The questions in steps 2 through 4 below were derived from the progress triangle framework, referenced on page 9 of this workbook. As a reminder, the progress triangle is a three-element framework that describes the *relationships* among people who care about a particular situation, the *processes* that have been identified as being effective and ineffective for working in that situation, and the *substance*(information) required to understand and improve the situation.

Resilience Dialogues Worksheet for Assessing the Collaborative Potential of a Situation

Members of a planning team may answer the full set of questions. When designing your stakeholder assessment protocol for a larger set of stakeholders, you do not have to ask every question listed below; choose those that best fit your circumstances and time you have available to conduct the assessment and analyze the data. Just make sure to ask about situation (step 1) and choose at least one question from each category of the triangle—relationship, process, and substance.

**Step 1: Describe the s*ituation* that needs to be improved as you see it.**

**Step 2: Select from the following questions designed to evaluate the *relationship* dimension of the situation that has been described.**

1. Who are the primary parties directly involved? What are their skills and level of knowledge of the situation?
2. Are these parties willing to collaborate? To what extent? Can those opposed to collaboration be persuaded to try?
3. What is the history among the major parties?
4. What is the degree of trust among the parties and how might it be improved?
5. Who are the essential decision makers? What do you know about their values, concerns and fears?
6. What are the power relationships, sources of conflict and incentives to collaborate?

**Step 3: Select from the following questions designed to evaluate the process dimension of the situation.**

1. What methods other than collaboration might the parties use to pursue their goals? Are there traditional approaches to problem solving that support or conflict with a collaborative approach?
2. Can decision-making about this situation be shared? Are there jurisdictional, legal or organizational duty aspects of the situation that affect the degree to which collaborative decisions can be developed and implemented?
3. Are there sufficient resources of time, staff, expertise and money to conduct a Collaborative Learning process? Are there needs for design and facilitation by an impartial party?
4. What are alternative methods that might be used that include key parties and require less resource use?

**Step 4: Select from the following questions designed to evaluate the *substance* dimension of the situation.**

1. What are the issues important to this situation?
2. Do the issues vary among the parties?
3. Which of the issues are tangible?
4. Which of these issues are primarily symbolic?
5. Are there differences in how the major parties understand the situation, define the issues, and prioritize the issues?
6. What are the parties' interests and concerns about the issue?
7. What policies or actions have been tried in the past to deal with this situation?
8. What are the key information needs (data) or information gaps that should be addressed as part of the process? Is the information accessible and understandable?

**Step 5: Evaluation—Will Collaborative Learning get the job done?** When the interviews are complete, use the data you have collected to consider the following questions about the stakeholders you will engage…

* Is there recognition of interdependency and acceptance and respect for diverse perspectives?
* Is there commitment to learn and understand from sources considered credible and reliable?
* Is there desire for situation improvement and recognition of the potential for mutual gains?
* Can decision-making be shared?
* Is there a shared sense of responsibility for outcomes?
* Is there evidence of flexibility about ways to share and analyze information and reach agreement?
* Are there sufficient resources to implement a collaborative process over the time required?

If the answers to these questions are “yes,” the collaborative potential of the situation will support a Collaborative Learning process.

Interview process for Assessment

An interview is an excellent tool for collecting in depth data about people’s perspectives and knowledge. Observing tested interview protocols will help you collect data that will be the most informative for your assessment. The “Stakeholder Role Assessment Worksheet” provides an additional example assessment.

Complete resources for the Resilience Dialogues Project of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System are available from <https://www.wellsreserve.org/project/the-resilience-dialogue>