Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
May 13, 2020, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
RMRI Funding Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE
Participants: Terri Blackmore, Christina Burri Angela Boag, Jason Lawhon, Emily Olsen, Travis Smith, Tom Spezze, Nathan Van Schaik, Cindy Williams, Scott Woods

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Scott Woods and Terri Blackmore	Edit the funding database based on the discussion and begin to populate the database with grant information.
Cindy Williams, Tom Spezze, and Patt Dorsey	Develop the key messages and pitch for funders to create priorities for RMRI landscapes within their funding opportunities.
Samuel Wallace	Add the role of updating the database to the Funding Subcommittee roles and responsibilities in the RMRI governance charter.

MAY 1 RMRI MEETING DEBRIEF
Meeting participants debriefed the May 1 RMRI meeting. Their comments are summarized below.
- The RMRI Funding Subcommittee asked RMRI-Colorado (RMRI-CO) partners for volunteers from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to join the Funding Subcommittee to develop a private/foundation funding strategy. They made this request because federal and state government employees cannot participate in activities to generate private funding. Emily Olsen, National Forest Foundation (NFF), was the only partner who joined the Subcommittee following the ask. Many NGOs are currently thinking about their future fiscal years and are focused on their funding. There has also been a decrease in corporate donations due to COVID-19. RMRI partners are experiencing different challenges in different ways as a result of COVID-19, which may be a reason for the limited number of volunteers following the Funding Subcommittee's request.
- RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW) partners reported on their funding needs during the meeting. Many of their funding requests were related to capacity needs (e.g., funding for existing or new staff positions). The Upper Arkansas also requires additional capacity to develop forest treatment plans and write grants. A lack of capacity is the biggest barrier for the Upper Arkansas to accelerate treatments.
- Grants normally do not provide funding for direct capacity building, so the Funding Subcommittee should strategize ways to raise funding for capacity. Private funders may be excited to fund RMRI projects considering the opportunity RMRI presents to put private funding to good use.

GRANT DATABASE DISCUSSION
Meeting participants discussed the grant database that a subset of the Funding Subcommittee developed before the meeting. Their comments are summarized below.
- The initial spreadsheet created for the grant database represents an in-depth approach for organizing grants. The purpose of the grants database is to provide quickly accessible information so that partners can make decisions about whether to pursue grants, The information from the grants database may be put into a searchable database to help

partners find the grants that match with their projects. It may be possible to host the grants database on the CSFS website as well as the website of other RMRI partners.

- Having input from the three priority landscapes on what information they would like to have in a grants database would be helpful to continue to refine the database.
- The grants database should include information on both public and private grants and funding opportunities. The database should be clear about whether the funding is private or public to help inform who can be involved in which application processes. With the addition of private funding opportunities to the database, the name of the database should be changed from a grants database to a funding database.
- The database should highlight grant opportunities that either prioritize the RMRI priority landscapes in their application process or prioritize one of the four values of RMRI (water, recreation, forest health and habitat, and community).
- The funding database could have three separate tabs: one for all funding opportunities, the second for private foundation funding, and the third for funding opportunities that are specific to or prioritize RMRI values or landscapes.
- Having information on the complexity of the application process and grant administration in the database can help partners make informed decisions on whether the amount of money they would receive is worth the effort. Partners could provide information for this part of the database based on their past experiences administering certain grants. The grant administration staff at the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) could also provide information on the complexity of applying for and administering certain grants. The complexity of the application process and grant administration could be measured on a scale of one to five.
- Match requirements represent a burden for partners as they apply for grants. Some programs, like the RCPP, are difficult to apply for because it requires matching funds upfront. The Funding Subcommittee could think about creative ways to address match requirement barriers for local landscape partners.
- The database has a column to identify "partners needed." This column is intended to include information on whether the grant opportunity requires a 501c3 non-profit to be the lead. Instead of partner needed, this column should be retitled "fiscal partner."
- The database should be regularly updated to help identify changes in funding opportunities. Samuel Wallace will add the role of updating the database to the Funding Subcommittee roles and responsibilities in the RMRI governance charter.
- Other columns to include in the funding database include:
  - Whether grant funding can be used for private lands, public lands, or both
  - The complexity of the application process
  - The complexity of grant administration (i.e., monitoring and reporting requirements)
  - Match requirements (i.e., total match required, match restrictions, in-kind match, etc.)
  - Key contact information
  - Whether the grant prioritizes RMRI landscapes or values
  - Whether grant funds can be used for Firewise communities or defensible space projects
- The match requirements column should be next to the complexity of the grant administration column.
- The next steps to develop the funding database is for Scott Woods and Terri Blackmore to make the identified edits and begin to populate the database with information. After Scott

Woods and Terri Blackmore have initially populated the database, they can then request RMRI partners to identify other grants and help with populating the table.

FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE SUPPORT DISCUSSION
Meeting participants discussed how the Funding Subcommittee could support the funding needs of the local landscape partners. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Upper South Partnership (USPP) identified opportunity gaps in funding fire-adapted community projects. The USPP's process to move projects forward and apply for funding begins with a planning subgroup of the USPP developing projects together. Once the collaboratively planned projects are ready for funding, the planning subgroup sends the projects to a funding subgroup of the USPP. The funding subgroup helps allocate funding and provide match funding for those projects. The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute then monitors the implementation of the projects to inform an adaptive management process.
- The Funding Subcommittee could develop the funding database but also strategically connect grantors to the priority landscapes. As RMRI priority landscapes begin to identify projects with specific needs, the Funding Subcommittee should continue to consider how to align the funding opportunities with the project-specific needs of the landscape. Matchmaking is a time and resource-intensive process. Members of the Funding Subcommittee should be aware of the capacity needed to serve as a matchmaker effectively.
- A lack of administrative capacity to develop projects and write grant applications is a large barrier for local landscapes to apply for funding. One way for the Funding Subcommittee to provide support to local groups is through grant writing support. The NWTF and NFF have staff dedicated to grant writing that could potentially provide support depending on if they are working together with the local landscapes rather than writing on their behalf. The NWTF has been applying for grants to accumulate funding for the highest priority needs of RMRI, which include planning, implementation, and grant writing. As RMRI subcommittees are developing lists of requests for RMRI partners, the Funding Subcommittee could ask the larger partnership to provide funding for a shared grant writing resource.
- One challenge with having a central grant writer is they would need to try to represent the interests of all the partners in a priority landscape and would have to pivot between the different grant requirements. A more worthwhile investment would be to hire a coordinator to help pursue grants and represent the multiple voices and interests of the group.
- There should be more opportunities for priority landscapes within grant opportunities, like the priorities given to RMRI landscapes in the Restoration and Stewardship of Outdoor Resources and the Environment (ReStORE) grant. The Funding Subcommittee could gather feedback from local landscapes on which grant programs are most relevant to them and try to leverage funds into those opportunities. Local landscape partners may answer differently or be uncertain about which grant programs are most relevant to them, and the relevancy of funding programs may change over time.
- The Funding Subcommittee could work with organizations that prioritize funding for RMRI landscapes to standardize those grant applications to make it easier for RMRI partners to apply. The Funding Subcommittee could develop the criteria to help standardize those applications.

PRIVATE FUNDING STRATEGY DISCUSSION
Meeting participants discussed strategies to raise private funding. Their comments are summarized below.

- Having more private funding can make partners more eligible for public funding.
- There are times when foundations fund projects that do not completely align with their application guidelines. It would be helpful to look at what other projects foundations have funded in the past to develop a better understanding of which foundations could potentially fund RMRI projects.
- It would also be helpful to have the funding database in place when developing a private/foundation funding strategy.
- It would be helpful to have more details on project and landscape needs before developing a private/foundation funding strategy. Having more details on needs would help the Funding Subcommittee create a pipeline of funding requests to help develop projects.
- The Funding Subcommittee should be mindful of how much work they ask of landscape partners and consider how the information that local landscapes provide can lead to on-the-ground results. RMRI-SW continues to refine its funding request, and the Upper South Platte and Upper Arkansas will be bringing their specific asks at their respective orientations.
- The private funding strategy can occur at both the state and local level. The statewide private funding campaign can help raise money for all landscapes, and the local funding campaign can be more tailored to local needs. Local partners would need to identify local needs so that RMRI can develop a funding request to increase capacity. Developing a statewide funding request may be more efficient in the near term.
- Private sector partners need to organize private funding campaigns as state and federal agency representatives cannot participate in raising private dollars.
- The Funding Subcommittee can help support landscapes by having funding information ready through the funding database, identifying and introducing landscape partners to funders, and encouraging funders to prioritize RMRI landscapes, like ReStORE.
- As Scott Woods and Terri Blackmore populate the database, the Funding Subcommittee should connect with partners as funding programs or opportunities that align with their work arise.
- Funding Subcommittee participants can also develop a pitch to encourage funders to develop priorities for RMRI landscapes. Cindy Williams, Tom Spezze, and Patt Dorsey can develop the key messages and pitch for funders to create priorities for RMRI landscapes within their funding opportunities. Tom Spezze will take the lead in organizing that conversation.

GOVERNANCE CHARTER DISCUSSION
Meeting participants discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Funding Subcommittee under the RMRI governance charter. Meeting participants supported the governance charter language, and Cindy Williams can give comments on the governance charter offline.

NEXT STEPS
The Funding Subcommittee will read the meeting summary and determine whether they would like to have another meeting before the next full RMRI meeting on June 23.