



Advancing Sustainable Growth in the Grand Traverse Region through the Power of People & Metrics

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Context and Purpose.....	2
University of Michigan: School for Environment and Sustainability	2
Regional Development in Northwest Lower Michigan.....	2
Project Objectives	4
Activities & Processes	5
Case Studies of Great Lakes Coastal Communities	5
Interviews with Grand Traverse Community Leaders	5
Analysis of Interview Findings	6
Key Findings from Great Lakes Case Studies	6
Key Findings from the Grand Traverse Community	7
Conversations with Local Leaders.....	7
Direct Feedback from the Coalition	8
Current State of Coalition Efforts	10
Strengths of Coalition Efforts.....	10
Areas for Coalition Improvement.....	10
Factors Threatening Coalition Success	11
Opportunities for Coalition Advancement	12
Shifting the Coalition from Planning to Action.....	13
Elements of Effective Implementation and Progress	13
Recommendations & Strategies	15
Next Steps for Sustained Action.....	18
Literature Cited	19
Appendices	21
Appendix A: Full Case Studies	
Appendix B: Case Study Key Takeaways	
Appendix C: Pre-Meeting Materials for Coalition Feedback Session	
Appendix D: Key Takeaways from SWOT Analysis	

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¹ “Land Acknowledgement.” (2021). *School for Environment and Sustainability*. Retrieved from <https://seas.umich.edu/about>

Context and Purpose

University of Michigan: School for Environment and Sustainability

The School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS) is a college within the University of Michigan. SEAS offers students a unique opportunity to lead a master's project in place of a typical thesis to gain hands-on consulting experience with real-world clients. The master's project is a 16-month long group effort designed to connect students with communities and organizations to identify and address a specific need. Our team is composed of four students with unique, interdisciplinary backgrounds. Collectively, we were paired with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and their newly formed Community Development Coalition to help advance and sustain action toward regional sustainability goals. This work was completed from January 2019 through April 2021.

Regional Development in Northwest Lower Michigan

Great Lakes coastal communities experience unique cultural and environmental challenges, yet these communities share similar opportunities to leverage local water amenities to create vibrant, attractive, and progressive environments. To mitigate challenges and leverage opportunities, leaders across the basin are working to advance collaborative frameworks that inspire sustainable growth and community resilience along the Great Lakes coasts. The Grand Traverse region, located on the coast of Lake Michigan in the northwest portion of Michigan's lower peninsula, is one example of these efforts.

The Grand Traverse region sits along the northwest coast of Michigan's lower peninsula. With brilliant natural landscapes, the region has long held a special place in the hearts of Michiganders and tourists alike. It is home to the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, who have for centuries developed a rich history and connectedness with the area. The present community includes vibrant leaders and organizations from public, private, tribal, and nonprofit sectors who strive to make the region sustainable, welcoming, and resilient. The region is a popular tourist destination with key attractions centering around, but not limited to, the annual Cherry Festival, a flourishing wine and beer scene, and beautiful freshwater beaches. These attractions also make the region an appealing place for retirees to spend their summer months, with popular news sources claiming it to be in the top 20 places to retire in the nation.² The region continues to experience growth with the main hub, Traverse City, experiencing a population growth of 8.37% since 2010.³ Many leaders in the region wish to transition away from the current trajectory towards becoming primarily a seasonal tourist destination, to creating a community that can support both tourism and working families year-round.

In 2019, the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF) mobilized leaders from diverse sectors to form the Community Development Coalition of Northwest Michigan (Coalition), aimed at guiding collaborative and intentional growth for Northwest Michigan. The group's coverage area spans Antrim, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse, Benzie, and Leelanau counties, all of which surround the Grand Traverse Bay. The Coalition has crafted a Community Development Scorecard that outlines regional sustainability goals and specific metrics that will track progress across interconnected economic,

² Ben Geler. "Best Places to Retire in Michigan". (October 2012). *SmartAsset*. Retrieved from <https://smartasset.com/retirement/best-places-to-retire-in-michigan>.

³ "Traverse City, Michigan Population 2021." (2021). *World Population Review*. Retrieved from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/traverse-city-mi-population>.

societal, and environmental objectives. The Coalition aims to facilitate regional collaboration by breaking down the barriers between the different sectors of the triple bottom line, allowing novel opportunities between traditionally disparate organizations. This approach to advancing regional sustainability goals is a direct effort to enhance productivity and inspire innovative problem solving. Additionally, the Coalition does not require a membership scheme, therefore participating organizations and actors are herein referred to as “contributors”.

Prior to the Coalition’s debut, collaborative efforts in 2005 produced a 50-year master plan for the region called *The Grand Vision*.⁴ Although collectively acknowledged within the region as a well-intended initiative, mixed reviews continue to circulate after it failed to gain regional traction and later became known among some of the populace as a mark of inaction. In the face of doubt cast by the Grand Vision, Coalition success hinges on the ability of the group’s interdisciplinary contributors to shift from planning to action in a coordinated and intentional way. In addition to this lingering hesitancy surrounding regional planning, the region faces pressing economic and societal issues that cause friction and inhibit regional consensus and unified action.

Meanwhile, the Coalition is working within a regional context that includes deep-rooted challenges related to affordability and accessibility, racial equity, and economic resiliency. Less than fifteen minutes inland from Lake Michigan, the landscape shifts to rural and agricultural land, with many populations living in poverty. According to the American Community Survey (ACS, 2021), between January 2020 and January 2021, multiple counties in the Grand Traverse region had a significant number of its residents below the Federal poverty line: Antrim at 11.0%, Kalkaska at 16.7%, Grand Traverse at 9.6%, and Benzie at 9.5% (Figure 1). Counties further inland from the Grand Traverse Bay experience higher rates of poverty compared to counties along the coast with greater access to freshwater amenities. This is most apparent when observing Kalkaska, the only landlocked county, with 16.7% of the population under the poverty line; comparatively, Leelanau has the most shoreline and only had 6.1% of residents under the poverty line. Leelanau was also listed as having the most disparate income in Michigan as reported by the Economic Policy Institute in 2018.⁵ Northern Michigan communities also struggle to build and maintain diverse populations, with Grand Traverse County receiving only a 16.80 out of 100 on the 2018 diversity index indicating the county is predominately white.⁶ Furthermore, some portions of the Grand Traverse region have struggled to accept growing movements to advance racial equity, gaining national attention for a few prominent examples of negative backlash by multiple residents on different occasions.⁷

⁴ The Grand Vision. (n.d.). *The Grand Vision*. Retrieved from <http://www.thegrandvision.org/>.

⁵ “Income Inequality in Michigan”. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/multimedia/unequal-states-of-america/#/Michigan>

⁶ Reese-Cassal, Kyle. “2014/2019 Esri Diversity Index”. (September 2014). *Esri White Paper*. Retrieved from <https://www.esri.com/content/dam/esrisites/sitecore-archive/Files/Pdfs/library/whitepapers/pdfs/diversity-index-methodology.pdf>

⁷ Ramirez, Charles E. “Lawsuit seeks sanctions against Mich. county, official who displayed rifle in meeting”. (April 2021). *The Detroit News*. Retrieved from <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/04/12/lawsuit-sanctions-grand-traverse-county-official-rifle-meeting/7187321002/>

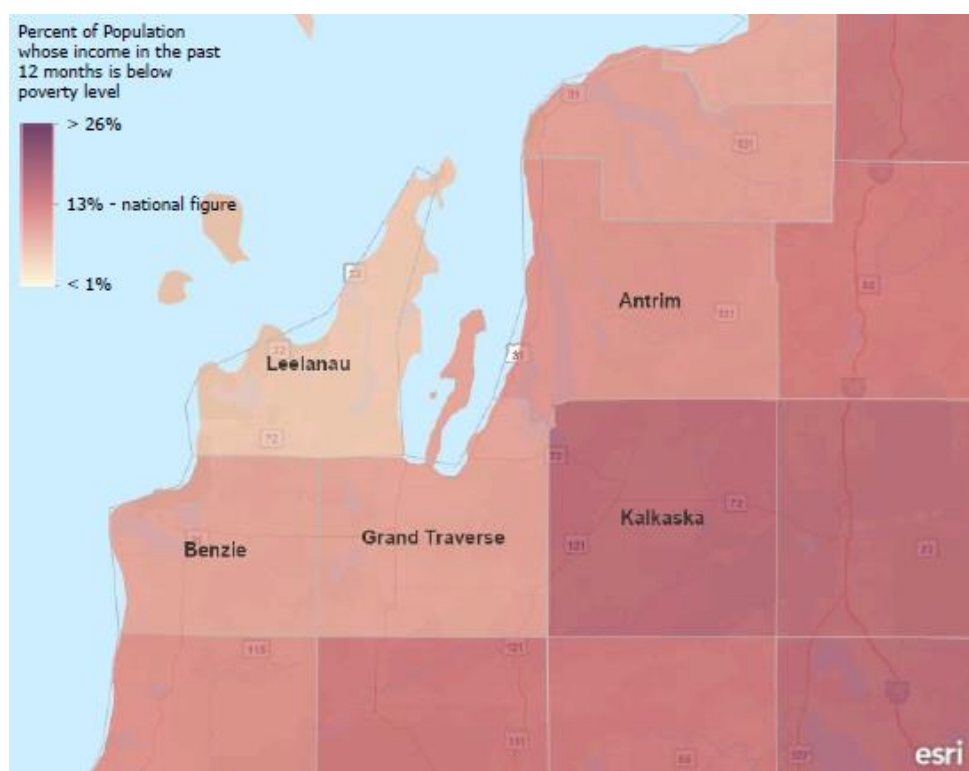


Figure 1. Percent of the population below poverty line in 2020 within each Grand Traverse county covered by the Community Development Coalition (ACS, 2021).

Project Objectives

The Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation recognizes regional hesitancy towards community visioning and planning, and now seeks to make purposeful change in ways that previous efforts fell short. Furthermore, the group is aware of their influence as a collaboration of regional leaders and is inspired to find new ways to address and positively advance regional affordability, accessibility, resiliency, as well as social equity and inclusion. To date, the Coalition has gathered a diverse subset of community leaders, published their Community Development Scorecard, and started tracking and sharing associated metrics via a public web platform.

To help the Coalition overcome hesitancies stemming from prior inaction, boost future success, and address regional challenges, we engaged in research aiming to identify key strategies for kick-starting and maintaining action toward regional sustainability initiatives within the Grand Traverse region. We identified three project objectives:

1. Understand how other Great Lakes coastal communities are approaching similar challenges related to sustainable regional development.

We researched and interviewed leaders from Great Lakes coastal communities making progress toward similar sustainability goals to understand key steps to advancing these types of efforts and overcoming barriers. This knowledge will allow the Grand Traverse region to identify effective approaches to sustaining progress towards current and future goals. Using this information, we crafted a series of case studies highlighting similar challenges and opportunities from example communities that can be applied in the context of the Coalition's efforts.

2. Identify specific opportunities and shortcomings of current community development efforts in the Grand Traverse region.

We interviewed local leaders from the Grand Traverse region to identify and assess barriers to, and leverage points for, sustained community action by the Coalition. Our interviewees represented diverse perspectives of both community members and Coalition contributors. These interviews aimed to highlight a range of viewpoints on the Coalition's efforts that allowed us to identify opportunities for action and recognize specific barriers to implementation.

3. Synthesize our findings into recommendations that can be acted on by the Coalition to ensure long-term progress, while mitigating potential barriers to action.

Following regional and local interviews, we analyzed and synthesized findings to recommend robust strategies for long-term progress toward the region's sustainability goals. Recommendations are outlined and organized by priority level and are paired with specific strategies to act on each recommendation.

Activities & Processes

Case Studies of Great Lakes Coastal Communities

We crafted a series of case studies to understand diverse approaches towards sustainability efforts in Great Lakes coastal communities. We used a range of criteria including geography, demographics, access to resources, and sustainability accomplishments to ultimately select the following six communities or regions: (1) Duluth and Cloquet, Minnesota, (2) Durham Region and Toronto, Ontario, (3) Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, (4) the central-west coast of lower Michigan radiating out from Grand Haven, MI (5) Buffalo, New York, (6) and Marquette, Michigan. We reached out to community leaders across disciplines and interviewed 19 individuals in total across the six case study areas. We asked these leaders about their vision for their region, attempted approaches and strategies for implementation, how they maintain accountability and momentum in their efforts, and how they manage and maintain partnerships and collaborations.

Interviews with Grand Traverse Community Leaders

To better understand local context, strengths, and barriers, we made connections with 17 interdisciplinary community leaders across the Grand Traverse region. These interviewees represented Coalition contributors and other community leaders. For those within the Coalition, we asked questions that highlighted what the Coalition was doing well and what could be improved upon. For other community leaders who were not affiliated with the Coalition, we asked questions about whether or not they were aware of the Coalition's efforts, and if so, what their initial reactions were. We asked all interviewees about their vision for the region, the strengths and missteps of past and present community planning efforts, and how they believed sustainable progress could be advanced in the Grand Traverse region.

Analysis of Interview Findings

Each interview was hosted and recorded using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Using our recordings and interview transcriptions, we used computer software called NVivo to conduct interview analysis. NVivo allowed our team to extract key themes and complete a quantitative analysis of qualitative data. During this process, we catalogued valuable sentiments and statements and categorized them into 11 primary topic areas. We then closely analyzed each of these categories to gain insight into what interviewees said in relation to each theme. These findings became the foundation for a SWOT analysis wherein we further organized findings into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to Coalition efforts. These processes allowed our team to pair experiential data with existing research and literature to pose a set of final recommendations for Coalition success.

Key Findings from Great Lakes Case Studies

Each Great Lakes coastal community we studied provided us with examples of strategies, techniques, and procedures they used to advance sustainable progress in their region. These examples are described in detail in our full case studies (Appendix A: Full Case Studies). Primary takeaways included both personal and organization achievements, and lessons learned through experience (Appendix B: Case Study Key Takeaways).

Community Support and Involvement - While some organizations believe they can trailblaze project efforts without community support, a nearly universal message present across our case studies was that community support and involvement is a primary factor in project sustainability and success. This was highlighted extensively by our interviewees as the need for organizational credibility being the steppingstone required to consistently act upon sustainability efforts.

Acting on Low Hanging Fruit - There was little debate around the best way to gain an initial level of credibility from the public. Several organizations laid out their initial objectives as easier and simpler projects, with low barriers to entry, known as “low hanging fruit” or “easy wins”. As such, a common thread present across case study interviewees was to incrementally advance small-scale projects that require smaller amounts of funding. These short-term milestones will help garner public support while major, long-term projects are managed behind the scenes.

Robust Communication with the Public - Public support will not necessarily increase solely as the result of a finished project milestone. Organizations must also communicate successes through community outreach. Using effective storytelling and creative uses of data presentation allow public information to be both engaging and accessible to a wide audience. While our case study interviewees had differing opinions on the extent of data that should be shared, there is a clear advantage in pairing narrative-based information with raw data. Pairing the two types of information communicates a message that is easy to follow and minimizes the potential for the public to misunderstand complex information. Depending on the extent an organization wishes to share its data, creative information sharing, such as maps or storyboards, are a way to pair this information in an effective and engaging way.

Intentional and Agile Planning - Approaches to planning varied greatly by organization and interviewee, but at a minimum, being prepared to act on pre-existing plans when resources become available arose as best practice across case study interviewees. In addition to being prepared, multiple

interviewees mentioned that plans should outline incremental steps for action and should consider a dynamic approach that includes the ability to adjust as contexts change.

Intentionality around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) - Several of our case study communities made it apparent that intentional efforts to advance DEI initiatives were of utmost importance to their community. These activities and efforts represent both specific local community issues with hopes of becoming a positive example on a national level. Active DEI approaches require active engagement with the community which must be front of mind and should be embedded across all aspects of a collaborative effort.

Key Findings from the Grand Traverse Community

Conversations with Local Leaders

Grand Traverse interviewees shared thorough and thoughtful personal perspectives on the region, providing us with insight into local sentiments surrounding the interconnected economic, ecologic, and societal aspects of the community. There was considerable overlap between themes discussed by the local community, indicating that Coalition interviewees and other community leaders shared similar values and perspectives. Regional actors were passionate about finding ways to work together, which was evident by the fact that every interviewee brought up the importance of partnerships and collaboration. All interviewees thought purposefully about the future of the region, and all discussed topics related to Coalition strategies, communication, and strengths and opportunities.

Local interviews were reviewed and quantified, then given a percentage representing the amount that theme was discussed relative to the other themes. The most discussed themes included vision (14.6%), partnerships and collaboration (14.5%), coalition structure and process with (12.9%), and communication (11.0%) (Figure 2). Several topics were talked about by every single interviewee: strategies, communication, partnerships and collaboration, and strengths and opportunities. Worries for the region were also apparent, with 15 out of 17 interviewees talking about weaknesses and threats. However, the identified weaknesses and threats were not all necessarily indicative of Coalition efforts, as many were expressions of broader concerns for the region's future. Additionally, many threats could easily be leveraged into opportunities to improve current efforts and the state of the region.

Several unanticipated topics arose that represented a smaller portion of overall conversations. These least discussed topics included sub-themes involving legal matters (0.3%), lacking resources (1.0%), and community priorities (1.6%). While we anticipated the following themes to be discussed in greater detail, they occurred less frequently as well: priorities (3.7%), and planning (4.1%). Despite 15 out of 17 interviewees responding directly to our questions related to DEI, the topic surprisingly fell among those which were discussed the least, with only 4.4% of all conversations covering the topic. Most interviewees acknowledged DEI as important and necessary, but many did not follow up with additional perspectives. That said, some were more passionate about the topic and brought it up on their own along with discussions on how to address underserved communities, improve inclusivity, and be drivers of progress for the community.



Figure 2. Hierarchical chart representing relative percent coverage between all themes.

Direct Feedback from the Coalition

Following our initial analysis, we hosted a feedback session with Coalition contributors to determine if emerging themes were aligned with the Coalition’s overall goals and objectives. Prior to the feedback session, we asked participants to rank five initial themes on a scale of 1 (least important) to 5 (most important) (Appendix C: Pre-Meeting Materials for Coalition Feedback Session). Responses were averaged across participants to visualize an overall ranking of priorities (Figure 3). Based on these rankings, we found that Partnerships and Collaboration, Goals and Visions, and Strategy and Structure all ranked similarly and fairly high, while both Scorecard and Communication and Public Education ranked lower.

The Coalition is still relatively new in the region, so it is vital for the group to become united around common goals and visions. Collecting group perspectives allowed us to determine if the Coalition felt unified in their approach and if this approach aligned with our initial findings from individual interviews. When asked to collaboratively prioritize initial themes, all four groups ranked the themes of collaboration and strategy within the top two categories, which aligned well with our interview findings (Table 1). This alignment also illustrated that collaboration and strategy are two critical components of the Coalition’s future success. Additionally, the group theme rankings revealed that goals and vision were also an important theme and highlighted how many Contributors felt similarly about the topics presented. This result emphasized that contributors believe that a unifying vision and shared understanding is important for achieving Coalition and regional success.



Figure 3. Coalition prioritization of primary themes in response to pre-meeting questionnaires.

Without collaboration and a shared vision, the Coalition's efforts will only benefit specific groups and organizations involved. Facilitating conversations between contributors will build understanding between different disciplines, further establishing the Coalition's common goal, and keeping contributors engaged with the larger group (Kania and Kramer, 2011). This could explain why there was a slight difference in prioritization between contributors and Coalition leadership. Having both contributors and leadership explain their rationale for their ranking helped align thinking across the entire group.

Contributors also noted that some of the themes were strongly correlated. Specifically, as one theme advances the others would follow. Therefore, while some themes ranked lower, it does not necessarily mean they are unimportant, but rather not as immediately critical as other themes.

Table 1. Feedback session prioritizations from the three contributor groups (1-3) and one facilitator group (4).

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	RANKING
Strategy	Collaboration	Strategy	Collaboration	High Priority
Collaboration	Strategy	Goals/Visions	Communication	
Goals/Visions	Scorecard	Collaboration	Strategy	
Scorecard	Goals/Visions	Communication	Goals/Visions	
Communication	Communication	Scorecard	Scorecard	Low Priority

Current State of Coalition Efforts

Using a SWOT Analysis, we identified and organized key themes from local leaders into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (Appendix D: Key Takeaways from SWOT Analysis). Conversations with Coalition contributors and other local community leaders gave us valuable insight into aspects that could help or hinder Coalition performance.

Strengths of Coalition Efforts

Strengths represent what the Coalition is doing well, the resources they can leverage, and what regional assets they have access to. The strengths identified by our interviewees anchored the SWOT analysis and highlighted aspects of the Coalition that should continue to be nurtured as efforts progress. Because the Coalition leads with their strengths, these were rather straightforward and easy to identify. We understood these strengths to be positive realities that reflect the Coalition's vision for collaborative frameworks in the region.

Leveraging Cross-Linkages Between Diverse Contributors - Many interviewees discussed the presence of unique cross-linkages as a result of gathering a diverse group of contributors. Interviewees broadly noted group diversity as a strength that encourages non-traditional partnerships across different sectors and disciplines. For example, energy partners could work with water partners to problem solve around the energy-water nexus, or nonprofits could work with local governments to collaboratively apply for funding. This concept reflects a growing recognition that interdisciplinary groups have the potential to unlock new solutions and expand traditional thinking. Cross-disciplinary connections fuel the Coalition's efforts and must be nurtured as a fundamental guideline for the group moving forward.

Shared Interest and Identity Around Water Resources - Regional passion and energy were often paired with pride for local environmental resources. As a coastal community, it became clear that the environment, and specifically water resources, acted as a common interest among partners in the region. Nearly every interviewee mentioned water in some form, showing that local water resources strongly contribute to the identity of these coastal residents. While interviewees valued water resources, this value represented itself in indifferent ways. Specifically, some focused on the utility and economic value of water, while others talked about the cultural value and benefits of water stewardship and protection. Bringing these values together and unifying around a shared water identity to accomplish a common goal is a powerful mechanism to motivate diverse contributors to find common ground in disagreements (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017).

Areas for Coalition Improvement

Similar to strengths, weaknesses also stood as realities faced by the region, but instead represented lacking resources or aspects that could be improved. When approached from a positive perspective, each weakness presents the Coalition with an opportunity to refine current approaches or build new avenues for success.

Mixed Levels of Contributor Involvement - We found that some of the noted weaknesses stemmed from a lack of two-way communication or engagement with some contributors, which led to uncertainty. For example, those who are highly involved in the efforts had more positive and concrete perceptions of group unity and objective setting, whereas those who were less engaged approached these aspects

with more uncertainty and hesitancy. Interviewees expressed a desire for consistent involvement and commitment by all contributors.

Independent Approaches for Coalition Action - Across interviewees, there were varying perspectives on approaches to the Coalition's next steps. Some interviewees were passionate about developing processes, while others were more interested in advancing projects. We did not feel that these diverse opinions or priorities were a weakness, but instead found that there was a lack of recognition among contributors around the value of leveraging each approach in concert with others.

Lacking Tribal Representation - Numerous interviewees mentioned a lack of tribal representation in Coalition efforts, with aspirations for increased engagement moving forward. We perceived the lack of tribal participation as a weakness, but also noted future engagement as a clear opportunity. Interviewees frequently paired these sentiments with positive feedback around recent efforts to remove a dam on the Lower Boardman River, which has involved notable leadership by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. The Coalition must find ways to connect with tribal leaders as soon as possible, as a delayed recognition may be perceived as disingenuous. First steps include listening to and learning from the expertise of tribal leaders who have been connected with the region for centuries.

Desire for More Community Engagement - Some interviewees shared a desire for the Coalition to expand community engagement with the general public. Those who agreed felt that public involvement was an element that should be included early and intentionally. Grounding early efforts in the community can provide an invaluable burst of energy to newly formed groups and initiatives (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). Furthermore, deploying experienced collaborators to engage on the ground can excel relationship building and establish trust within a community (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). If community engagement is not included in the Coalition's efforts, the group could struggle to gain future support and acceptance region wide.

Uncertainty Around Data Management - Contributors expressed a desire for more structure around data collection, metric tracking, and Scorecard development. There were also similar concerns related to long term data gathering, uncertainty around intended data users, and a need to establish relevance and urgency for a broader audience to care about collected metrics. Some interviewees expressed conflicting views around the validity and feasibility of scorecard metrics, questioning if the Coalition would be able to accomplish everything they tracked via the Scorecard.

Factors Threatening Coalition Success

The Coalition stands at a pivotal point in their forming phase which includes a delicate balance of both opportunities and threats. Threats represent fears, worries, doubts, or concerns that could hinder Coalition development and regional growth.⁸ While threats are not as obvious as weaknesses, they can fester and grow into weaknesses over time.

Lacking Commitment and a Unifying Factor - Some interviewees remarked on a lack of a unifying factor for the group. Building both professional and personal relationships is invaluable to unifying Coalition efforts, but the process takes time, commitment, and energy. As relationships build,

⁸ Broughton, Robert. "The SWOT Model" (n.d.). *Quality Assurance Solutions*. Retrieved from <https://www.quality-assurance-solutions.com/SWOT-Model.html#:~:text=The%20SWOT%20Model%20is%20a%20powerful%20tool%20used,Use%20the%20SWOT%20model%20to%20manage%20brainstorming%20sessions.>

contributors will recognize the value of meeting is in the ability to problem solve, learn, and work together in a transformative way (Kania and Kramer, 2011). In line with this sentiment, some contributors also voiced a desire for increased commitment and participation by Coalition contributors, noting that participation was in jeopardy due to both internal and external factors. A way to address this is through facilitating productive meetings and creating clear agendas. A key part of establishing internal group commitment will include assigning contributors to roles that reinforce the unique value their organization holds within the larger group (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). If internal and external threats are not addressed, a lack of unity and commitment could severely inhibit future collaboration and progress of the Coalition (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017).

Expectation Management - Expectation management was a common concern noted by interviewees, citing that communication, roles, decision making structures, and funding mechanisms must be more clearly outlined. Some interviewees desired more robust communication from leadership to provide added clarity and establish concrete frameworks that will sustain Coalition efforts long term. Additionally, unclear guidelines for communication and data sharing processes muddle information and lead to misunderstandings. Role uncertainty threatens accountability frameworks and sustained progress. Developing explicit, written guidelines for contributors to understand and navigate their roles is critical for accountability and maintaining a focus on advancing objectives (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). Moving forward, it will be up to Coalition leadership to establish clear, written roles for contributors to be effective in their positions. Finally, avoiding funding conversations threatens the ability to set clear mechanisms to pursue Coalition goals. Providing added clarity around expectation management on varying scales will allow the Coalition to lead and progress with confidence.

Regional Polarization - Similar to the rest of the country, the Grand Traverse region experiences multiple scales of social polarization that may threaten Coalition unity and progress. Those who populate the region, both seasonally and year-round, carry an array of contrasting perspectives based on their cultural, generational, and geographic identities. Facing tough conversations with patience, civility, and respect will give the Coalition the ability to navigate conflict. Contributors must continue growing their abilities to work constructively by listening to others and aim to understand and communicate with those who have differing views (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). While diversity is certainly a strength, an inability to respect and appreciate differing opinions could threaten the Coalition's ability to integrate a unifying effort across the region. Specifically, within-region polarization could severely hinder efforts to directly address topics such as climate change, racial injustice, and regional development.

Opportunities for Coalition Advancement

The novelty of the group opens a range of opportunities which represent attainable possibilities that could lead to Coalition and regional success if acknowledged and acted upon. We found clear opportunities that the Coalition can act upon to leverage strengths while minimizing weaknesses and threats. However, if not acted upon, the Coalition could miss certain opportunities that may not present themselves again, for example those that are tied to the early developmental efforts.

Establishing a Direct Approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Many interviewees recognized an opportunity to expand efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through a direct and honest approach. While the region experiences polarization, the Coalition has an opportunity to lead by example through direct frameworks to advance DEI initiatives, and specifically racial justice, in the region. It was noted that a direct DEI framework should be a fundamental component of the Coalition's

work and requires a willingness to lean into uncomfortable conversations. Missing this opportunity could threaten robust and impactful progress that benefits all those who live in or visit the region.

Using Storytelling as a Communication Tool - Project plans must include steps to frequently inform the community of progress and success (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2017). Many interviewees supported using storytelling as a tool to communicate Coalition progress and success within the region. Storytelling acts as a creative way to communicate the intangible impacts, relationships, and progress that supports quantitative metrics in the scorecard. While data will allow the Coalition to track change, interviewees differentiated storytelling as a way to show and communicate change. Narrative-based information sharing also provides opportunities for the Coalition to build a positive reputation with a broader audience and allow the public to see themselves represented in the group's efforts.

Expanding Partnerships and Collaboration - Interviewees expressed excitement for partnerships that could supplement weaknesses and allow for participants to pool resources including funding, information, or tools. One interviewee noted a unique opportunity for the Coalition to be truly visionary and develop a new model of collaboration that transforms the way sectors and disciplines work together. This also includes acting on opportunities to partner with local tribes and learn from their rich knowledge and expertise.

Shifting the Coalition from Planning to Action

Elements of Effective Implementation and Progress

Our findings from regional case studies and Grand Traverse interviews revealed themes that strongly reflect those described by prominent research in the field studying collaborative initiatives. Here we summarize the advice within two resources that illustrate the critical components needed to activate sustained progress in complex, collaborative efforts, like the Coalition.

Bricks and Mortar

Wondolleck and Yaffee's book *Marine Ecosystem-Based Management in Practice: Different Pathways, Common Lessons* (2017) presents examples of collaborative problem solving in marine-based communities and common elements that made these efforts successful. Wondolleck and Yaffee simplify these critical elements into two categories: bricks and mortar. To paraphrase Wondolleck and Yaffee, bricks represent tangible elements that act as a foundation for success and mortar represents the intangible elements that hold the bricks together and sustain collective action. For the Coalition, bricks include the physical gathering of contributors, clear and written objectives and guidelines, structures that organize group work, and data tracking frameworks (i.e., the regional scorecard). Complementary to the bricks, the Coalition's mortar includes positive group culture, high quality professional and personal relationships, effective and inclusive collaborative processes, diverse contributor personalities, committed contributors and leadership, a shared purpose, and a collective sense of place. The Coalition's ability to recognize the role of, and then continually attend to, both bricks and mortar in their formation and future will make the group and their work stronger and more adaptable.

Collective Impact

Similar to Wondolleck and Yaffee's book, Kania and Kramer's article "Collective Impact" (2011) recognizes cross-sector collaboration as the key to regional change. Kania and Kramer describe five necessary conditions for collective impact that must be acted on simultaneously to be effective.

1. **Having a common agenda.** It is natural for collaborative groups to represent varying interests. However, it is critical these interests align around a set of main objectives. Discussing and developing a shared vision will allow the Coalition to leverage common understanding in moments of uncertainty and disagreement.
2. **Developing a shared measurement system.** Creating a consistent measurement system allows a group to define their success. The Coalition's scorecard is a measurement tool with clear indicators. However, it will be crucial for the group to outline expectations for accountability by identifying the responsible parties who will collect, update, and distribute related data. Expectations must also include the implementation of a reporting cycle to ensure accountability across data distributors.
3. **Conducting mutually reinforcing activities.** Simultaneously advancing different activities in concert with others allows individual participants and the entire group to excel. Activities that are strategically coordinated, like the development of diverse working groups, will place contributors in a position that maximizes their specific skills and objectives while working toward a common goal.
4. **Maintaining continuous communication.** Staying in frequent contact allows groups to develop and foster trusting relationships over long periods of time. Continuous communication will give contributors the opportunity to get to know each other, develop a common vocabulary, and recognize that everyone's interests will be treated fairly. Fostering trusting relationships will encourage contributor loyalty and allow the Coalition to reap the mutual benefits of collaborative learning and problem solving.
5. **Identify a backbone for group leadership.** Collaborative work must be backed by a separate, neutral organization that is responsible for managing, facilitating, and supporting the collective's work. The Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and an independent consultant with Blue Orange Consulting currently play this role for the Coalition. These parties will be responsible for employing principles of adaptive leadership that mindfully advances group progress, while remaining dynamic and community focused.

Recommendations & Strategies

The following recommendations and strategies provide a framework for the Coalition's next steps. Our recommendations reflect and prioritize the most pressing themes from the SWOT analysis, while associated strategies for action are based on local interviews, regional case studies, and existing literature. Strategies detail tangible mechanisms to act on each recommendation. These recommendations and strategies are not all inclusive, as there may be additional Coalition priorities that were not documented in our research. Additionally, strategies are not intended to be completed all at once, but instead should be implemented strategically through intentional prioritization and planning, as noted in recommendation six.

Recommendation 1. Establish an active and direct approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

While DEI efforts may currently be lacking within the Coalition, contributors and community members noted ample opportunities and heightened energy for new action. The Coalition should act on the local desire for a more direct approach to DEI within the Coalition and across the region by actively addressing tensions and establishing a clear approach to integrate racial equity into Coalition objectives.

Strategies for Action:

- Remain open to, and lean into, challenging or uncomfortable conversations that allow for growth.
- Be intentional and direct with messaging and actions that address diversity, equity, and inclusion across social, environmental, and economic aspects of Coalition efforts.
- Pursue and allocate funding for group training that addresses racial equity and de-biasing strategies.
- Identify and elevate Coalition contributors and community leaders who directly represent or work in underserved and underrepresented communities (e.g., welcome new contributors; identify community-based contributors to lead and provide input).
- Identify equity champions who can act as advocates and teachers within each working group (i.e., contributors with expertise and preferably some amount of related training).

Recommendation 2. Intensify efforts to develop a unifying purpose and coordinate action.

Enhancing unity within the region and Coalition was a strong theme throughout our case studies and local interviews. While the Coalition has recognized this aspect, they should intentionally increase early efforts to integrate diverse contributor opinions while clarifying common end goals.

Strategies for action:

- Foster both professional and personal relationships through rapport-building activities that also establish inter-group trust (e.g., celebrations, happy hours).
- Align diverse contributor interests around high-level goals and approaches that are explicit and documented. This may include refining existing goals or developing new ones through a combination of consensus-driven activities (e.g., individual, or small-group brainstorming followed by large group share out and discussion).

- During quarterly meetings, allot time for each attendee to share their thoughts on the issue at hand, with no interruptions, to ensure all opinions are heard and understood (e.g., 3 minutes each).
- Establish working groups that simultaneously advance diverse approaches to Coalition success. This could include a working group to focus on Coalition development and processes, while another could focus on identifying opportunities to advance action toward Coalition objectives.
- Identify and act on opportunities to frame issues around the connectivity of local water features as a way to link upstream, rural communities with coastal, city-centric efforts across disciplines.

Recommendation 3. Expand Coalition partnerships and optimize collaborative efforts.

Coastal community leaders, Coalition contributors, and Grand Traverse community leaders all noted that collaborative networks and strong partnerships are critical to initiative success. Internally, building relationships between Coalition contributors will make tough conversations easier and provide a comfortable atmosphere for collaboration. Externally, the Coalition can leverage a network of local and regional leaders to advance innovative problem solving.

Strategies for Action:

- Develop a rapport with tribal representatives by listening and learning from their regional expertise. Aim to understand their cultures, goals, and perspectives. Offer assistance where appropriate and invite them to actively participate in the Coalition.
- Identify and document the unique value each contributor brings as a partner in Coalition efforts (i.e., what are the goals of each partnership?). Frame and communicate these unique benefits as a necessity for participation by each contributor (i.e., we need you here to be successful).
- Be patient with, and committed to, both internal and external relationships - building trust takes time.
- Identify a feasible way to compensate contributors for their participation as a way to affirm individual value and maintain involvement (e.g., food, funding, or transportation).
- Encourage leadership to play a more active role in identifying unique cross-linkages between contributors and convening partners around these cross-linkages. However, non-traditional partnerships must still align with and support each organization's vision.

Recommendation 4. Enhance communication and engagement with the public.

The Coalition has the opportunity to engage with the community and build public trust by establishing and maintaining communication channels with different groups and organizations within the Grand Traverse region. Leveraging public relationships will allow the Coalition to gain new community insights, share progress, and develop a positive reputation.

Strategies for Action:

- Identify diverse platforms to communicate and engage with a wide audience (e.g., social media, web-based news platforms, newspapers).
- Devise a way to make community members feel represented in efforts that shape the region (e.g., tell their stories when communicating progress and impact).
- Develop a common language to articulate Coalition efforts when messaging externally. A cohesive message will allow the Coalition to develop a positive reputation in the region.
- Create a working group to lead public facing communications and on-the-ground community

engagement.

- Engage strategically with established groups to identify regional gaps and expand opportunities for advancement in underserved communities (i.e., integrate surrounding rural areas with Coalition efforts).
- Publicly illustrate scorecard progress through accessible and descriptive narrative-based data sharing (e.g., ArcGIS StoryMaps, tracking social media interactions and sharing).

Recommendation 5. Be intentional with data tracking and progress sharing.

The Coalition's scorecard represents a unique opportunity to compile disparate sets of data that address the three pillars of sustainability. When gathered without targeted effort, data can often become unwieldy to analyze and costly to maintain. With expanding data sets, it is important to keep records of data collection and note limitations of contributing organizations to avoid misconstruing data.

Strategies for Action:

- Coalition leadership must ensure collaborators understand the implications of data gathering and sharing. This requires data users to understand resource constraints and limitations experienced by those responsible for data collection and analysis (i.e., develop guidelines and expectations that clearly outline how data will be shared and managed).
- Devise a mechanism to review data communication plans to ensure legal and practical use (e.g., review written guidelines annually).
- Collectively assess progress annually to ensure Coalition objectives and scorecard metrics align as efforts grow and evolve (e.g., remove data that is no longer relevant).

Next Steps for Sustained Action

To initiate and sustain action around the findings and recommendations outlined in this report, it is imperative that the Coalition have a clear plan for next steps that respond to this call for action. We understand that all strategies cannot possibly be implemented at once, but instead encourage the Coalition to thoughtfully consider our recommendations and prioritize strategies by urgency and importance. Once these strategies have been collaboratively categorized, top priorities should naturally emerge, and these will provide an agreed upon framework for immediate next steps. Additionally, it is critical to recognize that our recommendations and strategies are dynamic and will require regular evaluation to adjust approaches as contexts change. The following steps outline our suggested roadmap to realizing a unified and productive Coalition moving forward:

1. **Celebrate** - Take time to recognize and celebrate the successes that have already been achieved in the Coalition's first year (e.g., virtual happy hour, recognition of prominent actors and milestones). Celebrations should continue as a regular occurrence bi-annually and in response to interim successes.
2. **Guide** - Collaboratively develop agreed upon, written guidelines that articulate expectations for Coalition roles, accountability frameworks, and internal communication. (e.g., charters)
3. **Review** - In tandem with developing guidelines, collaboratively review SWOT results to supplement our findings with internal perspectives. Doing so will allow the Coalition to identify any high priority opportunities and/or pressing threats that were not included in the original analysis. Consider and make note of additional strategies that incorporate the identified opportunities and threats.
4. **Prioritize** - As a group, prioritize all strategies identified in this report and by the Coalition. This could be accomplished through an individual ranking activity or by separating strategies into four different categories based on level of urgency and importance. After individually prioritizing, gather as a group to determine collective priorities for action.
5. **Assign** - Once top priorities are identified and guidelines are in place, assign leadership to a person or working group to mobilize necessary action steps around each top strategy. Action steps should include target dates for action (including start and end dates with interim check-ins) and define expectations for progress and subtask completion. Tracking frameworks should be agreed upon and accessible through a shared internal location.
6. **Innovate** - As implementation progresses, frequently reference case study findings to identify unique ways to get 'unstuck' and utilize the case study contact list (shared with Coalition leadership) to access a diverse network of Great Lakes coastal leaders who can help with collaborative problem solving around a range of topics.
7. **Re-evaluate** - Utilize tools on an annual basis to re-evaluate the Coalition's trajectory and use evaluation results to refine strategies and approaches as efforts evolve (e.g., a SWOT analysis and/or TOWS matrix).

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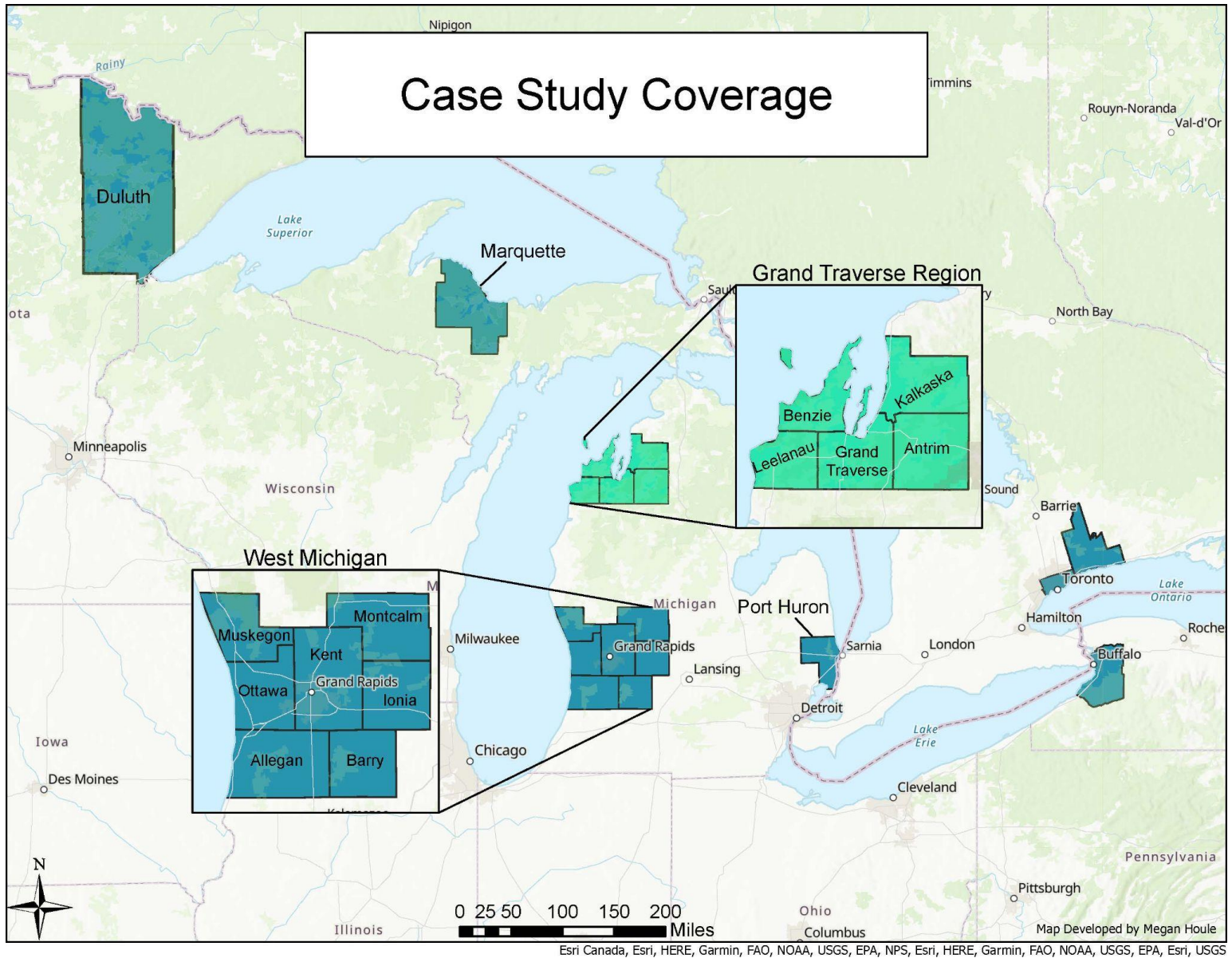
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Appendices

Appendix A: Full Case Studies



Buffalo, New York

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

- Credibility is established by making early success easily available opportunities
- If you can't change the world, change the community you value
- Expand the proverbial and literal table. Respect all members of your home
- The partner is not necessarily a stakeholder, and the stakeholder is not necessarily a partner

Slow and Consistent Growth: Slow and consistent growth leads to a locally empowered and sustainable movement. This factor is especially true in communities that have suffered from “brain drain” wherein the community loses their young and educated adults to opportunities in larger cities. Enabling young professionals that stay or return can be a key driver to building the generational momentum toward long-term progress.

Earning Public Trust: The power for change is rooted firmly within a community, and it is the job of community-facing organizations to facilitate local efforts toward positive impact. This facilitation can only be done after garnering initial support and credibility, which should be sought through identifying, targeting, and completing smaller-scale projects, often defined as “low-hanging fruit” or “easy wins.”

Managing Project Momentum: As organizational momentum builds, it is essential to maintain and manage organizational and inter-organizational relationships in a positive and constructive way. Leaders should allow disagreements to play out naturally in the group context provided they do not genuinely interfere with collaboration efforts.

Funding as a Puzzle Piece: Funding should never be thought of as a single transaction, but instead should be partially invested to fund future opportunities. Investments should be treated as an essential puzzle piece toward future projects to maintain consistent momentum.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



Duluth and Cloquet, Minnesota

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

- Community support is essential to project success
- Plan where you can as best as you can, but be ready to act when funding comes around
- Practical, relevant, and realistic metrics keep people engaged
- Trust takes time - when you're frustrated you're on the right path. Keep showing up to make your constituents know they are heard and valued

Finding Community Support First: Ascertaining community support is a key requirement for success. The primary role of project facilitation by community-facing organizations is to identify practical metrics that originate and resonate with the local populace, to draw out and leverage the fundamental forces of social change and progress from within. These community derived metrics also enable locals to be motivated and recognize their own input into related efforts, which subsequently drives project engagement.

Tracking Community Engagement: Develop metrics to track and measure community engagement (e.g., amount of people contacted, number of website views, social media hashtags). Community engagement metrics can encourage community facing organizations to engage directly and honestly with those they serve.

Communicating Data: Providing a narrative with the data is significantly more important than simply presenting raw facts. Specifically, raw data can often lead to misinterpretation, and it should be the organization's priority to represent their efforts in an engaging and truthful way.

Recognizing Indigenous Influence: Tribes experience frequent frustrations when others do not recognize their proper representation and authority. Indigenous communities, as governing bodies, are still a sovereign entity working at the same level as the federal government and deserve treatment as such.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



Marquette, Michigan

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

- Tribes must be at the forefront of progress; welcome their opinion and offer assistance
- Believe in local organizations; reaching out to help may be the fastest way to get a project done
- Show positive results as quickly as possible to establish credibility

Embracing Local Expertise: It is important to place tribal relations at the forefront of every conversation to build a system where tribes are never considered an afterthought. This includes prioritizing inclusion and mutual assistance. Relying on and trusting local groups is essential to fulfilling local needs. The knowledge of tribes, local organizations, and regional experts are invaluable as they are significantly more capable of making progress than any outside organization with little contextual knowledge. Tapping into the community's talent can further develop regional credibility as well.

Mindful Planning: Organizational credibility and traction are also built through small victories. Planning out these victories is important for success, but planning efforts must be managed carefully. Planning is critical to applying for funding, but can become time consuming and cumbersome with projects that require more urgency. Furthermore, groups can always return to the planning phase, therefore more time should be spent on streamlining implementation processes.

Communicating a Vision: It is critical for new groups to show action and build a positive reputation. Effectively communicating the economic and financial benefits of environmental work will build wide consensus around a shared vision. After convincing the community and other groups to participate, maintain interest by keeping them engaged through opportunities to volunteer on projects where progress is easily recognizable.

Tracking and Sharing Progress: Measure progress through incremental accomplishments as opposed to one long-term metric. To avoid overwhelming the public with information, use maps and accessible writing to garner public support and momentum.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, Canada

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

- Community foundations coordinate relationships and ensure the right people are in contact
- Sustained long-term success is built by consistency
- Working with the public is key to solving community concerns and issues
- Collaboration makes sense if organization's work helps accomplish overall goals
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts must be permanent and lasting

Community Driven Decisions: It is important for the public to take a central role in identifying and solving community concerns and issues, with public involvement being the key to sustaining successful progress. Local leaders stressed the importance of collaboration efforts among regional community-facing organizations as an effective means of risk mitigation and resource sharing. Small groups of organizations with adaptive management structures can be more agile in addressing project concerns, as there will be declines in project maneuverability as groups grow too large.

Ensuring Accountability: As collective action grows, it is important to have a robust monitoring system for project accountability. Empowering partner organizations to conduct monitoring will improve follow-through

Democratizing Philanthropy: It is important for every community-facing organization to democratize modern philanthropy. This includes shifting away from traditional philanthropic principles founded prior to World War II, which do not adequately represent the racial and cultural diversities that exist today.

The Role of Community Foundations: The goal of a Community Foundation is to respond to opportunities and be strategic about moving those things forward. Community Foundations should not determine the priorities for the community, but instead understand and work with community members to identify needs. Keeping a pulse on the community's response to efforts being made will keep the vision and goals aligned within the region.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY



Community Foundation

of St. Clair County

Toronto and Durham Region, Ontario, Canada

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

- Unify around a common thread and vision
- Use visuals and narrative-based storytelling, to communicate data effectively
- Provide alternate methods of community support that allow for varying levels of participation
- Garner public support by completing small, public-facing projects while larger projects are managed and maintained behind the scenes

Unifying Efforts: Creating a vision around a common thread is the first step to ensuring group success. This common thread (e.g., the environment) can be used to unify group members in times of conflict and center group efforts around pre-existing values.

Intentional Implementation: Community-facing organizations or groups should complete easy projects that involve the community to establish credibility and build momentum. While easy projects are in progress, the organization can plan and work toward bigger, slower moving projects behind the scenes. Smaller projects can maintain public momentum until larger projects are ready to be shared. When planning longer-range projects, it is imperative to keep the scale limited to the capacities and abilities of the organizers – as over-planning or establishing unrealistic goals can result in loss of interest.

Creative Engagement: It is important to create a sense of place around public engagement. By developing a sense of place, community members are able to feel a sense of ownership over their natural resources, becoming the eyes, ears, and voice of the environment. This passion for a place can be used to inspire others to participate through a range of talents (e.g., writing stories, creating music, designing posters). Providing multiple avenues for volunteering ensures all community members feel welcome and involved, and allows the public to engage at a level they can commit to. Additionally, minimum levels of community engagement are often underestimated when planning an effort.

Visualizing Data: Data sharing through narrative and visual means, such as mapping, can convey information in a way that is relatable to the public while avoiding information overload or fatigue. Open source data is becoming quite popular and many individual citizens find value in making their own inferences.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



Western-Central Lower Peninsula, Michigan

LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

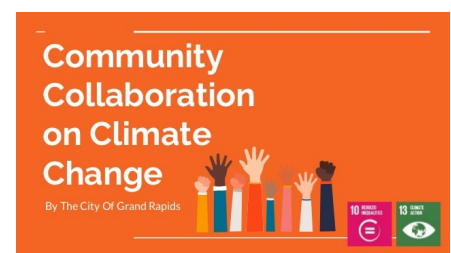
- Establish big visions that are accomplished through incrementalism and dynamism
- Manage expectations through intentional planning and clarity around goals of partnerships
- Establish clear and intentional approaches to represent diversity, equity and inclusion
- Showcase sustainability efforts in non-traditional ways, including through storytelling
- Highlight economic value of water and use connectivity of water features to link communities

Intentional Implementation: Establishing clear work plans allows communities to achieve bold and sustainable visions in their region. Successful implementation of these plans include deliberate and incremental steps paired with an overall dynamic, learning approach and frequent reevaluation of initial goals and plans. Leaders in the region maintain the interest and investment of partnering organizations by establishing clear expectations around partner roles and outlining what they aim to accomplish throughout the course of their partnership. Frequent appreciation and celebration is a way to sustain momentum and participation long-term.

Championing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Equity champions reinvent collaborative decision-making frameworks. These champions are integrated advocates for outcomes that actively address racial equity, justice, and inclusion across all aspects of an effort. These champions are experts and usually receive a form of related training. Leaders noted a new focus to reframe traditional white-environmentalist narratives and instead highlight sustainability stories and solutions led by underrepresented groups who have gone unrecognized as leaders in the environmental and sustainability movements.

Connectivity of Water Resources: Local leaders described a regional mindset that aims to sustainably leverage the social and economic values of their local water resources. This includes recognizing that, as a coastal region, water assets provide a foundation for economic activity. Additionally, it became clear that regional actors strongly acknowledge the connectivity of local water features in the area. For example, many view the Grand River as a regionally unifying force across communities, allowing local efforts to be framed in a way that engages communities both upstream and downstream of the region's central metropolitan hub.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:



FREY FOUNDATION

GVMC



Appendix B: Case Study Key Takeaways

Location	Organizations	Key Highlights
<i>Buffalo, New York</i>	<i>Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility is established through early wins. • It is not necessary to change the world, just change the community you value. • Expand the table and respect all members of your community.
<i>Duluth and Cloquet, Minnesota</i>	<i>City of Duluth, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support and backing is essential to the success of any project. • Metrics must be practical, relevant, and realistic to keep the public engaged. • Plan where and when you can, then be prepared to act on that plan at any time. • Trust takes time to build, frustration with the process implies you are doing the right thing.
<i>Marquette, Michigan</i>	<i>Lake Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Conservancy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribes must be at the forefront for progress; welcome their opinion and offer assistance. • Believe in local organizations; reaching out to help them may be the fastest way to get a project done. • Show positive results as quickly as possible to establish credibility.
<i>Port Huron, Michigan - Sarnia, Ontario, Canada</i>	<i>Binational Public Advisory Council, Michigan Environment, Great Lakes & Energy, St. Clair River Area of Concern, Community Foundation of St. Clair County</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of a Community Foundation is to foster and coordinate relationships, and to ensure that the right people are talking to each other. • Long-term success is built on consistency. • Public involvement is the key to addressing community concerns. • Diversity, equity, and inclusion must always be front of mind.
<i>Toronto and Durham, Ontario, Canada</i>	<i>Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, Toronto Region Conservation Authority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unify around a common thread and vision. • Use storytelling and visuals to convey data. • Provide alternate avenues for community support that offer varying levels of participation. • Garner support through completing small projects while keeping larger projects moving behind the scenes.
<i>Western-Central Lower Peninsula, Michigan</i>	<i>Grand Valley State University, Frey Foundation, Ottawa County, Nichols, Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, Grand Rapids Community Collaboration on Climate Change</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make progress toward big visions through incrementalism and by being dynamic. • Manage expectations with intentional planning and clear goals of partnerships. • Establish clear and intentional approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion. • Showcase sustainability efforts in non-traditional ways (e.g., storytelling). • Highlight the economic value and connectivity of water to link communities.

Appendix C: Pre-Meeting Materials for Coalition Feedback Session



Coalition Feedback Session Pre-Meeting Materials

Feedback Session on Thursday, November 12, 2020 | 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Instructions: Prior to Thursday's meeting, please review the initial key themes below which were identified from our interviews with a handful of Coalition contributors this summer. These are some of the aspects that were discussed and emphasized most frequently in our conversations. After reviewing the themes, please fill out the attached form to help us prepare for the meeting on Thursday. You will be asked to rank and prioritize the themes - we know this may be challenging and a low score doesn't necessarily mean the theme is not important; this is just brain exercise! **Please complete the form by Wednesday, November 11th at 8:00am.**

Goals & Visions

- Having a clear understanding of desired outcomes for the Coalition
- Having a clear understanding of how the Coalition addresses regional visions
- Identifying shared goals and priorities

Strategy & Structure

- Setting a clear strategy for executing Coalition goals and priorities
- Setting and managing realistic expectations for Coalition deliverables
- Establishing clear roles for both members and leadership
- Identifying a clear structure of how decisions are made
- Understanding and assessing opportunities and threats to success
- Securing funding to sustain Coalition efforts long-term

Scorecard

- Continued development of existing scorecard and metrics
- Assessing and developing structures for tracking and reporting metrics
- Leveraging scorecard metrics to inform progress in the region

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Identifying and acting upon synergies that wouldn't have otherwise occurred
- Developing new relationships while leveraging partner cross-linkages
- Setting clear roles and expectations for communication and information sharing
- Consistent and sustained involvement of Coalition members at the table
- Equitable representation of community groups within the Coalition

Communication & Public Education

- Emphasizing storytelling and narrative as a way of communicating progress
- Publicly sharing Coalition progress and accomplishments with the broader community
- Taking ownership of Coalition efforts and sharing out to respective organizations and constituents

Appendix D: Key Takeaways from SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride in regional identity and local environmental resources • Vast knowledge and expertise within tribal communities • Highly familiar with and skilled at generating a vision and ideas • Extremely motivated and eager to start acting and implementing • Energy for new and exciting work in the region • Backed by innovative leaders with excitement for new solutions • Commitment to collaboration and cross linkages • Representative of a diversity of sectors and disciplines • Leverage community data to measure and track progress • Exhibited trust and neutrality in existing leadership • Highly philanthropic community to support efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty around the unifying vision or element • Contrasting preferences toward process building vs. advancing projects • Differing views on expanding vs. capping contributors • Missing tribal representation, input, and influence • Lacking direct, regional approach to anti-racism and equity • Wanting more out of data applications and feasibility assurance • Unsolidified framework on how to prioritize objectives • Resources lack within specific contributor organizations • Disconnect between downtown TC and surrounding rural areas
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New partnerships to unlock shared info, resources, and tools • Lead truly visionary work and take on new and exciting mistakes • Establish new structures around collaborative decision making • Elevate core goals and interests of contributing organizations • Learn from tribal leadership and expertise • Shared voice can be a powerful, positive influence on the region • Contributing organizations can engage with respective networks • Communicate efforts and show change through storytelling • New efforts provide a chance to build a good reputation • Leverage data to inform sound decision making • Remain open to refinement and re-evaluation • Influencing local ordinances as an impactful action • Act on the environmental justice movement • Connect and elevate voices of underrepresented communities • Untapped potential for broader community engagement • Develop Coalition value from acting on cross-links 	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty around roles and accountability frameworks • Lacking clear structures and expectations for data / info sharing • Need to be more direct about funding realities and expectations • Warned of donor advised funding as being potentially restrictive • Lacking group consensus and clarity around vision and goals • Contributor commitment is in jeopardy (e.g., busy schedules) • Need solid backing from government and organizations with authority • Lingering doubts around action and implementation (i.e., Grand Vision) • Lacking communication around benefits of participation • Finding a balance between compensation vs. contribution • Broad, change-based work can be a heavy lift and mentally taxing • Pandemic is straining local economy and leading to 'survival' mode <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall regional and national polarization • Regional conflicts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion • Push-pull between regional traditions and incoming culture shift • Seasonal residents present unique challenges to development • Protections for natural environment are critical for sustaining eco-tourism • Local governments are heavily siloed