

3

AN INTEGRATED COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Most of us are familiar with and have participated in a collaborative process. We engage the right people from within the right circles to solve our problems. We collect the right information to answer the right questions to make decisions. Then, we involve the right people to make or communicate those decisions that achieve the desired outcomes. These collaborative processes happen every day – in our homes, neighborhoods, organizations, companies, and communities. They can be simple and involve quick decisions or entail extensive study and deliberation. Connection (of individuals), a shared understanding (of the issues, concerns, options, tradeoffs, and decisions), and a commitment to a shared outcome are the critical elements that create trust and enable our success.

What is a collaborative process?

A collaborative process is a structured process that brings together the right people asking the right questions and evaluating the right information to achieve informed, thoughtful, balanced, and durable outcomes.

The GSLBIP must implement a similar process to create trust and enable success, but at a large scale, across the GSL watershed. A successful GSLBIP will require a process that is appropriate for and rises to the challenges we face and the goals we seek to achieve.

CONSTRUCTION OF AN INTEGRATED COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The first step of any integrated water resources management plan is to build a collaborative process. The collaborative process will be the foundation and framework that the GSLBIP will depend upon to achieve its objectives. Not only must the GSLBIP involve watershed stakeholders to achieve Objectives 1 and 2, but it must also integrate them directly into the technical analyses completed to achieve Objectives 3, 4, and 5. Utah's 2001 State Water Plan stated it succinctly as "The responsibility for making many water-related decisions resides with local leaders."³⁹ These leaders (as stakeholders) must be integrated into developing the GSLBIP so that their decisions align with GSL watershed goals and objectives.

Public engagement traditionally uses a robust communications plan and a steering committee to gain input, insight, and recommendations as technical analyses are completed in parallel. The GSLBIP, however, seeks to take the traditional approach a step further by also directly engaging key stakeholders as part of completing the technical analyses. Developing sustainable and durable solutions that stand the test of time requires participants to have a vested interest in the process and results. An integrated collaborative process achieves those kinds of solutions.

Why do we need a collaborative process?

Input derived from a situational assessment³⁰ (provided in Appendix B) validated recommendations from previous efforts to evaluate strategies for water for Utah and GSL.^{8, 11, 12} Stakeholders in the watershed want and simply must have a vested interest in the solutions. Not only do adjacent communities want to connect with each other as they wrestle with water concerns, but they must do so within the context of both their river basin and the GSL watershed. Stakeholders want to and must participate in the process, accept the data, actively use the models, understand the issues and solutions, and assume a stake in the solutions.

ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES

An integrated collaborative process must implement the following strategies for it to succeed:

Ensure a public and transparent process

The process must enable any interested person or organization within the GSL watershed to be able to explore, learn, and participate in the GSLBIP. Processes, work products, data, and results must be transparent to ensure ease of access and accountability and engender trust.

Implement a strong communications plan

The process must include implementation of a strong communications plan that provides all interests with an opportunity to learn about and participate in developing the GSLBIP and also engages the broader community in reviewing, accepting, and implementing the plan. The communications plan must provide an opportunity for education and participation and allow individuals to explore and develop their own paths. Appendix C includes the *Communications and Outreach Plan* for the GSLBIP.

Engage diverse interests

The process must involve and represent diverse interests that balance and integrate different backgrounds, geographies, and perspectives from throughout the GSL watershed. These diverse interests need to be balanced with those of government agencies who are mandated to manage and protect GSL watershed resources.

Cross-connect at multiple levels

The process must facilitate cross-connection among government entities, interest groups, and participants across the GSL watershed, at the river-basin level, and even at the local level (Figure 3-1). These cross-connections are the means to forge the relationships, partnerships, shared understanding, and trust that will be required to formulate durable solutions and outcomes for the watershed. The more connected people feel to each other, the issues, their watershed, their GSL, and their solutions, then the more likely the outcomes will be successful, sustainable, and durable.

Integrate policy with science at the local level

The process must integrate and facilitate a discussion of policy and science that will be unique to each river basin. Watershed councils in each river basin will be best positioned to forge the required connections and shared understanding unique to their backyard. The councils will best understand their systems, data, and how solutions in their river basin will affect them, their river basin, and their place in the GSL watershed. They must participate in developing the solutions they will need to implement.

Foster learning by taking no regrets actions

Decisions are already being made, and actions are already being taken to address the risks we face and make use of opportunities we have. Near-term no regret actions are, and will continue to be, essential to the process. These no regret actions enable connection, encourage innovation as a means of learning, refine our understanding of the issues, “move the needle,” and engender trust among participants. These actions maintain forward momentum, demonstrate progress, and naturally facilitate an active, adaptive management process. Collaborative problem-solving is a critical element in taming a wicked problem. Appendices D and E provide technical memorandums that discuss “no regrets” opportunities identified as part of developing this Work Plan.

Develop a vested interest in results

Stakeholders with diverse values and views should be engaged and invested in from the beginning of the process. These stakeholders must gain a shared understanding of the issues, help shape the work to be done, oversee the work’s completion, interpret results, evaluate tradeoffs, and participate in crafting solutions – all to ensure that the stakeholders have a vested interest in the GSLBIP’s results and recommendations. A vested interest is essential for durable outcomes.

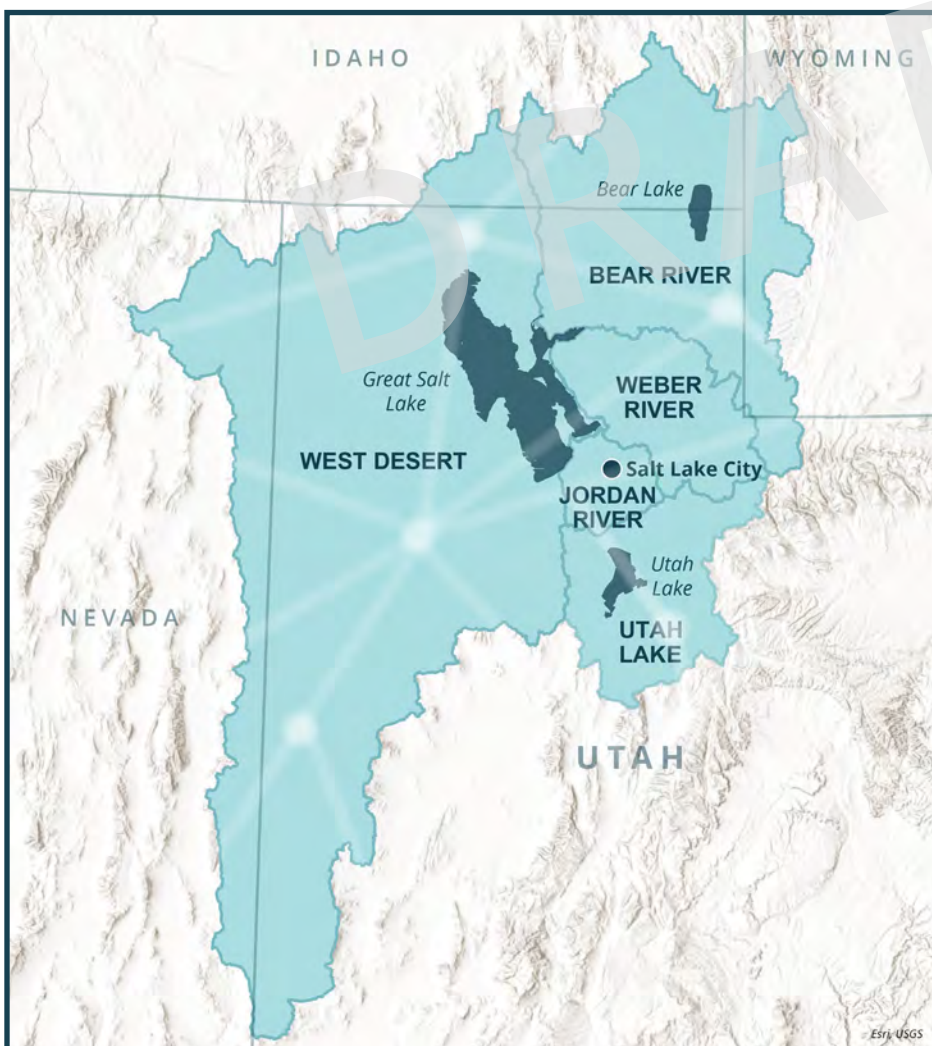
Facilitate inclusive and balanced deliberations

The process should be inclusive and balanced. Deliberations cannot be approached as a zero-sum game; we must reject an either/or approach in favor of identifying strategies that seek to balance needs and support multiple uses.

Forge consensus-driven decisions

Decisions by consensus means that stakeholders will strive to find common ground and unanimous approval but that, in the end, a minority may disagree while the rest can agree or reach acceptance. Even then, the views of the minority are respected and advanced to decision-makers for consideration along with the consensus recommendation. Consensus will provide a solid foundation for the GSLBIP; it will indicate long-term support and commitment from a diverse group of partners and participants.

Figure 3-1. Connecting Communities within Their River Basins and with Their Watershed and Great Salt Lake



Utah's Statewide Water Commitments²⁹

- Utah is committed to increasing the resiliency of its water supply and quality by maintaining and improving current water infrastructure, improving data collection, and investigating opportunities for new water supply and storage.
- Utah is committed to using its existing water supply as wisely as possible by reducing the amount of water consumed through implementing conservation, ensuring access to safe and reliable drinking water, and improving the quality of water as it leaves its communities.
- Utah is committed to optimizing the use and management of its finite water supplies to preserve the state's agricultural economy and ensure a sustainable and prosperous future.
- Utah is committed to maintaining and improving the health of its waters and watershed – with emphasis on our forests, GSL, Bear Lake, and Utah Lake – to support their continued multiple uses.

INTEGRATED COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Figure 3-2 illustrates the GSLBIP’s integrated collaborative process. Stakeholders will be engaged throughout and as part of the technical analyses to develop a vested interest in results, drive consensus, and result in sustainable and durable outcomes. No regrets actions will drive momentum, demonstrate progress, and facilitate collaboration via active adaptive management throughout the effort. Technical analyses allow stakeholders to be engaged throughout the process. The GSLBIP will not be solely a WRe and Reclamation plan; it must be the entire GSL watershed’s plan. To that end, the integrated collaborative process will be driven by a cross-connected structure of watershed stakeholders who participate in developing tools, interpreting results, evaluating options, and recommending solutions at the river basin and watershed scale. Stakeholders are not only advising, but they are truly participating.

The GSLBIP will leverage several existing collaborative efforts, such as the GSLBIP Advisory Group, GSLBIP Steering Committee, GSL Advisory Council (GSLAC), and various watershed councils to capitalize upon their momentum and effectiveness while minimizing additional burdens on organizations and individuals.

WRe and Reclamation will be responsible for engaging, facilitating, and coordinating the efforts of these groups within the GSLBIP framework.

GSLBIP Advisory Group and GSLBIP Steering Committee

The GSLBIP Advisory Group will engage and represent state and federal agencies with a stake in managing water in the GSL watershed. The GSLBIP Steering Committee will represent diverse interests from across the GSL watershed with a stake in how water is used and managed. Both will also contribute to the following:

- Guiding the GSLBIP development process and achieving the GSLBIP goal and objectives
- Recruiting the involvement of governmental and nongovernmental entities, the private sector, and citizens working to develop the GSLBIP and encouraging ongoing collaboration and communication among them
- Reviewing and advising WRe and Reclamation on activities, progress, technical products, and significant findings from GSLBIP development
- Reviewing and providing GSLBIP recommendations to WRe

The GSLBIP Advisory Group will additionally assess and advise WRe and Reclamation on alignment with existing law, policy, and efforts.

Figure 3-2. The Integrated Collaborative Process: Framework to Drive Consensus and Durable Outcomes

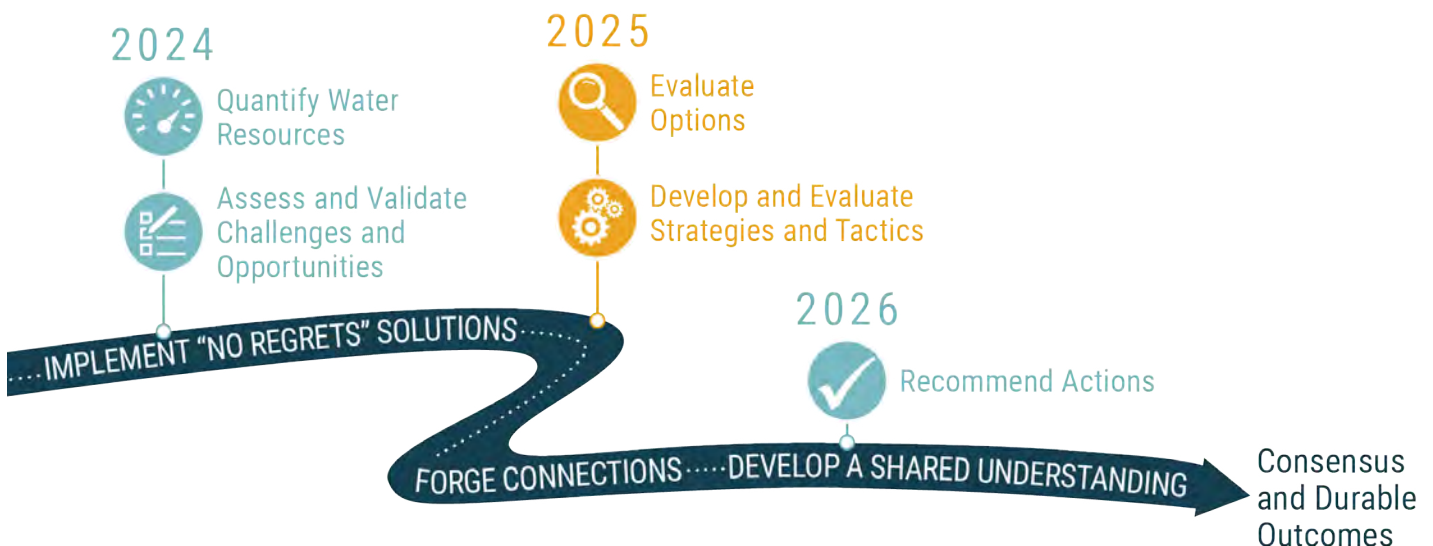
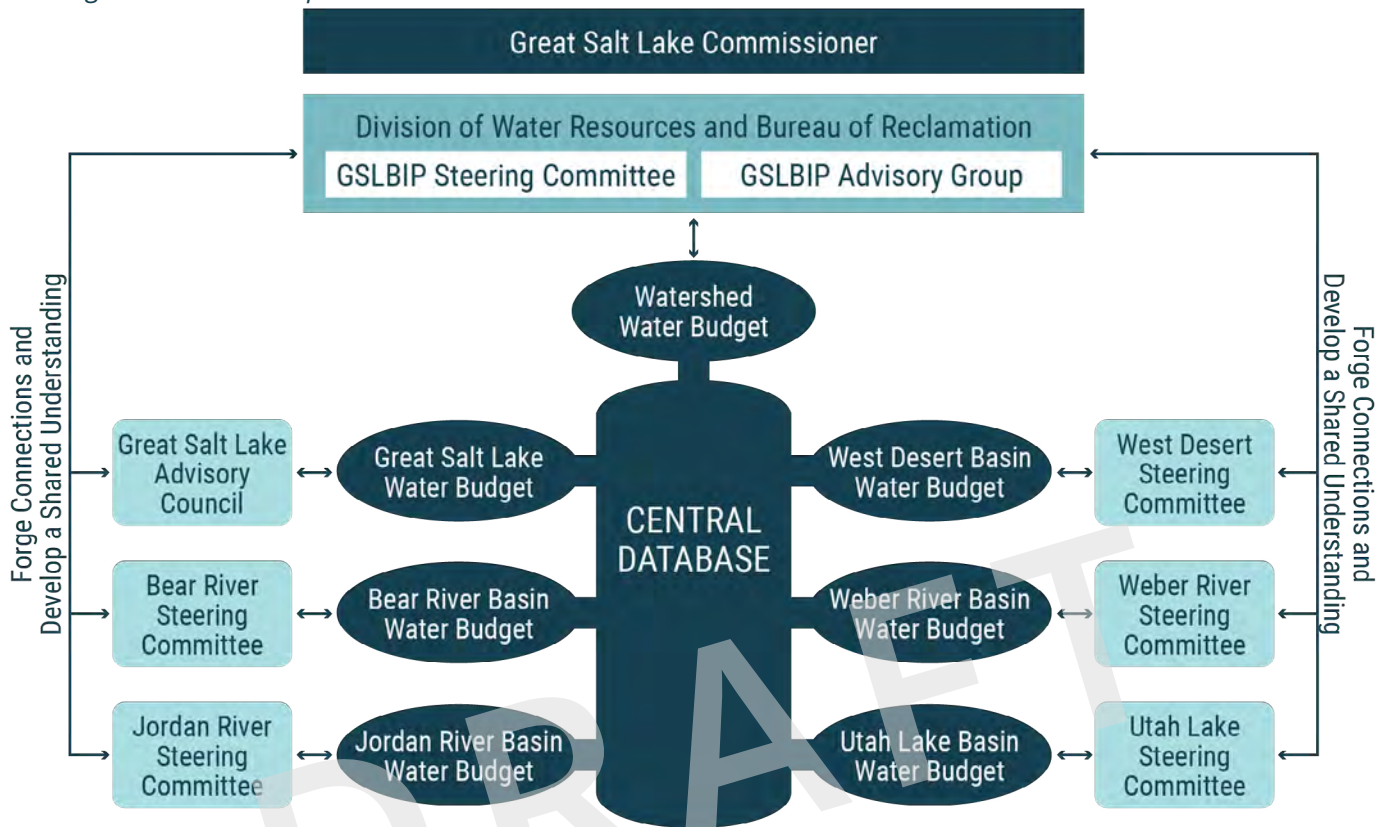


Figure 3-3. Integrating Stakeholders into Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan Development



At the watershed scale, WRe formed a GSLBIP Advisory Group comprising representatives from participating state and federal agencies in June 2022 to advise its efforts to implement H.B. 429. The GSLBIP Advisory Group has continued advising WRe and Reclamation in developing this Work Plan. A GSLBIP Steering Committee comprising diverse interests (non-state and federal agencies) from across the entire GSL watershed was formed in July 2023 to also advise in Work Plan development. Both groups will continue to work closely with each other and with WRe and Reclamation throughout GSLBIP development. The roles of the two groups will continue to be advisory; they will represent watershed interests, guide GSLBIP development, and provide final recommendations to WRe.

This Work Plan proposes to use the newly formed watershed councils within each river basin to engage participants at a more local level and integrate them into the technical analyses (Figure 3-3). The GSLBIP will leverage the expertise of these watershed councils to understand their challenges and water systems and support them in developing their own river basin water budgets.

River Basin Watershed Councils

The watershed councils will contribute the following:

- Represent diverse interests at GSL or within their respective river basin that have a stake in their water supply.
- Define, assess, and advise WRe and Reclamation regarding challenges they face in water management.
- Define and assess their respective water budgets and evaluate potential solutions within the GSLBIP framework.
- Review and advise the GSLBIP Advisory Group and GSLBIP Steering Committee pertaining to GSLBIP activities, progress, concerns, technical products, and significant findings.
- Review the GSLBIP and provide recommendations to the GSLBIP Advisory Group and GSLBIP Steering Committee.

The river basin water budgets will then be used to help inform and validate and the overall watershed water budget and solutions. The watershed councils will be asked to help consider challenges, identify options, and evaluate water management strategies within the context of both their river basin and watershed. These connections, if in alignment with GSL watershed goals, are what will sustain actions into the future. Direction from the top alone will not create durable outcomes; they must be owned at the local level for water users to choose and enable successful long-term implementation.

Work performed as part of this GSLBIP must be science based, technically correct, and defensible. Reclamation will form an independent Technical Sufficiency Review Team of experts who will provide an independent review of GSLBIP deliverables. Appendix F, *Technical Sufficiency Review Plan Technical Memorandum*, provides details on the composition and responsibilities of the Technical Sufficiency Review Team and Plan.

Figure 3-4. Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan Decision Hierarchy



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

GSLBIP’s integrated collaborative process implements a model that engages and cross-connects diverse interests at multiple levels to drive toward consensus-driven decisions. Stakeholders throughout the GSL watershed will have multiple venues to participate in the process’s analyses and discussions. In the end, the GSLBIP Advisory Group, GSLBIP Steering Committee, river basin watershed councils, and GSLAC must consider input from the diverse interests they represent to make recommendations to the groups and decision-makers above them. All groups must strive to make decisions by consensus; all must strive to find common ground and unanimous approval. Views of the minority will be respected and advanced to decision-makers for consideration, along with the group’s consensus recommendation.

Figure 3-4 illustrates the decision-making process. Communication will flow in both directions, but recommendations and requests for decisions will be forwarded following the illustrated hierarchy. Reclamation will not have the authority, nor the ability, to enact changes to current state water operations or policy through the GSLBIP. Reclamation will codirect GSLBIP development with WRe through the trade-off analysis step (Task 6) whereupon WRe will direct the final decision analyses for recommendations to be included in the draft and final GSLBIP. The GSL Commissioner will have the ultimate authority to direct policy that seeks to protect GSL and will coordinate directly with the Utah Legislature and Office of the Governor.

SUCCESS METRICS

An often-cited means to measure the success of GSL policy is for GSL water levels to reach a specific or range of elevations. While such a metric would indicate an increase of inflows to and a reduction of risks within GSL, this metric alone will not accurately measure the success of the GSLBIP for “Great Salt Lake and all uses, including people and the environment, throughout its watershed.” One task during GSLBIP development (Task 2) will be to establish and refine specific metrics that can be used to implement and actively manage identified solutions.

Success must be evident in the short term and measured in the long term.

Following are short-term success indicators:

- On-time and on-budget delivery of studies, plans, tools, and recommendations
- Significant participation in communication efforts, project meetings, and development of data, tools, and solutions
- Positive feedback from participants that they feel listened to and represented in the process and results
- Improved connection and shared understanding of the challenges, options, and solutions for managing the future water supply
- Continued changes in water use observed to be demonstrated by increasing participation in water conservation and optimization efforts that do no harm to GSL or other water uses
- Consensus on an action plan for balancing needs and supporting multiple uses throughout the watershed

Success as a Metric

Success is not either/or; for example, success cannot be either watershed needs, including people and the environment, or GSL water levels. Success must balance needs and support multiple uses.

Following are indicators of long-term success:

- **GSL water levels**—The ongoing decline of lake water levels is arrested and water levels are stabilized within a defined range.
- **Critical ecosystems**—A resilient water supply is provided that sustains high-priority ecosystems in the watershed.
- **Information**—Systems are in place to create, collect, store, make available, and process data for water management.
- **Policy framework**—Policy is thoughtfully refined to provide the economic, legal, and institutional mechanisms needed to incentivize a reduction in consumptive water use, share available water, and benefit all water uses, including people and the environment, throughout the GSL watershed.
- **Investments**—A source of sustainable funding is in place to facilitate, incentivize, and compensate water users to reduce consumptive use, implement changes in organizational infrastructure, and build, maintain, and operate required water infrastructure.
- **Water supply status**—Although the water supply may be limited, water needs are balanced through a proactive, collaborative process without a need for legal action.

In summary, and most importantly, success will be measured by the long-term outcomes. Actions taken due to the GSLBIP will ensure a resilient water supply that sustains the health and growth of GSL and enables the future we envision for GSL and all water uses in its watershed. The GSLBIP will foster a lasting water legacy for future generations.