

# MLIAC Funding Subcommittee

April 17, 2009

MonTech Conference Room, Missoula, MT

Present: Alex Philp, Michael Sweet, Jennie Stapp, Stu Kirkpatrick, and Robin Trenbeath

Absent: Art Pembroke

There was a discussion about what the Council Vision statement should be and how that affects the purpose of the subcommittee. Jennie suggested the vision should be to provide “Interdisciplinary opportunities for collaboration toward common solutions”. The subcommittee decided to use this as their guide in our deliberations.

The next discussion centered on what the subcommittee is trying to accomplish. The group determined that the charge is to “**design an approach to developing and implementing stable, sustainable and predictable long-term funding sources that support the creation, maintenance and distribution of all MSDI framework layers.**”

The basic question is “what are we good at?” The secondary question is “what are others good at and what should we not try to duplicate?” That is, over what MSDI themes do we (i.e., the Federation) have unique expertise (e.g., cadastral) and/or distinctive functional abilities (e.g., seamlessly combining inter jurisdictional data), and where do other (non-Federation) entities have equal or better expertise and/or abilities.

1. What are the Federation members good at doing?
  - a. Framework Themes
  - b. Federation Functions
2. What are non-Federation (e.g., Google) members good at doing?
  - a. Framework Themes
  - b. Federation Functions

There are two basic funding approaches. **One** is to look at each framework theme and treat each layer as a unique funding opportunity (this is the current approach). Although it is the purest form of MSDI funding, it is also the most difficult to ‘sell’ because it does not directly tie the expenditures to policy issues, business processes and/or the public’s need for information. Further, it usually requires the justification for added funds/fees (i.e., MLIA recordation fees). In addition, it does not easily recognize the value of unique Federation expertise.

The **second** method is to fund ‘issue’ or ‘policy’ based projects/programs that involve framework data and/or Federation expertise. This second method requires two significantly different fiscal approaches. First, project funding (e.g., one-time-only) where entities sponsor building applications and framework data (assuming you don’t already have it) that are directly necessary for project implementation. Second, ongoing funding support for maintenance and distribution of relevant framework layers and functional expertise is considered an incremental cost to the organization’s day-to-day operations, similar to paying employee salaries, network charges, software maintenance, rent, heat/lights, etc.

There were discussions about the pros and cons of each approach. The primary argument for a change in methodology is that we have used the framework approach with limited success (i.e., MLIA), and that the existing grant process creates competition between Federation members for limited funds rather than promoting opportunities for collaboration. The issue-based approach is more marketable because it closely ties MSDI funding to policy/business concerns. However, success of this alternate approach depends on finding both project and program based funding models. The subcommittee understands that in reality, a sound funding model will utilize all three methodologies; framework specific (MLIA), one-time project and ongoing program rate structures.

The subcommittee suggested several options (e.g., Governor's Challenge) to 'test' part of the revised issue based approach. Specifically, they wished to pick a subject and perform a one or two-day 'table-top' exercise using the best available data to evaluate the veracity of their hypothesis, fully understanding that this is not a full pilot of the methodology, only a test case.

However, using the test case approach has several advantages. First, it would demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of the current Federation environment to policy makers. Second, the 'lessons learned' could help guide the Council when selecting priorities and determining funding approaches. Third, the outcomes could provide real long-term benefit to decision makers and the public, thereby providing the precursor to a program-based funding model for the themes and functionalities demonstrated by the test case.

One recommendation was to explore the stimulus road construction and that relationship to wildlife, weeds, environmental quality and health in two or three counties. Other discussions involved various sub-parts of the Governor's Challenge.

Rather than focusing on just one option, the Chair requested that each member take some time to think about alternative projects and forward their ideas to him by May 1, 2009. We will do some preliminary research on each suggestion and the subcommittee will select a trial case prior to the June 4<sup>th</sup> MLIA Council meeting.

Suggested meeting dates for the next subcommittee meeting are:

- Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>,
- Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>,
- Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>,
- Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>,
- Wednesday May 20<sup>th</sup>, or
- Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>.

Please let the Chair know which dates best accommodate your schedule.

Robin H. Trenbeath, Chair