MONTANA WILDLIFE AND TRANSPORTATION

STEERING COMMITTEE WORKING MEETING

Jan 3, 2022
Meeting Notes

ATTENDEES:

- Steering Committee (Committee): Ken McDonald (FWP), Deb O'Neill (FWP), Dwane Kailey (MDT), Tom Martin (MDT), Kylie Paul (MSWP), Stephanie Adams (MSWP)
- Agency Staff: Dustin Rouse (MDT)
- Planning and Implementation Team (PIT Crew): Deb Wambach (MDT), Nick Clarke (MSWP),Hannah Jaicks (MSWP), Brooke Regan (MSWP), Barb Beck (FWP)

Agenda and Discussion:

1. Where do we want to be in 6 months, what key elements need to be accomplished by then, what actions need to be taken to get there? Logical order and timeframes for these key elements and actions? Each member discussed their goals.
    a. Sort out how will we use the Data and Information (D and I) product
    b. Accomplishing tasks from the Summit
    c. Steering Committee (SC) could be ready to accept applications or proposals for feasibility studies, by having application process solidified, criteria solidified, the flowcharts solidified for each agency to tell folks we're ready to receive proposals.
    d. Have processes, agreements and other steps set up to engage with different proposals and to move towards being competitive for securing federal funding in new infrastructure law
    e. Accomplishing a 2022 workplan
    f. Create an application form for a potential project.
2. Follow-up on each goal for 6 months
    a. D and I product – the D and I team will be meeting Jan 13. They plan to give the SC recommendations on how the product can be used in project selection, how its useful to public, to entities, and so on. They are preparing beta testing. These recommendations may be available to the SC by/before our Jan 19 meeting.
        i. Next steps for Jan 19 meeting: Review the documents on potential uses for D and I product and the questions from D and I team. Review any upcoming recommendations the D and I team send. Talk about how the tool will be used.
    b. Tasks from the Summit – there are items in the tasks that don't quite fit into the roles and responsibilities document that we still should keep in mind to work on.
        i. Next steps for Jan 19 meeting: Dwane will put the tasks within a spreadsheet and include the current status of each task. We'll talk about them at the Jan 19 meeting.
    c. Processes for project selection – SC will work on selection criteria after next Jan 19 meeting.

i. Next steps for Feb meeting: MDT will work on strawman document. Kylie will also provide, around Jan 20th, a compilation document on selection criteria that other states or programs have used for selecting wildlife crossing projects.

d. Application of federal funding – SC will tackle after working on selection criteria, in Feb or March.
    i. There is a lot of discretionary funding within the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and MDT is going through it to interpret it and might repurpose a couple job positions internally to address it. MDT expects they will receive a lot of applications for discretionary funding.
    ii. MSWP suggested that there are several organizations that are also examining the wildlife components of the Infrastructure Law and could share information and documents they've compiled in a meeting or via emails. MDT supported this suggestion. CLLC created a toolkit and Deb will share that with everyone.
e. Workplan 2022 –SC will work on creating a workplan for all of 2022, not just the next 6 months, at the February or March meeting to work on that

3. Review of the Roles and Responsibilities draft document. MDT prepared the document and requested comments on each component. Purpose and Decision Making were copied from the SC Charter. The Mission, Core Values, and Roles and Responsibilities are new.
    a. There was discussion around the consensus decision-making, but it was decided not to adjust the language, as it is defined in the Charter.
    b. Request for clarity around whether this document was for the SC's work overall or just related to project selection process work. Discussed whether this roles and responsibilities document could expand to fit all of SC work, but decided against that, or at least to not prioritize a charter revision that would add in a broader roles and responsibilities component. Made some edits to this document to clarify that it is just about the project selection process efforts.
    c. Question about the mission's use of word 'vision' – MDT responded its intention was to show that MDT/SC is moving above and beyond standard practice, to show it is working to help provide vision and leadership in wildlife mitigation across the state
    d. Decision to move the core values component out of this document and into the charter with an amendment , since it fits into that document's scope better than this one.
    e. Question on whether the internal MDT wildlife projects still function on their own unrelated to this work – yes, this document/process is for standalone wildlife projects that are partially or fully funded externally.
4. Flowchart of processes. MDT developed a draft flowchart explaining processes for managing stand alone wildlife projects. The flowchart was briefly explained.
    a. A public or group or stakeholder proposes project idea to someone from a member entity (MDT,FWP,MSWP)
    b. If sponsor thinks it has some merit, sponsor brings it forward to the SC. The term 'end' doesn't mean the project is a no-go, but could be modified to come back.
    c. There are several components to still sort out and discuss:
        i. Determining selection criteria and discussion of other topics listed in the roles and responsibilities document

ii. Definition of what makes a project concept and determine what step is needed there, such an application document and selection criteria document
iii. Definition of project sponsor and discuss how a sponsor might decide as gatekeeper which projects should go forward to the SC
iv. Steps needed to help make decisions, such as an evaluation document or matrix for each agency/entity
v. Level and strategy for public involvement

d. MSWP requested some time span components might be added to each step in flowchart to help get a sense of length of time of process – this is likely to vary depending on location and scope of proposed project.
e. There was discussion about the selection time period, with a selection cycle suggested as semi-annually as it is helpful to have a timeline to have a pool of projects to compare with, yet not helpful if a key project misses that timeline. Further pros and cons were discussed.
f. Next steps: FWP will share templates for application and evaluation internal review documents that they use for wildlife habitat decisions; Kylie will share similar documents from Missoula County's Open Lands Bond program. Further discussion will ensue at February meeting. MDT will share a modified Future Fisheries application and guidance into a rough template for application.

5. Plans for next meetings and timelines were established.
   a. Meeting dates: Jan 19th 10am-12; Feb 11th 1-3pm; March 3rd 9-11am
   b. Jan 19 meeting: D and I product and D and I team recommendations; Spreadsheet of tasks from summit and their current status
   c. February – Finalize SC Roles and Responsibilities; Selection criteria and strategy; Processes set up internally for how projects move ahead in each agency
   d. March – Discuss/determine how SC works with applications on discretionary funding; 2022 workplan

Action Items

- For the Jan 19th meeting, SC/everyone will review the document on potential uses for D and I product, the document of questions from D and I team, and any upcoming recommendations the D and I team sends.
- MDT will work on strawman document for selection criteria. Kylie will also provide, around Jan 20th, a compilation document on selection criteria that other states or programs have used for selecting wildlife crossing projects that she has been working on.
- Deb W will email the CLLC toolkit on the wildlife provisions of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.
- FWP will share templates for application and evaluation internal review documents that they use for wildlife habitat decisions; Kylie will share similar documents from Missoula County's Open Lands Bond program. MDT will share rough draft application form as well.