

Crown Managers Partnership

Strategic Plan

*Prepared by the Miistakis Institute
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Introduction

The Crown of the Continent Ecosystem

The 'Crown of the Continent' ecosystem is one of North America's most ecologically diverse and jurisdictionally fragmented ecosystems. Encompassing the shared Rocky Mountain region of Montana, British Columbia and Alberta, this 16,000 square mile / 42,000 square kilometre ecological complex spreads across two nations; across one state and two provinces; and across numerous aboriginal lands, municipal authorities, public land blocks, private properties, working and protected landscapes.

The Crown is internationally recognized for its biodiversity and landscape form. In relatively short distances and small areas, landscapes range from flat grasslands to soaring peaks; from rock and ice to lush forests; from uninhabited wilderness to densely-populated settlements. This varied landscape sees a likewise varied range of wildlife species and vegetation communities. A full complement of large carnivores and ungulates can be found in the region, and valleys in the Crown of the Continent serve as important wildlife movement corridors, representing one of the last areas with the potential for such large-scale connectivity.

The headwaters of three of North America's major river systems, flowing to three different oceans are encompassed within the Crown ecosystem: the Saskatchewan flowing to the Hudsons Bay; the Missouri flowing to the Gulf of Mexico; and the Columbia flowing to the Pacific Ocean.

The productive landscape has drawn people to the region for millennia, with the last century seeing an dramatic increase in industries and residents. This relatively narrow slice of the continent now sees upwards of two million people using its landscapes. The last century has seen dramatic increases in protection as well, with the designation of numerous parks, wilderness and other protected areas.

The region has a long and accomplished history of cross-border cooperation, notably the International Peace Park at its centre (designated a World Heritage Site and surrounded by a Biosphere Reserve), state-provincial memoranda of agreement, the International Joint Commission, several interagency committees, and most recently the Crown Managers Partnership.

Issues and Needs

The long term ecological integrity of the region is challenged because the region faces intensification in all areas of human activity, including urban and rural residential expansion, increased and diversifying recreational use, intensified demands for resource use and extraction, and the growth of the physical infrastructure needed to support all of these. These pressures exist at different intensities in different locales

throughout the region. The effectiveness of responding to these issues is complicated by jurisdictional fragmentation.

The result has been increasing fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitat, decreased quality of wilderness-oriented recreational experiences, degradation of important ecological goods and services such as clean air and clean water, uncertainty and frustration for both industrial and protection efforts, and increasingly unhealthy local communities.

In order to maintain essential ecological processes and manage human presence within this landscape, a need exists for transboundary collaborative approaches to ecosystem management at a regional scale. Political, financial and technical barriers impede this type of management. These barriers are magnified when numerous political borders divide a landscape. No single agency has the mandate or the resources to focus upon the entire region.

History of the CMP

In February 2001, government representatives from over twenty agencies gathered in Cranbrook, B.C. to explore ecosystem-based ways of collaborating on shared issues in the transboundary Crown of the Continent. Participation included federal, aboriginal, provincial and state agencies or organizations with a significant land or resource management responsibility within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. The aim was to involve a blend of senior and middle managers with technical and professional staff that have a role in management at the ecosystem scale (e.g., conservation biologists, land use planners, etc.). The Miistakis Institute for the Rockies was invited to help facilitate the process and act as a neutral third party. No attempt was made to put a firm boundary around the area of interest, but the region is generally defined by the Rocky Mountain ecoregion from the Bob Marshall wilderness complex (MT) to the Highwood River (AB) and Elk Valley (BC) and is known as the Crown of the Continent (see cover graphic).

The highly successful workshop, hosted by the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, resulted in a commitment by all participants to move forward collaboratively on regional ecosystem management. The Cranbrook Workshop highlighted several issues that were deemed important to the participants and could best be addressed at the larger regional ecosystem scale¹. In order to advance progress on their priorities, the Forum struck a Steering Committee to guide progress.

The second Annual Forum, in 2002, resulted in the formalization of the group to a Collaborative Partnership (Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Managers Partnership) that is accountable to the membership through an Annual Forum, implements direction from the

¹ These were: Address cumulative effects of human activity across the ecosystem; Address increased public interest in how lands are managed and how decisions are; Address increased recreational demands and increased visitation; Collaborate in sharing data, standardizing assessment and monitoring methodologies; and Address the maintenance and sustainability of shared wildlife populations.

Partnership through an Annual Work Plan, and which includes an Interagency Steering Committee as well as a Secretariat.

The Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) has met every year since then at an annual forum, and pursued additional work in creating networking opportunities, and pursuing strategic projects of mutual interest.

In 2006, at the 5-year mark of the Partnership, the CMP Steering Committee met to review the original goals of the Partnership, and redevelop them, creating a strategic plan to guide the next five years.

Vision

An ecologically healthy Crown of the Continent ecosystem.

Mission

The Crown Managers Partnership (CMP) is a diverse group of resource management agencies who agree to work together to achieve the vision by:

- Building an understanding and awareness of the ecological health of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem;
- Executing individual agency mandates in alignment with the vision; and
- Building enduring relationships and collaborating across mandates and borders.

Guiding Principles / Shared Values

- The Partnership believes that some resource and land management issues can only be adequately addressed at the regional ecosystem scale.
- Partnership activities are based on the belief that the social (including economic) health of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem is based on its ecological health and the need for compatible management strategies.
- Responsibility for direct management of the public land and natural resources lies with the individual agencies. The Partnership will not take a stand or position on resource-management issues, but rather will seek to inform and raise agency capacity to address those issues.
- By its very nature, the Partnership will draw together diverse opinions and approaches to ecosystem management. To best ensure the development of collaborative and effective solutions, the Partnership will interact in a manner respectful of that diversity.

- The focus of the Partnership will be on the development of management tools, data management and science (research/inventory/monitoring), and education and outreach at the regional ecosystem scale.
- The Partnership will operate on the principles of synergy and leverage, recognizing that in data collection, fund development, and problem-solving, numerous small contributions can be parlayed into something greater.
- As part of the Partnership's commitment to science-based decision-making, it will strive to maintain connections with the academic and research community.

Roles and Operational Structure

The Crown Managers Partnership

The Crown Managers Partnership is open to all public land and resource management agencies within the Crown of the Continent Region. This includes First Nations/Tribes, Federal agencies and Provincial or State agencies, and local governments.

The Crown of the Continent Region is loosely defined by the Rocky Mountain ecoregion from the Bob Marshall wilderness complex in Montana to the Highwood River in Alberta and the Elk Valley in B.C. This boundary is necessarily indistinct, reflective of its ecological rather than political derivation.

Staff involvement is determined by each agency. However, as a principle, the Partnership focuses on senior/middle managers and those technical and professional staff who are managing programs with adjacent jurisdictions.

Partnership responsibilities include:

- Pooling expertise in pursuit of the vision;
- Fostering an understanding and support for the CMP within member agencies;
- Contributing in-kind, financial resources and staff resources in support of the vision and mission of the CMP.

Steering Committee

The Crown Managers Partnership chooses an Interagency Steering Committee (Steering Committee) from their members, which includes representatives from aboriginal agencies; Federal, Provincial and State agencies; the Universities of Calgary and Montana; and the Secretariat. The Steering Committee strives for representation from a variety of geographic areas and resource management sectors.

The Steering Committee takes its direction from the Partnership through the Annual Forum, and implements that direction through annually-reviewed Strategic Plans and Annual Workplans.

Steering Committee responsibilities include:

- maintenance and direction of the strategic and annual work plans;
- fund development to support the CMP's work;
- promotion of the CMP, both within and outside of their own agencies;
- oversight of the Secretariat, and any other entities operating on the CMP's behalf; and
- maintenance of the Steering Committee membership.

Secretariat

The Steering Committee on behalf of the Partnership, delegates the day-to-day management and coordination of CMP activities to a standing Secretariat. The Secretariat operates under the on-going direction of the Steering Committee. Since the conception of the CMP, the Miistakis Institute has acted as the CMP Secretariat on a non-profit basis in close cooperation with the Universities of Calgary and Montana.

The responsibilities of the Secretariat are:

- general coordination and facilitation of the CMP;
- *ex officio* membership on the CMP Steering Committee;
- financial management for the CMP;
- coordination of internal and external communications; and
- coordination of fund development, including seeking opportunities to leverage agency dollars.

Delivery mechanisms

The CMP is committed to accomplishing its work in the most efficacious means available. This work could be carried out through any of the following delivery mechanisms:

- directly by the CMP or its Steering Committee;
- by the Miistakis Institute operating in its capacity as Secretariat or in a role of special project manager;
- by an independent contractor retained by the Steering Committee on behalf of the CMP;
- by a working group of CMP agencies and appropriate partners, convened on behalf of the CMP;

- by an individual partner agency in cases where a task of the CMP fits coincidentally within the mandate and operating plan of that agency;
- by graduate students, through course work, graduate projects, or the placement of interns; or
- any other delivery mechanism which supports the goals and structure of the CMP.

Regardless of the mechanism, work done on behalf of the CMP will be overseen by the Steering Committee.

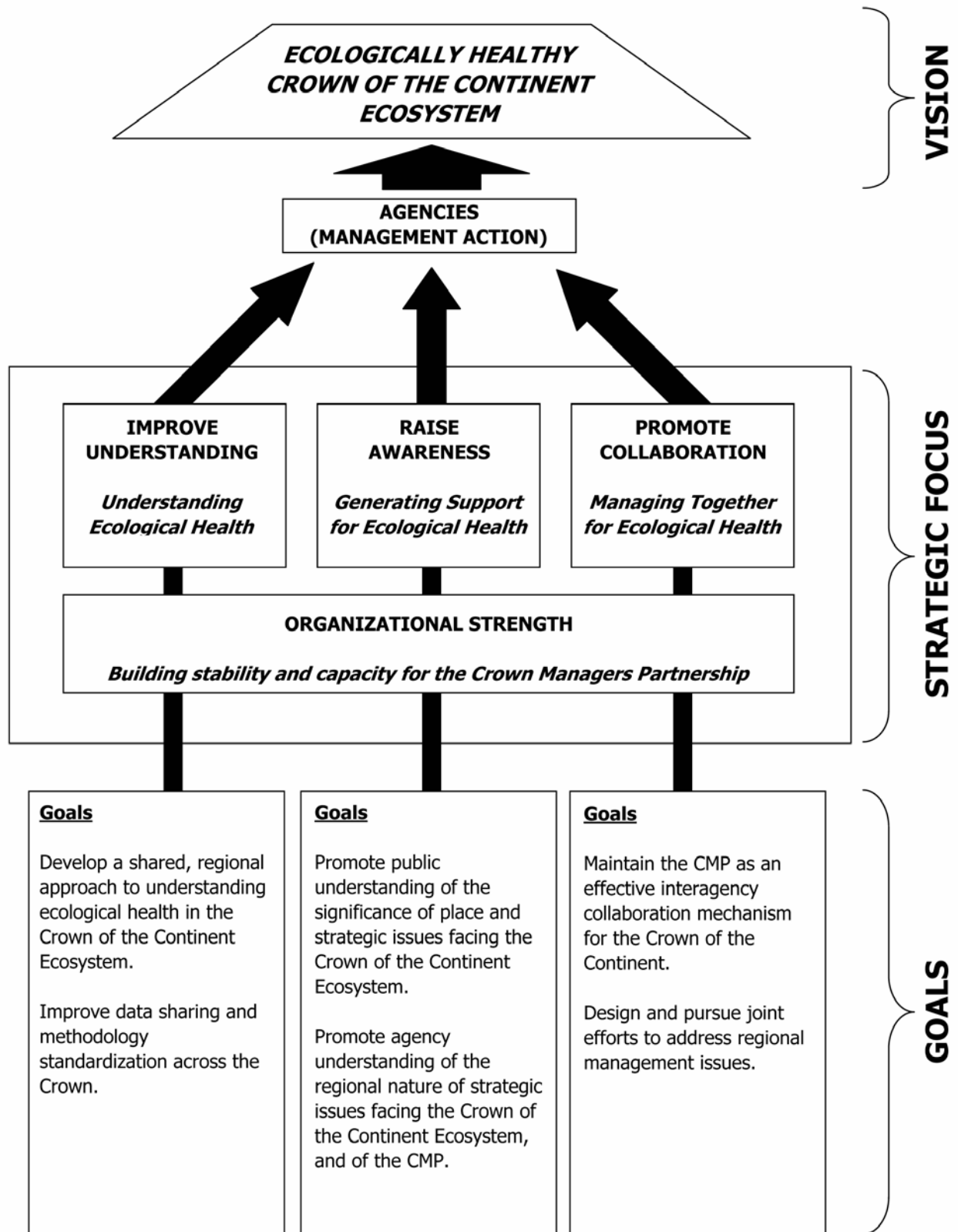
Strategic Direction

Strategic Framework

The *Strategic Framework for the CMP* (see following page) diagrammatically connects the Vision to the elements of the Strategic Focus, and further to the CMP's Goals. This chart summarizes the CMP's strategic plan.

As it is government agencies within the COCE who carry the legislative mandate to execute management actions, rather than the CMP itself, the underlying principle is that accomplishing the tasks laid out under each Focus and Goal will assist agencies in executing their management in support of an ecologically healthy COCE.

Strategic Framework for the CMP



Strategic Focus

The Crown Managers Partnership has identified four strategic foci which collectively define the route the CMP will take over the next several years to achieving their vision of an ecologically healthy Crown of the Continent Ecosystem:

These are:

Improve Understanding - *Understanding Ecological Health*

Pursuing a vision centred on ecological health requires a shared understanding of what ecological health is, and of the role that knowledge plays in addressing resource management issues in the COCE at a regional scale.

Raise Awareness - *Generating Support for Ecological Health*

An understanding of ecological health at a regional scale is not sufficient in practical terms to effect change. Progress towards addressing regional issues requires a heightened level of awareness amongst Crown agencies and the public regarding the unique management challenges and opportunities that exist in the COCE.

Promote Collaboration - *Managing Together for Ecological Health*

As no one agency has the mandate, resources or scope to address issues at the regional scale, a collaborative approach, based on shared understanding and respect, is required.

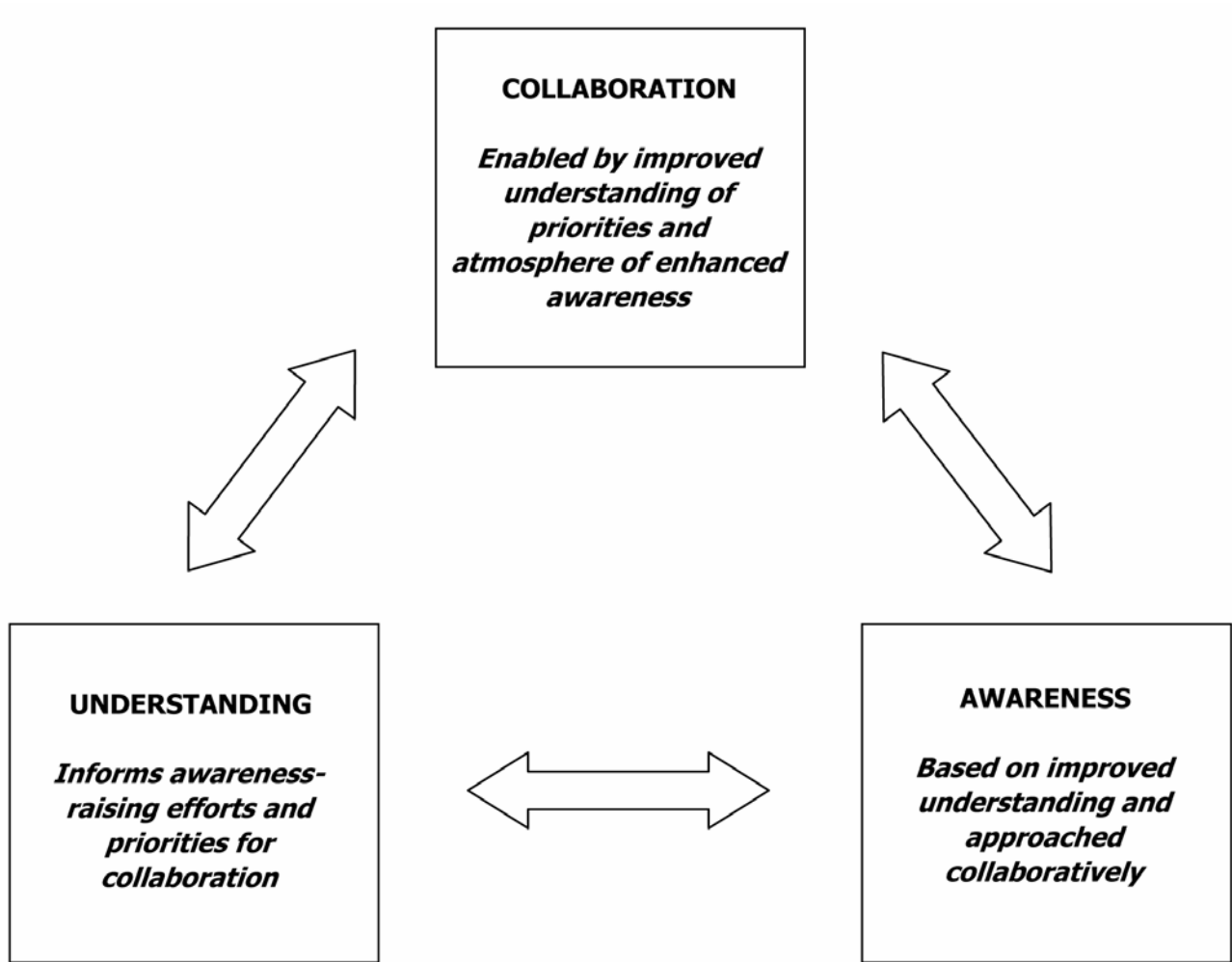
Organizational strength - *Building stability and capacity for the CMP*

Underlying these goals is the foundational need to maintain the CMP as an organization capable of pursuing its stated mission.

Goals developed under each Focus (see *Goals* below) further delineate the CMP's strategic approach. Annual work plans will detail the specific activities the CMP will undertake year by year to accomplish the goals, and move towards achieving the Vision.

Although goals have been developed under each Strategic Focus, there is a synergistic relationship between the foci, where each is dependent on the other (see diagram on following page).

Interrelationship of Strategic Foci



Goals

Improve Understanding

GOAL 1: *DEVELOP A SHARED, REGIONAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING ECOLOGICAL HEALTH IN THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT ECOSYSTEM*

Agencies within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem have a shared understanding of the ecological health of the region, including its current state and likely trends.

GOAL 2: *IMPROVE DATA SHARING AND METHODOLOGY STANDARDIZATION ACROSS THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT ECOSYSTEM*

COCE agencies have a clear sense of where important data reside, have well-known and well-established protocols for sharing available data, and have made significant progress toward breaking down barriers to data-sharing.

Raise Awareness

GOAL 3: *PROMOTE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE AND STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT ECOSYSTEM.*

Stakeholders in the COCE are measurably more aware of the important ecosystem scale resource management issues in the Crown region, and are supportive of collaborative management action.

GOAL 4: *PROMOTE AGENCY UNDERSTANDING OF THE REGIONAL NATURE OF STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT ECOSYSTEM, AND OF THE CROWN MANAGERS PARTNERSHIP.*

Agencies within the COCE are aware of ecosystem scale resource management issues and the role of the CMP, and are supportive of collaborative management action.

Promote Collaboration

GOAL 5: *MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION FOR THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT ECOSYSTEM.*

CMP partner agencies, as well as others, recognize the CMP as the premiere association for promoting collaborative ecosystem management in the COCE.

GOAL 6: *DESIGN AND PURSUE JOINT INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS REGIONAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES*

CMP partner agencies work collaboratively to address shared regional management issues.

Develop Organizational Strength

GOAL 7: *MAINTAIN THE CROWN MANAGERS PARTNERSHIP AS A FINANCIALLY AND ORGANIZATIIONALLY STABLE ASSOCIATION*

The CMP has diverse and reliable funding, and has the organizational capacity to accomplish its mission.

GOAL 8: SUSTAIN THE CROWN MANAGERS PARTNERSHIP AS A STRONG AND VIBRANT PARTNERSHIP

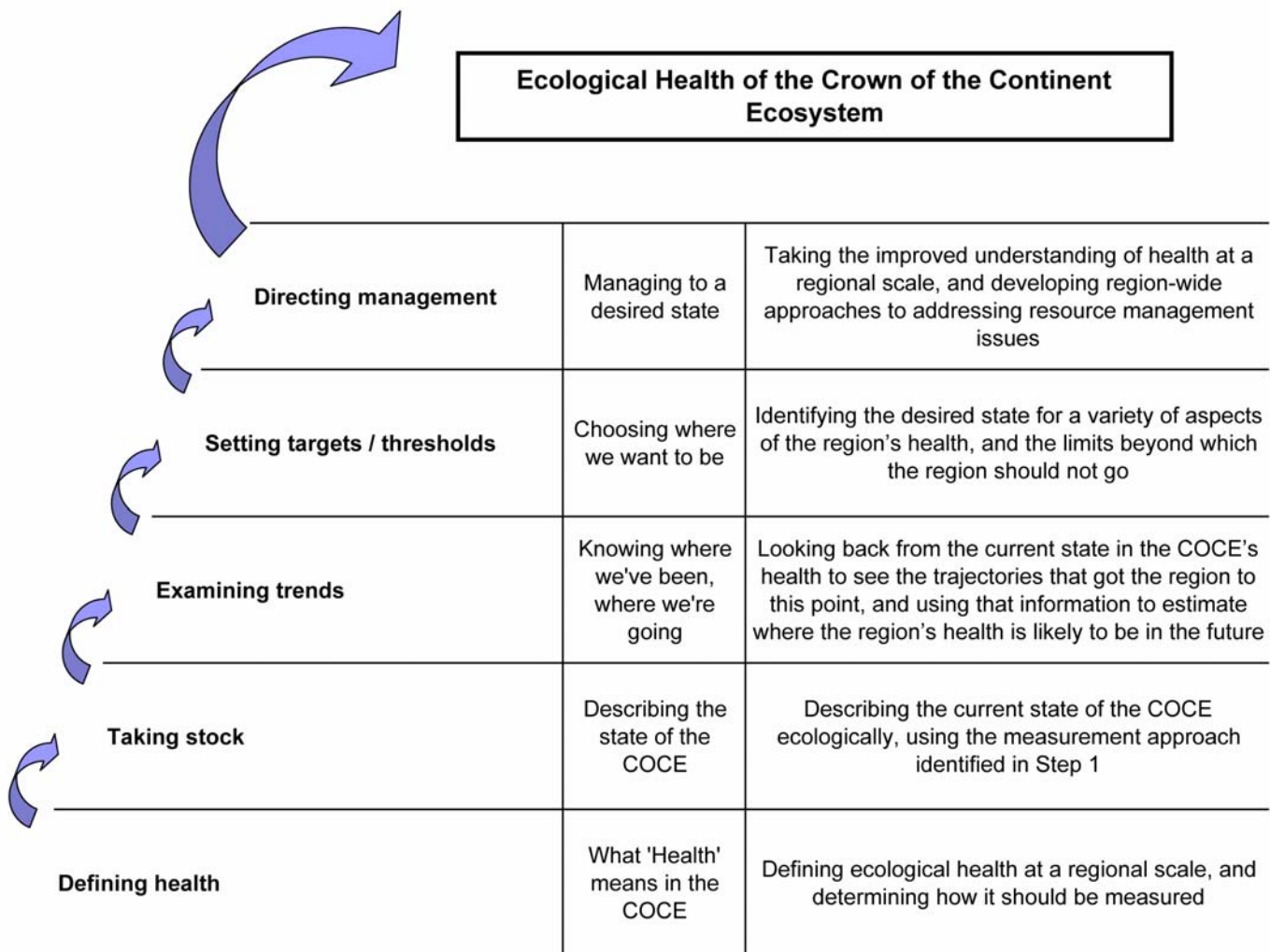
The CMP is actively supported by a diverse group of engaged agency partners who see it as highly relevant and useful.

Appendix 1: Strategic Priority: “Managing for Ecological Health” Project

The Vision of the Crown Managers Partnership is ‘Ecologically healthy Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.’

The CMP has determined that creating an informed, regional approach to achieving that vision is a critical need, a need which now constitutes the Partnership’s strategic priority. This approach needs to be based on shared knowledge and sound information. More specifically this means a solid understanding of the region’s health in terms of what ‘health’ means, where we currently are, where we are currently headed, where we want to be, then what we can do collectively as agencies within the COCE to move the region toward that vision.

Managing for Ecological Health



There are 5 steps to the *Managing for Ecological Health* framework. It is a building model, with each step informed by the sum of the steps preceding it (see diagram on previous page):

- **Defining Health:** Defining ecological health at a regional scale, and determining how it should be measured;
- **Taking Stock:** Describing the current state of the COCE ecologically, using the measurement approach identified in Step 1;
- **Examining Trends:** Looking back from the current state in the COCE's health to see the trajectories that got the region to this point, and using that information to estimate where the region's health is likely to be in the future;
- **Setting Targets / Thresholds:** Identifying the desired state for a variety of aspects of the region's health, and the limits beyond which the region should not go; and
- **Directing Management:** Taking the improved understanding of health at a regional scale, and developing region-wide approaches to addressing resource management issues.

On an on-going basis, work plans will include tasks designed to populate the framework, and a summary will be included in each year's work plan outlining its relation to this strategic priority.

Appendix 2: Fund Development Strategy

No single entity has the budget or the mandate to completely fund collaborative management initiatives across the region. That simple fact is one of the most significant barriers to transboundary collaboration in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

Recognizing this, a fundamental element of the CMP from its conception is the principle of leverage. The CMP was conceived to operate on small contributions from numerous agencies, collectively providing a relatively significant operating and project budget. Those resources can then be further leveraged through the resources available to the Miistakis Institute as a non-profit, charitable (equivalent to 501(c)(3)) institute, and to the Universities of Calgary and Montana.

Principles

- Core funding for the CMP's work is estimated at \$35,000 (CDN) per year, and will come from multiple modest investments by partner agencies;
- One of the primary benefits of the CMP is the leveraging of fiscal resources. It is anticipated that each agency will be able to leverage their investment in the range of 10:1 to 15:1;
- Projects developed by the CMP will be cost shared by Agencies who have a direct interest in the initiative, although core funding will provide some minor project management resources. The importance of "in-kind" support is also an important resourcing tool;
- Members of the Steering Committee will work with agencies in the Partnership to establish and maintain core funding for the CMP;
- The Miistakis Institute will seek access to additional funding through grants and donations that are not generally available to Agencies; and
- The Universities of Calgary and Montana will seek to leverage agency resources through graduate and academic expertise.

Strategies

- Identify agency/project fits where individual agencies would benefit in particular from CMP project activities, and are most likely to contribute;
- Develop fund development strategies for each project, and tailor project activities to likelihood of funding;

- Identify agency-related funding sources which may support core or project activities (e.g., associated foundations, national programs, etc.); and
- Develop a fund development strategy as a component of each annual work plan.