



## **Maine Woods Consortium Coordinating Team Meeting Notes, 4/2/09**

Participants: Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc; Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Council; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Mary Ann Hayes and Lucas Sanders, Maine Rural Partners; Bruce Hazard and Shaunacy Cobb, Mountain Counties Heritage; Jeff Hewett, Town of Skowhegan; Dina Jackson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; Carolann Ouellette, Maine Office of Tourism; Chris Shrum, Eastern Maine Development Corporation; Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Maine Crafts Association; Andy Whitman, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences; and Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center.

### **Key Decisions**

- Logic model workgroup is: Andy, Chris, Carolann, Mary Ann, Mike Wilson (maybe) and Bruce (Dina was nominated by Tracy after the meeting!). Since Andy has the most potentially controversial program area, he will run the draft by a couple of key contacts. Workgroup will do a draft version of the model to be distributed to the Coordinating Team for comments.
- Betterment projects must be selected by 4/15. Coordinating Team members have until Monday to review the previously compiled list and identify any potential tourism projects for consideration. 3-4 committee members that did not submit projects will formulate final recommendations (which projects to be funded).
- Maine Rural Partners does not need to reach out to a larger stakeholder group for more input on the Information Management System. Instead, Bruce and Chris will talk to funders about what they want to see.
- Every Coordinating Team member will submit a form letter detailing their in-kind match for EDA (value of their time committed to meetings for coming year).
- Each EDD will try to identify “soft” match to make up difference (need total of \$70K match).
- An RBEG application will go out for funding technical assistance for tourism businesses with focus on product development and frontline training using Betterment money as match.
- An application will be submitted to the Maine Environmental funders for \$50,000 towards Betterment match (tourism investment fund) and \$50,000 towards EDA match (MWC capacity building).

### **Individual To Do List**

- ® **Keith Bisson**
  1. In kind letter for Dina
- ® **Gail Chase**
  1. In kind letter for Dina
  2. Soft match? (talk with Mike Eisensmith)

- ® **Harold Clossey**
  1. In kind letter for Dina.
- ® **Shaunacy Cobb**
  1. Organize existing material that pertains to the desired outcomes of MWC.
- ® **Mike Eisensmith**
  1. Work with Chris and Bruce on RBEG proposal.
  2. In kind letter for Dina
  3. Soft match for EDA?
- ® **Mary Ann Hayes**
  1. In kind letter for Dina
  2. Participate on logic model workgroup.
- ® **Bruce Hazard**
  1. Present a framework to a couple of funders about what they would want to see in a database of projects.
  2. Organize logic model workgroup meeting.
  3. Create letter for Maine Environmental Funders grant request with help from Mike E. and Chris by 4/17.
  4. Work with Chris and Mike E. on RBEG proposal.
  5. In kind letter for Dina.
- ® **Jeff Hewett**
  1. In kind letter for Dina
- ® **Dina Jackson**
  1. Work with Chris on form letter for in-kind match to be used for EDA.
  2. Circulate form letter to team with firm due date.
  3. In kind letter
  4. \$10,000 soft match for EDA.
- ® **Carolann Ouellette**
  1. Arrange a meeting with Maine Technology Institute to discuss kiosk system.
  2. In kind letter for Dina.
  3. Participate on logic model workgroup.
- ® **Chris Shrum**
  1. Help Dina with form letter for in-kind match to be used for EDA.
  2. Present a framework to a couple of funders about what they would want to see in a database of projects.
  3. Work with Bruce and Mike E. on RBEG proposal.
  4. In kind letter for Dina.
  5. Participate on logic model workgroup.
- ® **Andy Whitman**
  1. Participate on logic model workgroup.
  2. Run logic model by couple of key contacts once draft is completed.
  3. In kind letter for Dina
- ® **Mike Wilson**
  1. In kind letter for Dina
  2. Meet with Betterment selection committee to determine recommendations.
  3. Send recommendations out to Coordinating Team.
  4. Participate on logic model workgroup. (pretty please?)

® **Robin Zinchuk**

In kind letter for Dina

## **Next Meeting**

Conference call - Thursday, June 4 from 9-11 am

## **Meeting Notes**

**Organizational Structure.** Conversation about the organizational structure focused primarily on the “new model” for MWC. MWC’s value added is to identify desired outcomes and strategies, then align and support action across multiple organizations (non-profits, businesses, government agencies) to implement strategies. “Phase One” would involve supporting (through capital investment and technical assistance) the projects and initiatives of other entities that seem aligned with MWC goals. “Phase Two” could involve MWC approaching existing organizations about high priority needs that are not currently being met and/or advisory teams sponsoring their own projects.

Capital investment would be provided through some sort of “network” of funding sources (philanthropic, government, corporate). Capital investment team/steward will figure out approach. Technical assistance would likely be provided by a “network” of existing technical assistance providers. In some cases, projects that are to receive MWC capital investment might be “required” to accept technical assistance. This would need to be handled delicately as not to damage the relationship with the sponsoring organization. In the workplan, there is funding for a capital investment steward who could initially handle the technical assistance aspect. The group agreed that much can be learned from Betterment process and implemented in the capital investment program.

Tracy and others noted that the plan was fine for future, but right now we don’t have capacity. Coordinating team actually doing all the functions outlined on the new organizational chart. Bruce voiced concern that proposed current organizational structure may be too beaureaucratic and expensive to maintain. The group felt that it makes sense to streamline the organizational flow to deal with the current capacity limits but to ensure that the framework remains so that it is specific enough to be directional but general enough to evolve as capacity increases. The schematic identifies placeholders for each activity but all agreed that this is an “ideal” structure. Until money is available, the advisory committee functions can be delivered by the Coordinating Team.

**Logic Model.** Bruce has been working with Garrett Martin on the MWC logic model. Garrett felt that the original logic model is too complicated and provided a simpler version for the Landscape Resources area as an example. Advisory groups were originally set up to determine the desired outcomes, but these groups have yet to be pulled together. This is a big missing piece (clear outcomes/strategies) that impacts funding requests.

Bruce proposed sending out a Survey Monkey to 30-50 key people in each program area with suggested high priority outcomes and asking them to rate their importance and offer additional outcomes. This would allow agenda setting to happen at a larger level. Tracy

felt that this has been happening for years at the larger level through other MMHN/MWC projects, meetings, and reports. Dina disagreed; she felt that the group had more recently been narrowed down to a smaller scale and needed to reengage with a larger audience. Through this conversation, it came to light that some of the newer Coordinating Team members had not been properly informed about organizational participation in previous program areas of MMHN/MWC and from large scale meetings.

Group settled on following course of action: Bruce and Shaunacy will assemble a list of previous MMHN/MWC participants, documents, processes and research that would be useful for the formulation of the logic model. Then Andy, Chris, Carolann, Mary Ann, Mike Wilson (maybe) and Bruce (and maybe Dina) will create a draft logic model for review by the Coordinating Team. This group is charged with whittling it down to the two or three most important outcomes per program area that everyone could agree on. Going forward, a process should be established for getting these outcomes and strategies out to a larger group in the near future, and after that every two years or so to incorporate feedback and new challenges. Mike Wilson suggested that in the not too far future, MWC should make a brochure that explains what MWC is at this time and distribute it. Another option would be to setup a speaking schedule to reach out to the larger group

***Information Management.*** Lucas Sanders presented a report on progress on the information management project. The current plan is for a database to be incorporated into the existing MWC website. It would be accessible online. Organizations sponsoring projects would (might? – this has yet to be decided) load their own information. Organization could be asked to load a minimal amount of information with links out to full proposals or for more information. The primary audiences would be funders looking for projects (either to fund or as context for projects they might fund) and organizations looking to connect with other organizations that are working on similar projects. An email/letter could be sent quarterly or yearly reminding organizations to update their information or it will be deleted. If MWC can demonstrate value for being on the site, then keeping information current would not be as hard.

Possible avenues for demonstrating value could be: 1. sending new information to congressional representatives; 2. quarterly email blasts to funders with lists of projects tailored to their specific interests. If we could demonstrate value, MWC could possibly charge a fee for listing. Projects from the CEDS process could also be listed (question: Do all EDDs maintain a database of projects? Do they use same fields in databases?). Andy suggested MCH create a form letter that each Coordinating Team member personalizes and sends to 5 organizations asking them to upload their projects as a way to get it started.

The original plan for informing the structure of the system was to first survey the Coordinating Team as to their information needs and then survey a larger group for additional suggestions and feedback. The group felt that this was not necessary and instead wanted Bruce and Chris to talk to a couple of funders about what kind of project information they might want to see on the site.

**Betterment Funding.** Mike Wilson has been working with a small group to come up with a process to evaluate projects submitted for Betterment funding. A survey had been circulated to this group, and Mike identified the highest rated response in each question to create a beginning set of criteria. Criteria will be used to guide decision making, though the group understands that the final decision will be to some extent subjective (i.e., it is not a “mathematical” rating system).

Members of the team were asked to submit projects for funding and encouraged to submit one project from an outside organization for each project they submit for their own organization. Mike cautioned against funding too many projects from around the table since MWC is intended to be the filter but not necessarily the recipient. Also, anyone who is the possible recipient for funding would need to recuse themselves from the decision-making process. Once recommendations are made at the committee level, it will go back out to the Coordinating Team for final approval.

Unfortunately, the committee had not considered a list of projects that had been created from projects suggested by the Coordinating Team last April and from responses to a newsletter for “shovel ready” projects. This problem highlighted the fact that we really need an information management system that has all this project information in one place. Several group members noted that the Betterment process is for the group a learning process. Keith suggested doing a post-mortem evaluation of the process to help us going forward. Andy suggested that going forward, it may be a good idea to have a couple of high risk projects in the mix because the opportunity for organizational improvement is much higher.

Bruce and Chris have been talking about applying for RBEG money to increase the pool of money for tourism projects. This would need to be turned around quickly (though different members had different ideas of when the actual deadline is). An RBEG application will go out for funding technical assistance for tourism businesses with focus on product development and frontline training.

**EDA Funding.** Dina Jackson reported that the application for EDA Disaster Relief Funding is 90% complete. The team needs to come up with a match for \$280,000. That total includes \$15,000 for AVCOG administrative costs. Bob Thompson has suggested a 25% match - \$70,000. A Planning Grant (if Disaster Relief is not viable) would require a 50% match.

There was a lot of conversation about leveraging existing funds for a match and in-kind donations. The final decision was that the group would come up with the \$70,000 through soft matches and in-kind donations to “unlock” the EDA money and then actively fundraise for the cash match (we still need the cash to get the work done). Each Coordinating Team member will fill out a form letter provided by Dina detailing their in kind match. The Economic Development Agencies will each be asked to find the remainder in “soft money” match (example: portions of planning grants from State Planning Office).

***Other Funding Opportunities.*** Bruce noted the Maine Environmental Funders Quality of Place funding. The maximum amount for this grant is \$100,000 for up to 3 years. The group agreed to apply for \$50,000 for EDA match and \$50,000 for the tourism fund. This means that 2-3 projects will need to be selected by 3/17 to be included in the letter.

Carolann suggested Bruce meet with Maine Technology Institute about funding for the visitor kiosk idea.

***Closing Remarks.*** Mike Wilson observed that the MWC is well positioned to take a big role in helping shape policy and stimulate action in the rim counties. The combination of interests (environment, community, economy) and the way of defining the area (Maine Woods) is unique and compelling. Mike suggested planning a major conference, perhaps at the end of the EDA grant period once we are better organized, to roll out the concept – goals and strategies - to a much larger group of people. Group supports this idea. (April 2010?)

Meeting adjourned at 3 PM.