

Listening Sessions Plan

Target Audience

Public who may not respond to an online public survey. Relative to the general population of Minnesota, younger members of the public, minority populations, and residents of the Metro area responded to the 2019 survey at a lower rate. In addition, the 2019 survey results skewed towards members of the public affiliated with environment and natural resources organizations.

Purpose

Gather broad input on priorities for environment and natural resource funding (goals) and preferred methods to address those priorities (strategies), particularly from members of the public who may not participate in an online survey.

Format and Schedule

LCCMR staff will organize remote and in-person listening sessions for the subcommittee members to attend in March and April, concurrently and complementary to the public survey and subject matter expert survey. This would allow input from the listening sessions to inform the subcommittee's discussions on goals and strategies for future ENRTF spending. The format of the listening session will vary from more formal opportunities for public comment, smaller group discussions, and informal input gathering. In all cases, background information will be provided, the public's input will be recorded with written notes, and they will be encouraged to complete the public or subject matter expert survey.

Remote/Virtual Listening Sessions:

LCCMR staff will organize 1-2 remote listening sessions for subcommittee members to attend, with a target of holding the sessions in March 2024 (potentially March 9-15 or March 25-29). Subcommittee members will participate remotely. Members of the public will RSVP to attend and participate remotely. At this time, LCCMR staff envision the sessions will be structured to begin with a presentation, followed by a staff-moderated discussion, and ending with the opportunity for open-ended public comment. Subjects that may be covered in the presentation would be an overview of the ENRTF, the LCCMR, the funding process, accomplishments, and how strategic planning fits into the process. Staff-moderated discussions would be focused on soliciting responses to specific questions, such as the following:

- What do you enjoy most about Minnesota's environment or natural resources?
- What do you think are the biggest threats to Minnesota's environment or natural resources?
- How do you think ENRTF dollars should be used to improve and enhance Minnesota's environment, natural resources, and outdoor recreation?
- What would it look like if Minnesota made good progress on addressing those threats to our environment or natural resources?

- What one word would you like to be able to use to describe Minnesota’s environment and natural resources in 10 years?

Following the moderated discussion, participants would be given an opportunity to provide any additional comments or statements. Participants will also be encouraged to complete the public survey if they have not already done so.

The remote listening session will be recorded and posted to the ENRTF YouTube channel. LCCMR staff will analyze the comments received during the discussion and open comments and provide the analysis to all subcommittee members.

In-Person Listening Sessions

LCCMR staff will organize in-person listening sessions for the subcommittee members to attend, with a target of holding the sessions in early April 2024. In-person listening sessions would be held in 1 or 2 different regions of the state. One day would be spent in each region with 2-3 listening sessions (morning, day, evening) held in different locations in each region. There will be three potential formats for each in-person listening sessions:

- Coffee and Conversation
- Invite-Only Discussions
- Open House

The exact locations, dates, times, and formats for each listening session will be determined by staff, with input from the subcommittee members. Staff will prioritize the regions and locations as follows:

1. Greater Minnesota
2. Rural Areas
3. Minority Communities
4. Tribal Communities
5. Twin Cities Metro Region
6. State College or University Campus
7. Suburban Areas
8. Urban Areas

Staff will pursue both targeted and broadcasted outreach to encourage participation.

Coffee and Conversation

The Coffee and Conversation sessions will be informal and hosted at a coffeehouse or similar informal setting. If there is an opportunity to do so, participants as a whole will be welcomed, and LCCMR staff will give a brief overview of the ENRTF and LCCMR, and the goal of the engagement opportunity. LCCMR subcommittee members will pair up with a staff member and join small groups, posing some broad questions to participants and taking down notes on what they hear. If a large-group welcome is not possible, members will need to introduce themselves and the goal when they begin a conversation. LCCMR staff will close the engagement session, thank participants for coming, collect note sheets, and ask participants to complete the public or subject matter expert survey, as appropriate (either online or in a hard copy form made available). This may be done at each table or by addressing the whole group.

Invite-Only Discussions

Rather than an open invitation, specific individuals or organizations –with a focus on groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in past surveys – will be invited to the sessions. These sessions may be held at non-traditional locations, similar to the Coffee and Conversation sessions. The Invite-Only Discussions will start with a welcome and a brief overview of the ENRTF and LCCMR and the goal of the engagement opportunity. Participants will form small groups of no more than 5 people. LCCMR subcommittee members will pair up with a staff member and join small groups, posing some broad questions to participants and taking down notes on what they hear. These sessions may also be used to ask more specific questions related to the draft goals and strategies. If a large-group welcome is not possible, members will need to introduce themselves and the goal when they begin a conversation. LCCMR staff will close the engagement session, thank participants for coming, collect note sheets, and ask participants to complete the public or subject matter expert survey, as appropriate (either online or in a hard copy form made available). This may be done at each table or by addressing the whole group.

Open House

Open House sessions will be an informal opportunity for participants to come and give general input on questions related to ENRTF strategic planning. These sessions would likely be held at more traditional sites, such as community centers, government buildings, or college/university buildings. Feedback will be gathered graffiti-style on posters around the room and via a comment box. Refreshments will be provided, and some other incentive for attendance may be arranged. LCCMR staff and members will be on-hand to encourage participants to leave their comments, participate in the public survey (either online or in a hard copy form made available), and to engage them in informal conversation. LCCMR staff will set up the room and collect the posters and other handwritten feedback at the end of the session.