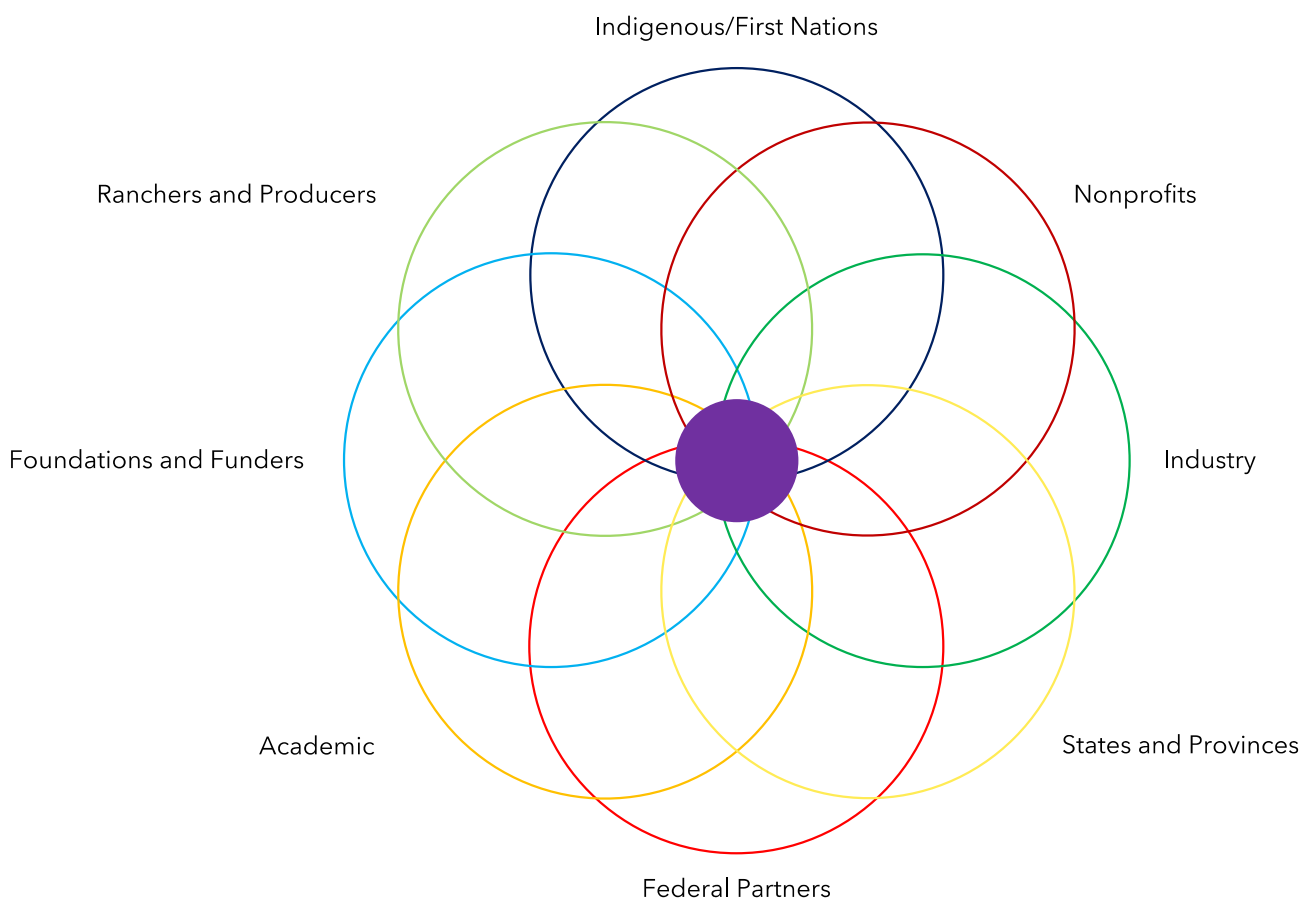


Figure 3. To identify the shared priorities of eight sectors, not everything will be perfect for everyone. The Roadmap seeks to occupy the large area of common ground and collective work in the center.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND CONSTELLATION GOVERNANCE

The Roadmap is built on the best practices of **Collective Impact**. Highly collaborative, cross-sector efforts such as the Roadmap demand a well-organized structure with decentralized leadership to ensure that effective, mutually reinforcing activities are happening across the biome (Figure 4).

This well-organized yet decentralized structure is commonly referred to as **Constellation Governance**. The constellation model is a complexity-inspired governance framework for

multi-organization collaboration and provides a way of organizing a group of interested parties to meet a need without having to create a new organization. This structure has already proven useful for the Roadmap. The primary entities involved throughout the Roadmap process include: 1) the Steering Committee and sub-committees, 2) the Backbone Organization, and 3) the Workgroups.

A key responsibility of the Steering Committee (currently the “Planning Committee”) and the Backbone Organization (currently the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) is to **ensure that the vision, purpose, and principles of the Roadmap are utilized, and that workgroups, committees, and participants keep this guidance at the forefront of their work** in support of the Roadmap. To make sure that guidance is provided, the Roadmap Community uses a variety of different [input and feedback approaches](#), including participatory forums and Summits, workgroups tackling specific issues or elevating sector-specific needs, surveys to explore gaps in knowledge, and representative and consensus-based decision-making.

The Steering Committee should be comprised of diverse stakeholders and partners, ensuring engagement and leadership across all sectors involved in the Roadmap effort. The Steering Committee is charged with:

- Planning and coordinating the Summit (or other types of gathering as needed).
- Guiding the overall work of the Roadmap and being aware of the “pulse” of collaboration.
- Tracking progress and catalyzing Workgroups when needed.
- Managing two sub-committees:
 - *Metrics Workgroup*: Using the Scorecard Goals, this committee measures progress and outcomes on Roadmap priorities and actions.
 - *Communication Committee*: This committee focuses on reporting back to the Roadmap Community regarding progress through monthly emails and/or quarterly newsletters, as well as updating the website and resources. They also build robust communication toolkits and networks to elevate the priorities of the Roadmap.



Western meadowlark



The Backbone Organization is currently the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, but it is possible for the Backbone Organization to rotate through Steering Committee members and other leaders. Ideally, the Steering Committee and its sub-committees take on the bulk of the collaborative effort, leaving the Backbone Organization to take on a facilitative and collaborative leadership role as chair of the Roadmap. It is critical in Collective Impact for the Backbone Organization to take on such a role, rather than acting as a directive authority. The Backbone Organization is charged with:

- Supporting the Steering Committee and guiding the facilitation team, coordinator, or other hired support to meet the needs of the collective effort.
- Ensuring that momentum continues and that key connections are made across sectors.
- Building trust amongst stakeholders.
- Securing resources with the Steering Committee to support biome-wide collaboration.

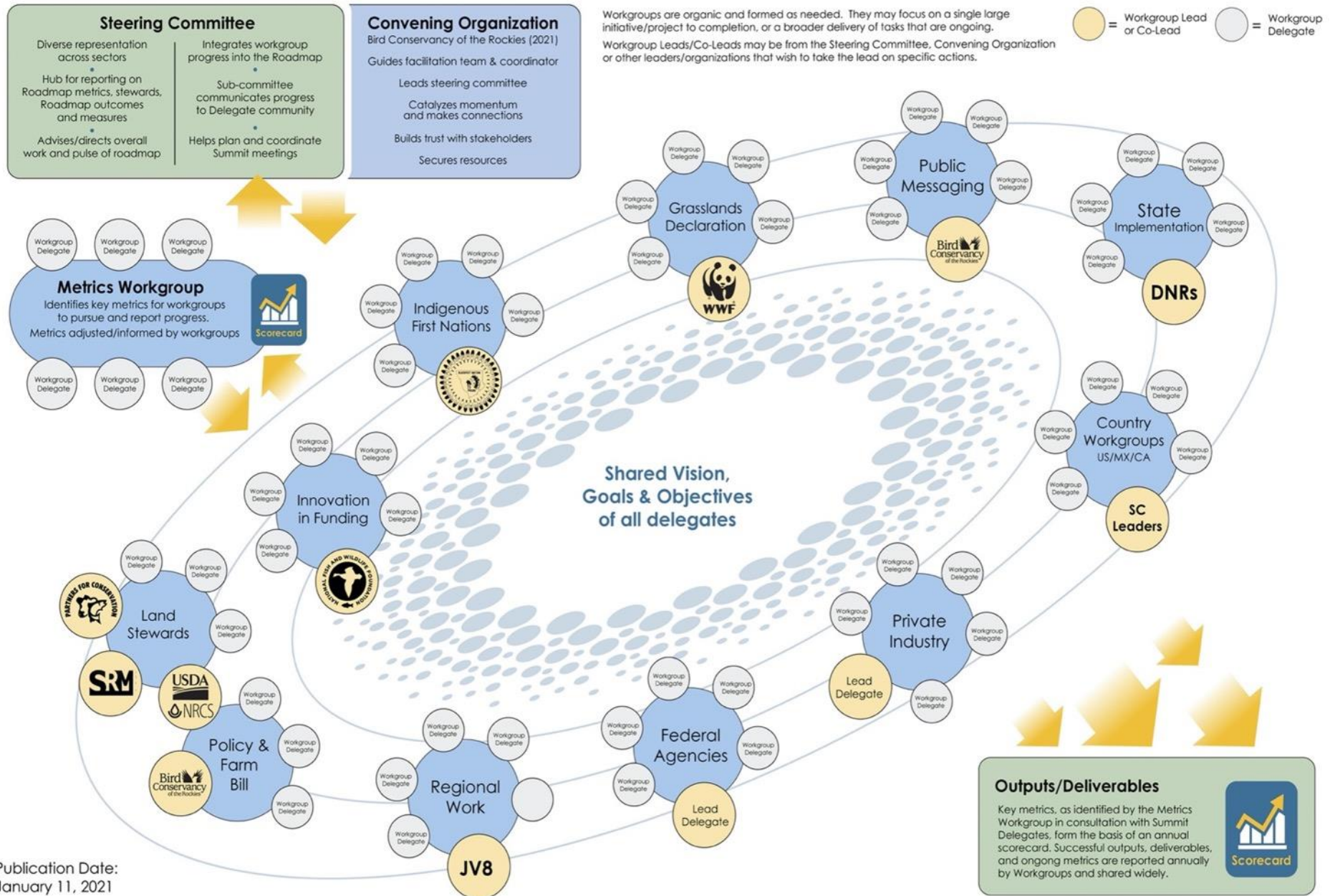
Workgroups have and will continue to emerge throughout the Roadmap process. The majority of stakeholder engagement in the Roadmap occurs through the constellation of workgroups, each of which is spearheaded by a voluntary lead organization or individual. The Workgroups' location within the Constellation Governance structure empowers ownership, diverse leadership, and equitable collaboration to solve the incredibly complex challenges across the grasslands. Delegates should feel welcome to join and eventually lead a workgroup - leadership is not limited to the Steering Committee or Backbone Organization. Leading workgroups depends on collaborative, facilitative leadership that seeks consensus, group processes, and innovation, not power, command, and control. Workgroups can:

- Focus on a single issue, action, or strategy until it is addressed or achieved.
- Act as an ongoing Roadmap initiative (e.g., research or public messaging).

Current Workgroups Include:

- Indigenous/First Nations Workgroup
- Canada Workgroup
- Mexico Workgroup
- Metrics Workgroup
- Funders Workgroup
- Industry/Private Sector Workgroup
- State Workshop led by State Advisory Team
- Federal Partners and National-Level Leadership Advisors
- Policy Committee: RAWA, NAGCA, Farm Bill Exploration
- Communications and Public Messaging Team
- Landowner, Steward, and Rancher Leadership Advisory Team

Empowering ownership, diverse leadership and equitable collaboration to solve very complex challenges
 Roles within this governance model are constantly evolving.



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Figure 4. The Roadmap’s adopted model of Constellation Governance. The Steering Committee and Backbone Organization (listed here as Convening Organization) provide structure to the Community, while the many stakeholders engage through a decentralized process organized around the shared Vision, Goals, and Priorities.

Conclusion

Eight diverse sectors and three countries have come together as a collective to identify these common principles and shared priorities to address the challenges faced in the North America's Central Grasslands. Changing the way we work together across the biome will make it so our individual and local actions add up, leading to outcomes for human communities and the environment that are more than the sum of their parts. By increasing support for coordinated conservation and fostering mutual respect and support for the diverse people living and working across the Central Grasslands, we can ensure resilient and connected grasslands and thriving human communities, now and for generations to come.

For additional details about the Scorecard Goals, a terminology and acronym glossary, additional figures and resources, citations, and an overview of past Roadmap Community actions, please see *The Central Grasslands Roadmap Appendices* document.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Platte River, Nebraska

