

REGIONAL DIALOGUE SESSION (Wed am)
NOTES FROM BOZEMAN-TO-BILLINGS GROUP

Project #1 – Clarkston Subdivision in NW Gallatin County

This is a rural subdivision whose homeowner association has folded so no one is providing services such as road grading, snow plowing, or weed control. Many owners are hostile to the idea of restoring a homeowner association, but are looking for a different approach to sharing services. A few property owners are considering a cooperative for these services, plus the property owners present (Chris and Nevada Thompson) are thinking about installing tiny house pad sites on their property. Other ideas for the subdivision were community gardens, a community center/kitchen, and livestock. Katie Weaver, Park County Extension Agent in Livingston is interested in helping this group and will be taking CDS training as a starting point.

Project #2 – CrossFit Livingston (Park County)

Owners Tad and Nichole Clayton apparently are struggling with their new business (licensed as a CrossFit affiliated gym) and may be open to converting to a cooperative. Meagan Lannan, Job Service Manager in Livingston, suggested this project and is interested in assisting with co-op exploration. Approximately 20 members currently a committed athletes and/or trainers who would possibly invest.

Here is Meagan's assessment of her experience at the Summit:

I gained considerable knowledge about the how and why of a cooperative business model. The opportunity to hear how other rural communities are activating this 'grass roots' collaborative platform to sustain viable goods and services was inspiring! I also have a greater understanding about the diversity of cooperative models/possibilities across the country.

I have connected several Livingston community members to the Montana Cooperative Development Center to research the potential for a cooperative. Due to this training, I had the awareness and confidence to make this referral.

Project #3 – Food Hub System for Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council (Yellowstone County)

Marguerite Jodry is working with the Northern Plains Resource Council and the food hub steering committee to fund a feasibility study for this project. They want to align with the Rocky Fork Food Hub in Red Lodge and possibly with small farmers in Northern Wyoming. This summer they are testing out a CSA for vegetables and special orders for meat. They also are interested in a developing a poultry processing center. There are still some concerns about whether this system would organize as a cooperative or use another business model. They will apply for a federal Local Food Promotion Program grant and a Montana Growth Through Agriculture grant to get started with the studies.

Project #4 – Farmland Purchase Cooperative

This idea was also advanced by Marguerite Jodry and would involve raising funds to purchase farmland specifically for new farm start-ups. The directed CD concept introduced in the Community Investment track might be appropriate here. Investors would invest in low-yield Certificates of Deposit directed at farm land purchases, but structured to allow for rollovers from individual retirement accounts.