



Maine Woods Consortium Coordinating Team Meeting Notes, 2/5/09

Participants: Jeff Hewett, Town of Skowhegan; Gail Chase, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Dina Jackson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; Bruce McLean, MAGIC; Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center; Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce; Mary Ann Hayes and Lucas Sanders, Maine Rural Partners; Bruce Hazard and Shaunacy Cobb, Mountain Counties Heritage; and Andy Whitman, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences.

Key Decisions

- A new committee will work on preparing a proposal for investment of Betterment funds, recommendations to be approved by the Coordinating Team.
- Coordinating Team approves changing EDA request to “disaster relief” if that seems to EDD representatives to be the best approach (does not preclude other funding).

Individual To Do List

- Bruce and Shaunacy will meet with Lucas on information management system requirements.
- Bruce will move forward with formation of advisory teams (looking for volunteer help!!) for Networked Economies and Community Revitalization - with goal of submitting refined “desired outcomes” list to Coordinating Team April 2.
- Mike Wilson will pull together a meeting with Dina, Harold, Robin, and Mike Eisensmith after Bruce H’s 2/13 meeting with Betterment to work on proposal for new investment.
- Dina will follow-up with Chris and Bob about EDA grant questions. She will report these out to the group as soon as she has news.

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 2 from 10am-3pm at EMDC in Bangor (time and place by consensus!).

Meeting Notes

Information Management . Maine Rural Partners has been funded to develop an information management system for MWC. Lucas Sanders and Mary Ann Hayes have been talking with representatives from FairPoint and Vital Economies and expect to get some support for their efforts through these organizations. They will be meeting with Vital Economies in March to ask for assistance on specific aspects of the system. Lucas is conducting a preliminary scan of various technologies and is hoping to align this project with one they are working on in support of the Washington County One Community project (so as not to duplicate efforts).

Shaunacy Cobb and Bruce Hazard (MCH) will meet with Lucas to determine a strategy for assessing what data needs to be gathered (stakeholder information, project and initiatives, outcomes and indicators), how stakeholders want to manipulate/use captured data, and in what format should it be accessed. This assessment will probably be done through a survey. Then the team will develop a form for collecting required data. Stewards will be included in the conversation and Coordinating Team will be tapped for feedback.

Program/Steward Update. Bruce reported that following our last Coordinating Team meeting (in December), he had asked each of the stewards to identify potential members of their respective advisory teams and to invite them to join. He thought it would be important from a fundraising perspective that people/organizations are signed on to these teams to leverage support. Stewards observed that in order to do this they would have to create workplans and job descriptions for their teams.

In recent weeks, in response to a request from Mary Ann (serving as steward for Community Revitalization group), Bruce has created a workplan and a job description for the Community Revitalization Advisory Team and its members. He has also created a generic job description for advisory team stewards. The first phase of work for these teams is to refine the desired outcomes, identify key stakeholders, and surface projects or initiatives.

Bruce further reported that Mary Ann had noted that she had signed up for the steward position on the assumption that there would be funding and without funding she would not be able to take even these preliminary steps. On a similar note, Bruce H reported that Tracy Stutzman has had to withdraw from the co-stewardship of Networked Economies (as a new mother, working only two days per week). Bruce McLean reported some progress with the Networked Economies team but said that he is unable to volunteer additional time since MAGIC is no longer able to pay him for this work. As for Landscape Resources, Andy Whitman reported that he feels that this work is close enough in mission and program at Manomet to allow him to provide unfunded leadership for now.

Bruce H. has volunteered to help with the Community Revitalization program (recruit a team, etc.) until funding is found or someone can be found who can volunteer at this time. He will also look for stewardship help with Networked Economies program.

Betterment Funding. Bruce H reported that the Betterment Fund is potentially interested in investing up to \$50,000 a year for 3 years in tourism development and channeling this investment through MWC. Their primary interest is in creation of new living wage jobs. Understanding that this opportunity had arrived before MWC was really ready for it (advisory teams not formed, criteria for investment not yet developed), Bruce H convened a “skunkworks” including Mike Wilson and Keith Bisson to recommend a decision making process to the Coordinating Team as to how to invest this money.

Mike W explained that the skunkworks group initially considered putting a portion of the money to building capacity of the MWC. They also considered putting out an RFP for tourism projects (as suggested by Carolann). Instead, they decided it would make more sense to work through existing relationships and networks to surface high impact projects. The group thought that this amount of funding might be focused on 2-3 projects to receive significant funds instead of many projects receiving a small amount. Bruce H had distributed an outline of potential investments before the meeting.

Mike W recommended forming an ad-hoc committee to develop the broader set of criteria (beyond living wage jobs) to determine what projects should be funded and also to create evaluation measures. This committee must be conscious of possible conflicts of interest and function with integrity. Bruce H is meeting with Betterment representatives on February 13 and will discuss the approach (funding 2-3 partnerships). Betterment is looking for a full proposal by May to make money available this summer.

Coordinating Team members expressed concern about promising “living wage jobs” over a short timeframe given a relatively modest investment. Members felt that it would be important to clarify the timeframe within which the jobs need to be created and in particular to ask Betterment if they could help us to use the amount of money offered to leverage additional funds that will be needed. Dina, Robin, Mike E and Harold (via Bruce) have agreed to participate on the committee with Mike W taking the lead.

EDA Funding. Dina Jackson reported that she and Bob Thompson had recently met with Alan Brigham to discuss the application for funding from EDA. Alan had felt that the Planning Grant application put forth by MWC would be a good fit for EDA funding. Since that meeting, the possibility of using some disaster relief program funding (money for counties who have had natural disasters but not in reaction to a specific disaster) has been raised by Alan in conversation with Chris Shrum. The group asked Dina to keep us informed regarding conversation amongst Alan, Chris, and Bob to see if this disaster relief approach would work with some language revisions in the proposal. The benefit would be that it may not require a 50/50 match and could be available sooner. It is unclear if this would preclude us from future funding, or if the MWC could tap into the disaster money to fund strategic projects while moving forward with the planning grant. Dina is going to follow up on these questions with Bob and Chris.

Next meeting. **The group settled on a face-to-face meeting in Bangor on Thursday, April 2 (10-3)** to resolve and move forward the Betterment proposal, update the group on the EDA grant, and discuss recommendations for desired outcomes from advisory teams. Maine Network Partners has offered some training and coaching on working through networks. Carole Martin could present to the Coordinating Team and then coach the stewards going forward. The group felt that the need for the presentation depended on the depth of information and how it applies to this stage of networking.