



**Maine Woods Consortium
Coordinating Team
Meeting Notes, 12/4/08**

Attendees: Jason Bird (sitting in for Chris Shrum for part of meeting), Eastern Maine Development Corporation; Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc; Gail Chase (part of meeting via phone), Kennebec Valley Council of Governments; Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Council; Shaunacy Cobb and Bruce Hazard, Mountain Counties Heritage; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Mary Ann Hayes and Lucas Sanders, Maine Rural Partners; Dina Jackson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; Bruce McLean, MAGIC; Carolann Ouellette, Maine Office of Tourism; Andy Whitman, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences; Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center; Robin Zinchuk (beginning of meeting via phone), Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce; and guests: Valerie Flanders, United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development; John Rust, Maine Professional Guides Association; David Vail, Maine Center for Economic Policy.

Key Decisions

1. The group agreed to use the organizational structure proposed by Chuck Lawton, illustrated by Bruce. (Mike Wilson offered to create a better diagram).
2. The group agreed to the proposed 2009 workplan and budget.

Group To Do List

1. Sign off on EDA grant.
2. Letters to Bob Thompson from any organization requesting funding in the workplan has board approval to complete this work and that they are ready to take on the workplan if funding is approved. (Bruce H will follow up with specific request.)

Individual To Do List

- Mike Eisensmith: List of suggested developers for Community Revitalization team
- Mary Ann Hayes: Rework logic statement for Community Revitalization.
- Bruce Hazard: 1. Talk to Janet Wyper at LL Bean about IT person for peer review. 2. Separate out from budget communications and evaluation/tracking from general management. 3. Specifics on letter needed by stewards for Bob Thompson. 4. Circulate EDA proposal for Coordinating Team sign-off
- Dina Jackson: Memo from accountant for fiscal agent fee.
- Bruce McLean: Rework logic model for Networked Economies.
- Andy Whitman: Rework logic model for Landscape Resources.
- Mike Wilson: Follow-up on USDA funding for SEI information management system.

Meeting Notes

Lawton Recommendations: Structure and Membership

The Capital Investment Committee has already met and discussed the Lawton report. Mary Ann expressed disappointment over the level of specificity offered in the report. The indicators and outcomes were not explained in depth in the original version nor was there a business plan with a focus on how to finance the Consortium over time. The committee looked at Chuck's skills as an economist and asked him to further develop the indicators within the framework of the logic model that Bruce H had developed.

Structure: Chuck's model showed "advisory groups" and "support groups" with both providing assistance to "projects" and with coordinating team providing oversight. Bruce provided a new diagram showing a slightly different structure, but very similar. Within "support groups," Bruce H proposed adding a technical assistance group. Coordinating team approved the general structure.

Membership: Chuck proposed a two tiered membership with one group called "contributing members" having voting rights and another group called "interested parties" that could make comments but could not vote. Bruce H noted some discomfort with the proposal because the Maine Mountain Heritage Network had always tried to make decisions as "close to the ground" as possible by the people who the decisions will have the largest impact on. The exception to this would be when a decision would impact more than one group and then that decision is elevated to the advisory/program group or the coordinating team. Harold questioned this and thought that the interested parties would already have determined what the need is before they applied for MWC support. Bruce H observed that we have already had instances where a grant was received for a general program area and more specific allocation between projects was required. The Coordinating Team would make allocation decisions if funding is received for multiple program areas.

Mary Ann agreed that interested parties do not need "voting" rights and that it is "by invitation" that organizations or people get to the voting levels (project teams, advisory/support groups, coordinating team). She did think that the program areas need a statement of values or philosophies on inclusiveness. Also, she wanted to clarify that these are not necessarily "advisory" groups but more "program" teams. Maybe the title of advisory group should be saved for an external advisory group of people (funders?) that the Consortium is trying to establish relationships with.

Bruce H cautioned the group that in the future, not all projects will fit nicely into the program areas as currently defined and could fall until multiple programs while also asking for assistance from the capital group and the technical group. This would be a package of support for a project. This is where keeping decision-making as close to the ground encounters a challenge because multiple program areas could have input and the Coordinating Team might have to step in to establish priorities. Above all else, funding allocations must be clear, transparent, and tied directly to specific metrics and outcomes that are publicly accessible (per Chuck Lawton's recommendation). Keith inquired if it

was foreseeable that investment committees would make some of the decisions and if that would be encouraged by the Coordinating Team.

Logic Model - Changes to Impacts/Indicators/Outcomes and Advisory Group Nominations

The following is brief overview of breakout groups that considered logic model sections by program area. It was noted that program/advisory groups will also be looking at the logic model and will recommend refinements/changes.

Landscape Resources – Andy (steward), Bruce H, Mike Wilson, Carolann, John

This group felt that the general landscape resources vision statement still has merit. With respect to “impacts,” Andy said they sounded more like “outcomes.” He applied the “different types of capital” test to the proposed outcomes and recommended a “cultural capital” addition which was “transmission of knowledge, values, skills related to landscape.” Also with respect to indicators, Andy suggested looking at three kinds: “conditions” (where are you today?); “pressure” (where are you going?); and “policy” (where are you doing about it?). The group chose a few key indicators for each of the long term “outcomes.” Also, given a quick vote with little discussion, the group identified two short term outcomes for “high priority” status: “better information about condition of resources, use patterns, emerging asset-related market opportunities available to all stakeholders” and “planning mechanisms and policies accommodate full range of interests in a more transparent and equitable way.”

Suggestions for the program/advisory group included: Don Mansius, Maine Forest Service; John Cashwell, Seven Islands; John Rust, Maine Guides Association; John Willard, The Birches; Bryan Wentzell, AMC; Alan Hutchinson, Forest Society of Maine, Luc Brochu; E.J. Carrier; Stephanie Gilbert, Department of Agriculture; Greg Shute, Chewonki.

Community Revitalization – Mary Ann (steward), David, Lucas, Valerie, Mike Eisensmith, Shaunacy

The group felt that this is about strategically planning for the future, how to deal with a sparse population in a smart way with flexibility and capacity to move forward. All agreed that critical mass is needed for commercial, social and public services. Valerie stressed that empowering counties is important since everything works at either the state or town level right now. Engaging the community in stimulating strategic planning around community driven needs is important.

Suggested additions to the long term impacts

- Need to add economic development asset development currently missing from list.
- Strengthen Quality of Place connection.
- Leadership needs more emphasis.

- Public-private partnerships need emphasis, combing all resources across sectors & silos.
- Cultural assets conserved, enhanced **where it makes sense (not every building), need to clearly identify the core cultural aspects to be translated into economic opportunities.**
- Social/civic fabric strong. Local pride. Vibrant cultural life. **Active youth engagement.**
- Sustainable (new?) systems for the delivery of government, **commercial**, and social services including health and place-appropriate education services – organized, deployed on service area scale. Community with capacity would understand scale & critical mass and have collaborative, efficient & effective systems that work.

Suggestions for the program/advisory group (the max size is 12 and 9 preferred, perhaps establish 2 levels with outside sounding board to cover areas not on core group) included: Robin Zinchuk, Gail Chase, Jeff Hewett, Mike Eisensmith, Healthy Communities, Maine Downtown Center, Culture/arts/heritage (perhaps Patrick ? from Center Theatre), Recreation representatives – 1 motorized, 1 non-motorized, Franco American (Sheila Jans from St John Valley or check with Yvon Labbe, Franco-American Centre), Tribal (check with Sue Hammond for recommendation; perhaps Donna Loring),–, Developer –

Networked Economies – Bruce McLean (steward), Harold, Keith, Dina

This breakout session started with a discussion about the words “Networked Economies” and what they mean to everyone at the table. SugarWood Gallery in Farmington was offered as an example of many businesses working together with a store front that provides them a bigger offering than any of them could accomplish individually. We also discussed how that was related to business co-ops and how USDA and other entities can grant funds to businesses who organize themselves in this way. Another definition of Networked Economies was shared based on a book called, “Network Orchestration.” Instead of having businesses combine their offerings to offer as a static store front, a network orchestrator combines like-types of businesses together to fill much larger orders than any of them can fulfill individually. Under this model, businesses would be selected by the orchestrator based on their quality levels and ability to produce a certain minimum amount of the order.

After some good discussion, we felt that it was good to keep each version of the definition. However, our little group wasn’t sure if the Maine Woods Consortium or the Networked Economies group would want to take on an actual Network Orchestration role. However, it might be worth spending time identifying others who may already be playing this role and determining how we could get businesses in our regions on the list of eligible producers under this model.

After reviewing the vision, impacts, and outcomes we decided we needed to better define the role (in terms of time commitment) we would ask a member of the advisory team to play. However, names and categories were offered as follows: Mark Hews, Threshold to

Maine RC&D; Matt Polstein, New England Outdoor Center; Donna Fichtner, Plum Creek Rep (maybe someone else could represent Plum Creek as well or better?); Keith Small, Down East Business Alliance; Nature Conservancy representative; Mark Berry,?; DECD representative (with hesitation); Sandy Browder, Professional Loggers Assoc.; and a representative from the Maine International Trade Center.

Long Term Impacts

- Under Asset based businesses – we need to update the list to better reflect tourism and some indicators to track progress (visitor numbers, border crossings, etc.)

Stronger Export Markets

- Eastport should be added to the list

Short and medium term outcomes

- We discussed whether there should be a certain expectation of quality set for participating businesses who participate in a network
- Under capacity for Economic Development Agencies to be more aligned with asset-based development, we felt that needed better definition and that it might be hard to effect a change by any of the state's economic development agencies that wasn't their idea first
- Results: we thought that maybe there should be subsets developed when tracking number of businesses increased in each sector (wood products, agriculture, specialty foods and hand crafts)

Maine Woods Amenity Based Development Project - David Vail

The Maine Center for Economic Policy received a grant for a research project focused on amenity investments as a way to revitalize "gateway" towns in the rim counties of Maine. David Vail of Bowdoin College will head up this project which will study two or three town clusters to make recommendations for cost-effective investment strategies. This could help surface what kinds of amenity investment strategies have the greatest potential for success. Examples of amenity investment are main street beautification, supporting historical societies, upgrading boat ramps, improving trails and parks, and expanding hospitality offerings. The desired impact of such amenity investments is three-fold: improving the quality of life for existing residents, attracting experiential tourists, and increasing in-migration.

The Consortium can benefit from this by learning what models have been effective and how to measure success. John asked if there was any focus on communities that want an industrial park versus tourism development. David explained that the focus is purely on amenities. Mike Eisensmith felt that some of the work done in Aroostook County such as the 5 year tourism plan or the resort destination analysis may be of use. Mary Ann also thought the group could contribute what they know to help stretch the funding further.

David listed the possible community "clusters" to be included and the group was allowed to weigh in. The Washington County cluster got Harold's vote. Mary Ann asked if there would be variety of scales for the research and how much of the research was about local

versus tourists. Carolann explained that it has been her experience that towns that have been growing have done so because of tourism. People came to visit and liked it so much that they moved here. Keith mentioned finding a balance between historically successful areas and currently successful ones. Mike Wilson did not think that the Bethel cluster worked because it included Norway. He thought that Rumford and Newry would be better. David explained that Norway was included because it is an hour from Portland and 30 minutes from Lewiston for commuters.

Information Management

Mary Ann announced that Maine Rural Partners has received a grant from the Northern Forest Partnership Program to build an information management system for the Maine Woods Consortium. Lucas Sanders, an Americorps member with a computer science degree and web experience working with MRP thru August, will be helping with this. Mary Ann is also having conversations with Jeff Allen at FairPoint about this system and plans to invite him (or a FairPoint rep) to sit on the committee. FairPoint, through Vital Economies, its consultant, has asset mapping software that may be useful. Many economic development regional organizations have seen this. She would like this system to service the whole northern forest region down the road but does not want the committee to get hung up on that.

MWC communications may get pulled into this because MRP sees information management as a subset of communications. When asked what the central purpose of the system was, Bruce H explained that it is a way to manage information about interested parties and to provide a searchable database of initiatives that are moving toward desired MWC program outcomes. Lucas thought that this pulled impacts and outcomes into the information management realm. Bruce agreed and felt that the tracking/measurement of initiatives should be included in the system. John thought that this sounded like the system that CenTRO is building for nature based tourism. Keith would like to see how social networking could fit into this system. Carolann would like to see a press page on the website.

Dina wanted to understand who is responsible for finding the projects or if the system will allow people to enter their own information like on visitmaine.com. Bruce H said that the information could come from all angles and that we would need to stimulate the population of the database but it would be web-based and integrated into the MWC website. Mary Ann wants to incorporate this question into the needs assessment to determine who needs to be tapped for information. Carolann also thought that the needs assessment should include who the “market” is that we are trying to communicate with, what is their age, and what is their comfort level with technology (computers, Internet).

Bruce H thought there was mention of funding from USDA for SEI to put such a system in place. Mike Wilson said that it was referenced at one point at the recent “summit” but it was not concrete. He will follow-up on this. Bruce McLean inquired if \$10,000 is enough to do what we told NFP that would be done. Mary Ann said no but they are hoping that FairPoint and EDA can help. Bruce H explained that he reflected in the proposal that this funding was for only the first phase of work.

Mary Ann proposed a committee to discuss this further, guide development of the project. Mike Wilson and Dina volunteered if interaction is done through conference calls and email. The group needs suggestions for a 2nd IT consultant. It would be ideal to find a donation of peer review. John suggested talking to Janet Wyper at LL Bean. FairPoint and MPBN are also on the list.

Mike Eisensmith has been working with FairPoint about web conferencing capabilities and suggested Mary Ann talk to them about this too. Having web conferencing capabilities could be an easy way for the Coordinating Team to interact without traveling.

EDA Proposal and 2009 Work Plan and Budget

Bruce H explained that AVCOG has agreed to be the lead applicant for the EDA grant and the fiscal agent for the Consortium. Funding that is designated for multiple purposes/organizations/projects (for example – funding coming from the EDA grant) will go through AVCOG. AVCOG will “sub contract” with agencies actually doing the work. Funding that is raised directly by agencies for specific projects will not go through AVCOG, though AVCOG or management agency (currently MCH) would/should track all funding. AVCOG will charge a nominal fee for acting as fiscal agent with the understanding that this is negotiable if more time/effort is involved than anticipated. Dina will have the memo sent from the accountant to Bruce H outlining this. With respect to EDA proposal, Bob Thompson will pull the information from Chris Shrum’s proposal and put it into the EDA form to submit within the next couple of weeks. Anyone who signed up to do a piece of work will be required to submit a letter to Bob verifying that their organization is ready to go if funding goes through and that their boards have approved this work (where that is required). Letters will be submitted as part of the grant request package.

There is a nonfederal match component if funding is received. Bruce H and Chris are ready to go out and find these funds. They will be looking for a cash match but the group should track their in-kind time so that can be banked for future needs.

Bruce H explained that it is the steward’s job to frame out what their workplan for 2009 looks like. This includes the number of meetings they will hold and how much time they need to get the work done. This should be done before contact is made for people to join the advisory/program teams. Bruce H had thought of the advisory groups as volunteer but that may not work. May need stipends or other payment. Each program area has requested around \$25-30k (for 2009). The general management figure is the largest but that is because it included fiscal management, tracking, and communications. Bruce H will have to break out what is earmarked for communications and evaluation. It is about \$50k for core management and there is a line-out budget available if anyone wants to see it. There is a marketing budget but no marketing person; Bruce has yet to talk Bob Thompson into allowing Dina to take that role. CEI, Inc. came forward with proposal to assess the capital needs and what types of capital can be used. The technical assistance aspect of the role needs to be included in this assessment, not just the actual capital needs.

Bruce McLean had some questions about whether this self-selecting process has netted the best stewards for the job. Mike Eisensmith noted that among those who were present – these were the willing! Bruce H felt that contractors can be used for special skills but that the steward is really meant to manage groups and the work process. Adjustments can always be made down the road. Mary Ann suggested looking back at the notes from the September meeting with names of people who wanted to be involved or were suggested to be involved with certain program area. Mike Wilson felt that everyone in this room knows the goals of the group and that to move forward, we should go with who we have in place. At some point though, stewards may need to be full-time employees.

Meeting adjourned.