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Community Outdoor Recreation Realization Pilot Review and Recommendations

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Community Outdoor Recreation Realization Pilot Review and Recommendations

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Introduction

Outdoor recreation is an important part of all communities, but this idea rings especially true in Montana which has over 33 million acres of public lands for outdoor recreation. About 71,000 Montana residents rely on outdoor recreation for an income, and it brings in \$7.1 billion in consumer spending (Headwaters Economics, 2019). Although it is clear how important outdoor recreation is to Montana for its economy and for residents' way of life, outdoor recreation can vary within each community depending on location and the community's vision and capacity for enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities. The Community Outdoor Recreation Realization (CORR) project was created to "provide guidance to communities throughout Montana to support the planning, vision, and implementation for outdoor recreation" (Montana Access Project, 2022) in hopes to help them reach their outdoor recreation potential.

CORR is a project between the Montana Access Project (MAP), the University of Montana (UM), and funded by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), to create a process for Montana communities to explore their recreation opportunities (Schlegel et al., 2019). This is an eight-step process led by the community to create a vision of recreation, action steps to fulfill the vision, and plan for implementation. The steps are illustrated in Figure 1 below and a detailed description of the steps that were implemented in the pilot communities is in Appendix A.



Step 1: Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build a community stakeholder list ● Host initial community outreach meeting ● Describe CORR and the potential outcomes ● Facilitate community engagement to be incorporated into vision statement
Step 2: Form a Coordinating Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Happens between meetings ● Bring community stakeholders together to form a coordinating team
Step 3: Develop a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate community feedback into a vision statement to guide the CORR process
Step 4: Recreation Asset Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify recreation assets in the community
Step 5: Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gain an understanding of what is already happening in the community ● Identify how CORR can be nested into existing community efforts
Step 6: Identify Opportunities and SWOT Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete a SWOT analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the community
Step 7: Determine Priorities for Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brainstorm potential projects that would help fulfill the CORR vision ● Organize these projects into quick wins, major projects, fill ins, and thankless tasks
Step 8: Take Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin to plan steps to complete prioritized projects

Figure 1: CORR process steps

Having processes like CORR which strive to improve recreation for communities are important for prioritizing outdoor recreation. Having opportunities to recreate can help to build relationships and improve health, both physical and mental (Ahna et al. 2020, American Public

Health Association, 2013, Mullenbach et al. 2021). There are numerous physical and mental health benefits of having accessible green spaces including increased physical activity, stress relief, greater sense of well-being, and an overall strengthened sense of community (American Public Health Association, 2013, Mullenbach et al. 2021). Connecting communities with these benefits strengthens individual health and the health of the community.

Additionally, it is crucial to make sure that recreation areas are catered to the communities themselves. Communities that have people from diverse groups will have varying needs that should be addressed when public spaces are being implemented or changed (Ahna et al. 2020). Diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) should be at the forefront of thought when completing this process. People of all backgrounds should be represented. The CORR process takes this into account, encouraging communities to have representation of all groups in the planning process. Recreation areas should be accessible to all people, especially marginalized communities. This can mean that areas are within walking distance, that they are ADA accessible, or are perceived as safe areas to be in. The CORR process is a great way for communities to prioritize how they want to improve their recreation opportunities by examining the communities' desires and making sure that areas can be safely accessed.

This report evaluates the pilot implementation of the CORR program in Columbia Falls and White Sulphur Springs. A polished toolkit was compiled based on feedback from interviews with pilot community CORR members and from the CORR facilitators. This toolkit makes the CORR process accessible for future use by other Montana communities.

Background

CORR facilitators implemented a pilot of the CORR program with two Montana communities: Columbia Falls and White Sulphur Springs. This test of the CORR process allows for analysis to improve the final process and toolkit to share with the rest of Montana's communities.

Columbia Falls is a small community with a population of 5,651, located in Northwest Montana, adjacent to plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities including Glacier National Park, US National Forest lands, and rivers with recreational value. Columbia Falls has some established outdoor recreation services including guided fishing trips and tours, snowmobile rentals, and guided tours of Glacier National Park. Residents of Columbia Falls take advantage of the natural recreation areas outside of the services intended for tourists. The residents of Columbia Falls enjoy the abundance of trails and other recreation amenities in the area. There is a large presence of public lands and organizations focused on outdoor recreation in this area.

White Sulphur Springs (WSS) is located in central Montana and lies in the heart of the Smith River Valley and Lewis and Clark National Forest. It is surrounded by the Castle, Big Belt, and Little Belt Mountains and is a gateway to the wild and scenic Smith River. WSS is known for hunting and fishing access and is near a scenic byway. The community is rich in history, with European settlers in the area since 1866. The town is named after the white residue left around the thermal hot springs for which the area is known. The Blackfeet, Crow and Sioux tribes that inhabited the area, referred to WSS as the "Valley of Peace." Mining history of the area include ghost towns such as Castle City, which mined silver and housed 2,000 residents including Calamity Jane. Many historic buildings still stand in WSS, including the Castle Museum and carriage house built in the late 1800's. Modern WSS is home to 1,052 people and the economy dominantly consists of agriculture and cattle ranching. WSS also has art trails, the Red Ants Pants Festival, snowmobiling, skiing and snowboarding at the Showdown Ski area, and cross-country skiing recreation opportunities in the nearby mountains.

Methods

The goal of this research was to create a toolkit that can be easily accessed and utilized by a variety of communities in Montana. CORR facilitators connected researchers with several members from each pilot community that were part of the community's coordinating team. Interviews were conducted with the purpose of allowing researchers to gather feedback from CORR facilitators and community members on the process. The input of these individuals was used to refine the CORR process so other Montana communities can easily use CORR on their own. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and/or in-person with interviewees consenting to voice recordings of the interview. The recordings and interviewee answers were kept anonymous to avoid bias when compiling the toolkit and to ensure the interviewees felt safe to give true feedback.

Interview questions for CORR members were created with the intent of gaining more insight into how they perceived each CORR step and the process overall. Researchers created an initial set of interview questions and consulted with CORR facilitators to produce a finalized set of questions. The questions for CORR community members are shown in Figure 2. Questions were not asked about CORR Step 5 as it was not a facilitated step.

CORR facilitators assisted the pilot communities through the CORR process which gives them a different perspective than the community members. The interview questions designed for these participants were different from the questions for the community members and are shown in Figure 3. The information gathered from both sets of interviews allowed researchers to gather information to improve the toolkit.

After all interviews were conducted with both the CORR members and facilitators, all responses were transcribed and combined in a single document organized by interview question. A qualitative analysis was conducted to find common themes and any relationships between responses. The results from this process were then used to inform recommendations and compile a suggested comprehensive toolkit.

Community Member CORR Interview Questions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything in the process you would change? Did you need more support to work through the steps in the process? 2. What kind of support would be most helpful? (Examples from other communities, checklists, mentors, etc.?) 3. Which step did you find the most challenging? Why? 	
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have enough community involvement? • How do you think this could have been done more effectively?
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have concerns about the time commitment and workload of being part of the coordinating team? • Do you feel as though your coordinating team accurately reflects your community as a whole? Why or why not?
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about forming a vision statement? • What kind of support would be useful if you were creating a vision statement without guidance from the facilitators? Would examples be helpful?
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the mapping activity helpful to the process?
Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn from the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) activity? Did you find it helpful to the process?
Step 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about identifying priorities for action? Was it difficult to prioritize projects?
Step 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which part of action planning was the most difficult? • What questions would help you get to your action plan? • What resources would be most helpful?

Figure 2: Member interview questions

CORR Facilitator Interview Questions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything in the process you would change? 2. What kind of support do you think would be most helpful for communities? (Examples from other communities, checklists, mentors, etc.?) 3. Which step did you think the communities had the hardest time with? Why? 4. Do you think it is realistic to ask communities to do this process on their own? 	
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have enough community involvement? Was there appropriate representation of each community? If not, how can we improve this?
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about forming the coordinating team?
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of support would be useful for communities when forming a vision statement without guidance from the CORR team? Could you be available to help communities who tried to start this process on their own? • What would be your advice for communities when handling conflicting visions?
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the mapping activity helpful to the process? What were the challenges of this activity? • What would be helpful for doing this activity more effectively?
Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was good or bad in the SWOT activity? How can we make this process clearer for communities?
Step 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be helpful for doing this activity more effectively? Is it realistic to hope that communities do this on their own?
Step 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions should communities ask themselves to complete their action plan to assure that it is achievable? • What resources would you recommend these communities use?

Figure 3: CORR facilitator interview questions

Results

The results of the interviews are included below. Notes from interviewers are recorded. Direct quotes from interviewees are included in quotation marks. Each question was analyzed for themes of response and summarized.

General Questions

Is there anything in the process you would change? Did you need more support to work through the steps in the process?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Trying to coordinate the team for meetings was difficult.
- The time frame should be changed to have more frequent meetings about a month apart.
- “The process isn’t done yet, even though it's been over a year”
 - The process has been very good, it just has taken so long; moving the process along at a speedier rate would be helpful. It’s difficult to keep people excited and motivated.
- There needs to be a clear final goal for the plan and how it fits into the community.
- A schedule or calendar would be helpful to hand out to stakeholders and the members so they can visualize the timeline and time commitment of participation.
- The toolkit will be a really valuable resource to have when this process is over.
- There was enough support for every step except step 8, the action plan.

Columbia Falls:

- All of this stuff takes work, but the process needs to consolidate time to keep interest and keep people engaged.
- A timeline would be helpful so that people know what they are getting into.
 - Deliverables need to happen in a time period where people still feel like they’re involved.
- No changes, “I love the process”.
- It has been worth the time put in.
- Less of a gap in each step and between meetings, good model.

- Step 8 will be very important- “how do we actually move things forward”.
- “I am having trouble understanding whether I am speaking on behalf of myself or my employer, MTFWP. I understand that I was initially included because I manage recreation sites for FWP in the Columbia Falls area but I am also a resident of Columbia Falls and have my own personal opinions that don’t necessarily always align with FWP. Just an observation.”

Facilitators:

- The timeline needs to be condensed.
- There should be built-in space for internal reflection.
- More formal check-ins between facilitators and the community about the process so as to avoid getting lost in the content.
- In-person meetings were most productive for this process.

Summary: There is a need for a more formal and condensed timeline for this process. The meetings need to be closer together so not as much time is wasted in meetings in reviewing the content from the previous meeting. Since the coordinating team is voluntary, it is important that the timeline can allow members to plan in advance and not require a large amount of capacity. Part of this step could include when meetings are, how long each meeting is, what is expected at each meeting, and how long the CORR process is going to take in general. Community members expressed interest in a toolkit including background, examples, and resources for communities to rely on through this process.

What kind of support would be most helpful? (Examples from other communities, checklists, experts, mentors, etc.?)

White Sulphur Springs:

- It’s difficult if there is a town that has never gone through a formal planning process.
 - If you're going to give a toolkit to someone who doesn't know how to use the tools, they won't see the value in it.
- A facilitator may be necessary to begin the process.

- Communities may need someone who is on call to help with the process and then to help with little technical things along the way.

Columbia Falls:

- Examples from other communities would be helpful.
 - Broad vs narrow interpretation of the process.
 - Communities of similar sizes.
 - Who actually needs to be at the table depending on the selected scope.

Facilitators:

- There should be guides for each step.
- Mentors should be available for when people get stuck.
- The largest need for support is in the action step and actually getting projects done.
- There could be checklists to facilitate the steps.
- Before each meeting, someone should send a review of what has been completed and what the agenda is for the next meeting.
- There should be assignments outside of meetings. These don't have to be extensive, but keep people thinking about the process and keep the meetings productive.

Summary: Having a tool kit going over each step with examples and resources will be helpful for communities to follow along with during the process. The communities also saw that there may be a need for a facilitator or mentor during the CORR process, to keep everything up to date, organized, and moving. There could also be support from MAP and UM throughout the process, either as a facilitator or as a resource to contact if needed.

Which step did you find the most challenging? Why?

White Sulphur Springs:

- The facilitators made each step easy and kept the group focused and on-track.
- The last step is the most difficult. It takes a lot of time, and we ran out of time to complete our action plan.

- The perception of what planning should be for a park and what our group did was so disconnected.

Columbia Falls:

- The initial brainstorming was the most challenging—none of the information was bad, but too much information runs the risk of going astray.
 - Narrowing the scope of brainstorming at the end of the meeting.
 - There were some moments where there were frustrations because there wasn't enough time.
- Step 8 will be most challenging.
- All steps are very fluid.
- All other steps were very well done, and the interviewees learned a lot.

Facilitators:

- The mapping step can be difficult because it can require computer and mapping skills.
- The action step can be difficult. The communities must identify WHO will get it done and how/with what resources.
- Step 7, ranking priorities for action was difficult. We should create a process for reaching a top 3 for the group.
- Throughout the process, the community needs to remember to go back to vision-pause and think through this - it's the foundation for the whole process.

Summary: The communities found that Steps 4, 7, and 8 were the most difficult to navigate. For Step 4, the community stated that the brainstorming aspect was challenging; there was a wealth of information, but that means it runs the risk of the whole process going astray. Step 7/8 was difficult for the communities because planning the action items felt out of reach or overwhelming. Both communities also stated that the lack of time was a huge constraint in getting the steps done. The facilitators also found the same steps difficult but added some different insights. Facilitators pointed out that Step 4 could be difficult for some communities because it may require some computer or mapping skills depending on what the community would like to achieve in this step. For Step 7/8, the facilitators found that ranking the priorities was difficult and suggested that there be a set process for determining the community's top three

action items. Facilitators also suggested that communities continuously go back to their vision statement as it is the foundation of this whole process.

Do you think it is realistic to ask communities to do this process on their own?

Facilitators:

- This process was adapted from something the Forest Service does called Community Wildfire Protection Planning, where the community creates their own plan and funding is available for those projects. It is community led and prioritized. The community uses a template and a dedicated facilitator so the process stays the same between communities.
- CORR diverges from this idea because there is no dedicated funding.
- A community must figure out WHO is going to lead the process. It does not have to be an expert - someone who wants to do it and will do it, and is motivated, dedicated, and passionate.
- Some communities will have this person, some will not.
- Realistically, communities can do it on their own, but help is always valuable.
- There is a spectrum of resources and expertise available in communities.

Summary: The inspiration for CORR was adapted from a Forest Service program where a community creates, plans, and leads a planning process. This program provides communities with a planning template, a dedicated facilitator, and funding. Where CORR diverges from this program is that CORR does not have a dedicated facilitator or funding, which are seemingly the most important and wanted by the pilot communities. Since these two things are not provided, the CORR facilitators emphasized the importance of communities finding someone to lead the process. This person does not have to be an expert, but rather they must be motivated, dedicated, and passionate to help with this process. CORR facilitators recognized that some communities will have this motivated person, and some will not. Realistically, communities can do this process on their own, but help in the form of a facilitator, resources, and expert input is always valuable.

Step 1 - Community Engagement

Did you have enough community involvement?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Thought we had a good mix of community members who were on the same page.
- Good initial turnout. Interviewee wished that there was some sort of recreation expert to guide the group
- “Not done yet”
- If the community didn't want to be involved, there wasn't much we could do about it.
- Once we got the actual stakeholder team together, we had a solid/committed team.
 - CORR facilitators were initially worried about the high schoolers participating but it worked out well.
- Avenues of outreach
 - Postcards
 - A lot of the people in this area who would want to be involved in this process does not necessarily use email
 - Facebook and news articles
 - They didn't ask the group which the avenue of communication were most successful
 - If they had to guess which were most effective for them, word of mouth and postcards

Columbia Falls:

- I think so
 - Sandwiched between COVID–felt drawn out
 - If the same scoping period, it would've been different/not as long
 - There also would've been more people interested if the process happened now
 - Community involvement over the past four years has increased

- Yes, if too many people there not productive, diverse range of stakeholders, would be nice to have more local community members

Facilitators:

- White Sulphur Springs took longer to get people recruited- but overall good representation, bigger group, included different group within community
- Columbia Falls - more agencies there to get involved, and surrounding area rep there, had less of “who is the community”
- Difficult coming in as outsiders, difficult thing to communicate, we never know if this is the true representation, if community doing this on their own this would work better
- Only did one outreach, maybe give more time to get this info out, give people more of a chance to participate

Summary: This first step is crucial to this project and can have a huge effect on the project’s outcomes and overall success. It is difficult coming in as a facilitator in this step because they wouldn't know what a true representation of the community would look like. This step relies heavily on community outreach and communication to get people involved. There needs to be effort to invite and encourage agency representatives from the community and local community members both to get involved. Another factor in this step is how to get the word out. There needs to be adequate time provided for people to hear about this project and decide if they can get involved. Reaching out to the community members via email, newsletters, postcards, and social media is crucial. Another important aspect to this is the meeting time and place. It is important that meetings are at a reasonable time, taking into consideration work schedules, families, and transportation. Making sure the meeting is accessible to all and welcoming.

How do you think this could have been done more effectively?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Small town so they did the best they could. newspapers, posters, postcards, reaching out to the school system, social media.
- The first meeting was a lot of “come and join us” and offer food
 - 25 people, good size for White Sulphur

Columbia Falls:

- Growth policy – mailers, email <1%
- Different for this, word of mouth
- People in this community don't want to jump on zoom
- Covid made this harder, more meetings or not as much time between steps, timing was a big thing
- Confusion for agency members about who they were representing during the CORR process

Summary: To make this step easier, there needs to be effort reaching out to community members in many different forms. These can include postcards, posters, newsletters, newspapers, social media, word-of-mouth, and email. It is important to remember that each community is different and reaching out in more than 1 or 2 ways can bring in a more diverse group.

Step 2 - Forming a Coordinating Team

Do you have concerns about the time commitment and workload of being part of the Coordinating Team? Did the actual time commitment match your expectations?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Clear on how long it was going to take, took a long time to get the first meeting set up. would have been more effective if it was closer together. Long time between meetings, people tended to forget the material covered in previous meetings.
- Time commitment, yes. Workload, no.
- Thought that they could have done better on this part. Feels like they lost people due to how long the process took. It was hard to get back in the mindset of participating after long breaks.

Columbia Falls:

- It was so new! We didn't entirely know what the deliverable or time consumption would be.

- Everyone was excited to be part of something and willing to do it because they were excited.
- Depends on who you talk to for the time commitment aspect.
 - With the large gaps of time, it puts things on the back burner.
- The level of commitment needs to be clear and concise.
- More meetings, need to happen closer together, time well spent, overall meetings were good and flow was good!

Summary: Overall, the timeline seemed prolonged and caused some loss of participation. The workload was manageable for most that were able to attend regularly. The time frame of the meetings and the enthusiasm brought to them is critical. Participants start out excited and want to do something but lose some people due to the time gaps between meetings. It would help to keep that energy persisting using engaging content, close together meetings, and finding ways to help keep the morale up for them to keep attending. Both communities expressed that the workload was not too much and very easy to keep up with.

Do you feel as though your coordinating team accurately reflects your community as a whole? Why or why not?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Yes. They did a good job of putting the info together.
- Yes, also included high school students
- No, wish they had more input from the senior community (75+)
- They had a good mix of people who provided recreation services and those who used recreation services
- Had an initial good committee that reflected the community, but it dwindled overtime. There was poor retention.

Columbia Falls:

- One crowd that is hard to listen to is the motor crowd—try to engage the group, but it's hard to nail down specifically.
 - They are out there, but it is not very organized.

- You don't want to open the room to everyone, but rather people who can add something to the conversation (you don't want people who say things just to say things).

Facilitators

- Hard to get people to commit because it's a long process.
- Same people who participate in everything else.
- People worried about this not actually getting done or getting used.
- Provided roles and responsibilities to the team, that also shows the time commitment.

Summary: WSS felt as though their community was well represented. The feedback from CF was different from WSS. They felt as though they had less community representation. It is important to have a wide range of age groups to offer their input. It would help to be able to contact these people through phone calls, in person, or have other community members bring them the information after meetings to get their views and how they feel about the planning happening. Having meetings closer together was a solution both communities had expressed to keep participation high.

Step 3 - Develop a Shared Vision

What did you learn about your community's ideas from forming a vision statement?

White Sulphur Springs:

- It was a necessary process. They almost had the statement to begin with, the community agreed on most of what they wanted.
- As the process happens, they need to identify who has the strongest voice and not give so much credence to one person's input.
- The vision turned out okay in the end, but they didn't get as much input from the general community because of one strong voice
- Thought that it was a good exercise. Ideas that they had not thought of before were brought to the table during this process

Columbia Falls:

- When you get people coming from different backgrounds from your community, it can get tricky
 - Columbia Falls is a community that has a heavy influence of visitors/tourists, at end of day its home to families—ideal runs strong (value and connectivity)
 - Usually money is the main focus, but for Columbia Falls, it's not, because they have tourism money coming into the community already
- The people all have common goals, how to get there was how the vision was developed
- Discussion of how recreation, community, and health are all connected

Summary: This is an important step of the process to bring differing perspectives from the community together. Starting with this process allows people to think about what the process could do for their community. However, the process of creating a vision statement takes some brainstorming and wordsmithing that can distract from the goal and purpose behind having a vision statement. During this step, facilitators must ensure that each person has room to participate and stay away from one voice overpowering the group.

What kind of support would be useful for communities when forming a vision statement without guidance? Could facilitators be available to help communities who tried to start this process on their own, if necessary?

Facilitators:

- Resources provided should include a definition of a vision and examples.
- Information could be included of how to form a vision statement: common themes come out of community engagement meeting and are synthesized into a vision statement
- Communities need to think bigger picture with the vision statement
- Every step of the CORR process needs to go back to the vision statement. If the vision step could be integrated into each step this would help

- This step should start as a brainstorm activity- then turn this information into a vision statement

Summary: This process is possible without a facilitator, but skills, abilities, and motivation vary within communities. Resources for successful completion would include a definition of a vision statement and examples. This step could also include a list of brainstorming questions or topics to think about. During this step, guidance should be provided as to why a vision statement is important and how to use it throughout the CORR process.

What would your advice be for communities when handling conflicting visions?

Facilitators:

- Spend more time talking about it, anticipate that there will be conflict, have a plan B to mediate.
- Find common ground. This helps everyone move forward a little step at a time
- Create opportunities for community members to meet outside of CORR meetings to allow them to humanize each other
- Don't disregard differing perspectives and opinions—they add value and more accurately represent the whole community.

Summary: Conflict can arise when parties have different ideas about their communities. In this case, conflict is not bad. It is important that differing perspectives be voiced during this process to accurately represent the community as a whole. If needed, provide space outside of business-oriented meetings to allow members to get to know each other. In CORR meetings, work to find common ground and build trust and relationships.

What kind of support would be useful if you were creating a vision statement without guidance from the CORR team? Would examples be helpful?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Their support was definitely needed for an easier process.
- Some communities may not have people with the skills to go through this kind of process

- Examples would be helpful, as well as more direction and guidance on what a vision statement should look like and reasons on why one needs to be developed.
- More exercises that lead up to creating the vision statement, like making word clouds, exercises that would prioritize values, and more.
- Having a facilitator was helpful to move the group past this step instead of having the group continually struggle.

Columbia Falls:

- A whole strategic planning process like this still requires a facilitator even if you could do it yourselves. Having someone independent from the process and the community is very valuable
- Initial process needs a facilitator—if not, the process can blow up because personal opinions can halt it
- Examples of vision statements
- Give the structure of what a statement should have

Summary: The entirety of the CORR process would be easier and go more smoothly with a facilitator. Communities have differing levels of skill, ability, and motivation for a process like this. Facilitators keep the process moving forward. For the vision statement step, it would be helpful to have small tasks leading to the culmination of a vision statement like brainstorming activities. Examples are also helpful for creation of the final vision statement.

Step 4 - Recreation Asset Mapping

How was the mapping activity helpful to the process?

White Sulphur Springs:

- It was helpful. It gave them a clear picture of what they needed to do and wanted to do.
- Discussing what is out there was good information
 - “I don’t think it’s been officially published or posted”
 - “It’s not useable”
- Stated that it is unclear as to WHY this step was included

- Is it for the community or for the tourists?
- Physical maps or signs would be more useful to tourists/the public than an online map
- Maintenance
 - They have a person who can make the map
 - They don't know who is going to upkeep it; if there are any updates in the future, who takes care of that then?
- This step may be interpreted as a little unclear
- This went well but it fell flat because they did not have paper copies. Interviewee felt like only having digital versions left out some individuals and thought that having the paper map could be more effective.

Columbia Falls:

- Beneficial because what we consider recreation amenities can be very different
- One risk they ran into was that they got a little diluted
 - How big? How many?
 - “Are they really Columbia Falls?”
 - Good question to ask is to identify what the community “bubble” is—set parameters before mapping
 - By having a big unregulated bubble, it essentially becomes useless
- Very helpful, some overlap in ideas, but other new/different ideas came to the table, helpful having diverse stakeholders

Facilitators:

- Figure out how big we want the map
- Harder step to get done on their own - paper map
- Is the map the main goal? Or is map a tool for you to see community assets in outdoor recreation
- Could just show a google map and have a discussion on this and make a list of the assets in community
- Can this step be more simple
- Just used the maps in this step – brainstorming tool to narrow scope

- This could be just hand drawn maps!

Summary: While this seemed like a helpful process to go through, the communities overall faced a variety of challenges. Having the necessary technology and skills to make the maps would be an initial barrier but being able to narrow the scope on what assets are specific to the community and being able to utilize the map as tools could prove to be even greater challenges. There are two different directions this step could go in. It could either be simplified to paper maps and having this be a brainstorming activity that results in a list of community assets. Alternatively, this map, with the technology to do so, could be made into a useful tool used throughout the process. Either way would be helpful to the CORR process but understanding what the point of this step is should be decided upon.

Step 6 - Identify Opportunities and SWOT Analysis

What did you learn from the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) activity? Did you find it to be helpful to the process?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Helpful for the facilitators, less so for the community who already knows their own hurdles.
- It was good to identify strengths and weaknesses
- This process is valuable to creating consensus on what strengths and weaknesses are - brings people with different perspectives on the community together.
- At this point, we recognized that some people don't see the importance of a more formal recreation component
 - Some friction around town about money being spent on developing recreation
- This process helped to conceptualize how strengths and weaknesses will affect the projects they were thinking about

Columbia Falls:

- It was helpful as a whole, a few people in committee have done things like this before.

- Thinking about how this process can help us move forward

Facilitators:

- The communities found it difficult to distinguish between strengths and opportunities and weaknesses and threats.
- This step could be a bit overkill and arbitrary
- The word SWOT is unfamiliar, perhaps we could simplify to strengths and weaknesses
- Recognize that “threats” are out of a community’s control
- This step is meant to begin conversations

Summary: Depending on the experience level of the people in the communities, the term SWOT is unfamiliar. It was also difficult to distinguish between the internal and external elements (strengths vs opportunities and weaknesses vs threats). Perhaps this process could be simplified to identifying a community’s strengths and weaknesses instead. This step is intended to begin conversations and should have more explicit instructions for completion. There also needs to be consideration about the external factors that could be affecting the community. For example, what is happening in their state or region.

Step 7 - Determine Priorities for Action

What did you learn about identifying projects for action (how much impact/effort)? Was it difficult to prioritize projects?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Would have been good to split it up more. We need quick wins to gain support of the community to do the longer ones.
- The pre-established priorities by city officials were not the priorities that the community wants/wanted
 - “There's a conflict between what needs to be done with basic infrastructure and what the community would like to see for recreation offerings”

- Because of how small the final coordinating team was, they felt like they already understood the priorities. They wished that there was a point during this step when they were able to bring in the broader community again to get their input, recognizing that there may be flaws in the project that the team is unaware of
- Follow-up question: Does the parks committee get approval?
 - It gets approved because there is no master plan in place yet
 - ex: safety issues at multiple parks were requested in budget, more equipment—these things never came up in CORR meetings (committee identified projects as opposed to tasks)
 - There is a disconnect between funding for what has to get done and what wants to get done

Columbia Falls:

- Learned that there was an opportunity to increase access in so many areas
 - Connectivity, lots of room for improvement
 - Embracing outdoors is just outside the door
 - Hard, seems easy to attain, but the effort is going for lower hanging fruit leads you to keep pushing back the harder projects
 - Disjointed—how do you make all of these things connected
 - Beneficial to have expertise in this step—people who know how to do grants and such—can help you gain wisdom and prioritize stuff
- “With so many worthy projects it is difficult to identify priorities, especially in a pretty short amount of time. I wasn’t sure how many we were going to select so it was hard to determine where to put my votes.”

Summary: This step can be difficult to get everyone on the same page and to move forward in the project. This is because the team is coming together to make big decisions and taking all projects into consideration. It is important to get opinions from everyone, even if differing, and figure out what would work best. It may be a good idea to start with some ‘easy’ or ‘quick’ priorities then have some larger and more time-consuming ones. By working with the group to achieve some smaller projects first can help motivate and push for the larger projects to get done.

If possible maybe opening this step up to the community as a whole and getting input on their chosen priorities would be helpful.

What would be helpful for doing this activity more effectively? (Determining Priorities for action) Knowing this did get a little out of hand, is it a realistic hope that communities do this on their own?

Facilitators:

- Can change to make more simple
- Tie this back to vision statement
- Gets back to problem about same people doing everything in community involvement
- Not something you want the community to rush through
- Could be difficult for communities to do this on their own if they have never done it and are unfamiliar with the process
- “If they could've done it themselves, they would have already done it themselves”
- Keep list from what was on it in the beginning - don't add more
- Worksheet not the right thing? -kind of threw them off
- Reminder to keep key things in mind (vision statement)
- Only have them pick top 3 priorities
- Guiding aspects to help them prioritize
- Got overwhelmed very fast - in White Sulphur Springs

Summary: It is important that ample time is given to this important step. Plan enough time for them to talk through different projects and ideas. Before starting, remind them of their vision statement and what they said they wanted to see in their community. There needs to be time provided to review the differences between quick wins, major projects, and thankless tasks. This step could be made simpler with a facilitating third party and by only allowing the members to choose three top priorities. The other projects that are not in the top three can stay on the lists and be included in the report but are just things to work on after the top three projects are finished.

Step 8 - Take Action

Which part of action planning was most difficult?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Trying to get grants to do the work on the park. It was helpful to have the form to fill out to know the steps.
- The action items didn't get done with this step because there wasn't enough time.
 - “We just didn't have time to really dig into the weeds and we didn't have the instructions about [how to do that]. So they told us, you know, figure out what the steps are. But they didn't say, if you're developing a park, here's all the steps you need to go through”
 - The problem was that facilitators gave great additional information at the end of the meeting that could have been helpful at the start.
 - The meeting did not start with the steps of what it takes to develop a park.
 - Breaking down the action plan into steps for WSS to follow because they haven't done this kind of planning before compared to CF.
- Maybe some training on how to plan a project would have been useful, or some materials in the toolkit that include how to create a project plan.
 - There is a budget associated with every plan that needs to be addressed before money is even involved.
 - Maybe a list of things to consider for project planning would have been useful? List everyone who could potentially be part of this project and the potential cost of bringing them in (DEQ, DNRC, water rights, etc.)
 - “We don't know what we don't know”
 - “Here's a great plan for a playground, a new playground from zero to opening”
- There wasn't enough time and the lack of varying perspectives were barriers. Is this where we flush out all the details for every project? The end project was most likely pretty poor.

Columbia Falls:

- “Having just selected the priorities and jumped immediately into the action steps, it was hard to collect my thoughts and shift gears to action steps. It's almost like Step 7 and Step 8 could have been separate meetings.”

Summary: While the term “Take Action” may seem simple, it seems this step was the most difficult to work through for the communities. One difficulty communities cited as a barrier in this step was a lack of knowledge on how to start a planning process for their selected action items. A sentiment stated by one member revealed that insufficient time was also a constraint for successfully completing this step. The prospect of acquiring grants and money were a worry for communities as well. Communities suggested structuring the meeting differently, such as picking one action item and working as a large group through all of the steps for the item. This would allow the entire team to understand the depth of the project and what things must be considered for successful planning. Another suggestion communities thought would be useful is to have training of some sort on how to plan a project.

What questions would help you get to your action plan?

White Sulphur Springs:

- Maybe it would've been better to pick one item to work on in a giant group and work through a full example of how to put together an action plan for that item— not splitting into groups.
 - Working through an example would be helpful
 - If we had been able to go through a full example, the group could have done other action plans without as much guidance.

Facilitators:

- Questions to keep in mind: Who, what, when, where, why, and how?
- Low hanging fruit - know that even small projects can be difficult.
- What are the priorities, create a hierarchy & a checklist.
- What matters most is **who**—grants, trained professionals, etc. Who is doing it?
- Broad guiding questions that get to bigger picture will help with this step.
- We had a worksheet – put the steps in and go from there.

Summary: Communities thought working through a full example of how to put together an action plan for one action item would have been helpful. By doing this, the communities could then have an example action plan to reference that is applicable to their unique community. Facilitators reflected and listed a few ideas for communities to keep in mind when working through their action plan, such as: knowing the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the project for each action item, with a specific emphasis on the “who” part. It is especially important that communities figure out who is going to get the work done, whether it is contractors or another source. Facilitators also suggested that communities use broad guiding questions that help direct the meeting to focus on the bigger picture. Another suggestion from facilitators is that communities should establish what the priorities are, create a hierarchy, and a checklist with the help of a worksheet to ensure the gaps or missing pieces are identified.

What resources would be most helpful?

White Sulphur Springs:

- The knowledge of the availability of different grants. The biggest hurdle is funding. We had no money and needed the funding to do anything else. The other hurdle was finding contractors or people to help do the labor work.
- Would an example plan be useful?
 - Absolutely, or even just links to various very good and thorough plans
- Structured matrix table with action, time commitment, finances, etc. was helpful.
- Flushing out details to bring the process full circle.

Summary: Communities found that there were hurdles they were unsure of how to navigate. A few hurdles mentioned by communities were knowing what grants/funding sources were available to them, how to acquire that funding, how to find who (contractors, laborers, volunteers) would be working on the project. Resources the communities said would be helpful were links to examples of thorough plans from other communities so they could see how action plans are structured and what the contents included. Another resource the communities said would be useful was a structured matrix table that includes sections such as the action to be taken, the time commitment, and the associated finances for that action item. This would be

helpful because it would allow the community to flush out all of the details and bring the process full circle.

What resources would you recommend these communities use?

Facilitators:

- Every single one available (other examples from different communities can be intimidating because of how vastly different the funding, plans, level of commitment, and involvement can be).
- An extremely comprehensive list of outdoor recreation funding can be great, but not useful if it isn't applicable
 - “What am I supposed to do with this?”
 - There is a lack of curated information for rural communities.
- There is a lack of coordination – not a lack of information, but rather the right/applicable information.
- Stacks of resources that fit together/work with one another would be best.
 - This can require lots of time & effort & skill to look through resources.
- Grant writing examples/resources, and/or contact points to help (this can also help create connectivity between communities), think of things that create equity.

Summary: Facilitators stated that all resources are recommended for communities to utilize, but that the usefulness of the resource must be accounted for. While resources that are examples from other communities are useful, it can also be discouraging for communities when there are disparities in the amount of funding, commitment, plans, and involvement when comparing it to their own community. Resources must be useful and curated to rural communities, otherwise the resource is virtually useless. An idea that arose from the facilitators was the concept of “sandwiching” resources. This means resources can be mixed and matched, compiled in a manner that is comprehensive and works in conjunction with one another. It was noted that this type of compiling would require a lot of time, effort, and skill to do. Ideally, the sandwiching of resources would allow communities to gain examples/resources, but also would encourage points of contact for help, connectivity, and equity.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Change CORR Steps Order

During this review, researchers determined that the CORR steps need revision. This recommendation includes changing the order of steps and the wording of a few steps. The content of the steps remain the same, but the researchers suggest moving “Information Gathering” to be between “Determine Priorities for Action” and “Take Action”. Figure 6 shows the order of the CORR steps at the time of this review, and Figure 7 shows the suggested final order of steps.

	Current CORR Steps
Step 1	Community Engagement
Step 2	Form a Coordinating Team
Step 3	Develop a Shared Vision
Step 4	Recreation Asset Mapping
Step 5	Information Gathering
Step 6	Identify Opportunities and SWOT Analysis
Step 7	Determine Priorities for Action
Step 8	Take Action

Figure 4: Current CORR Steps

	Suggested CORR Steps
Step 1	Community Engagement
Step 2	Form a Coordinating Team
Step 3	Develop a Shared Vision
Step 4	Recreation Asset Mapping
Step 5	SWOT Analysis
Step 6	Determine Priorities for Action
Step 7	Information Gathering
Step 8	Plan for Action

Figure 5: Suggested CORR Step

This recommendation also includes renaming step 8 from “Take Action” to “Plan for Action”. This change more accurately encompasses the content of this step. It also provides a clear message to communities who may use the CORR process that this is a planning process that prepares them for action. The planning process fits within the suggested timeline, but action

will extend past the formal CORR process. This clarity guards against possible confusion of the outcome of participation in CORR.

An additional step name change is suggested regarding the updated step 5. Researchers suggest renaming this step to “SWOT Analysis”. This focuses this step on the completion of a SWOT analysis, as the next step contains the content of identifying opportunities. Simplifying step 5 allows all community brainstorming activities to be completed in one longer meeting in combination with steps 3 and 4. Step 6 can stand alone and allow brainstorming and prioritization of projects. This change of steps clarifies the order and content of CORR meetings.

Recommendation #2: Define the Timeline

Feedback from the community members focused around tightening and defining the timeline of the CORR process. The researchers suggest that the final toolkit include appendices describing the suggested CORR timeline and sample meeting agendas. The CORR process should be completed within 6-12 months. This would require a more intense time commitment from the committee members on the coordinating team but would allow these people to stay engaged and excited about the process. A suggested version of the documents for this recommendation are included in the toolkit found in Appendix B.

Recommendation #3: Establish a Coordinating Team Leader

Success of the CORR process is dependent on accountability. Whether the process utilizes facilitators or not, researchers recommend that there is a community member chosen to be leader of the coordinating team. This position is key to ensuring action is taken after the planning process ends. This person should have specific duties that ensure the progress of the CORR process for the community is recorded and that assigned actions are completed. Other leadership positions within the coordinating team may also encourage participation and success of the process. These roles could include tasks such as note taking, sending out agendas, and meeting place coordination. These community member leadership positions should exist whether the community uses facilitators or not. Leadership positions give community members ownership over the CORR process and a firm stake in ensuring the process progresses.

Recommendation #4: Suggested CORR Toolkit

Researchers compiled a guide for the CORR process. This guide, located in Appendix B, could serve as a self-contained delivery of CORR, containing all of the resources necessary to

complete the process. Researchers recommend that this guide be reviewed by CORR facilitators for content and resources. Subsequently, this guide should be reviewed by a graphic designer to be made aesthetically pleasing and accessible. The design of this guide is important as the CORR process could be daunting, but design can be key in making it accessible to users.

Another possible delivery of the CORR toolkit is the CORR website. A web developer could create an interactive web version of the toolkit. This could provide an accessible way to view the toolkit, with steps broken down and resources linked. Integrating the toolkit into the existing website would allow site visitors to view the toolkit in a location where they can also ask for help through the “learn more” feature of the website.

Discussion & Implications

The piloting of the CORR process in communities had challenges and limitations that should be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions from the gathered results.

First, the pilot communities received direct guidance from the CORR facilitating team. This report does not include observations or results from communities using CORR without the facilitation. Evaluations of the CORR process are only from two communities. All rural communities are vastly different and additional challenges may emerge in the context of other communities. Communities vary in their experience with project planning and capacity. Even with the CORR toolkit and resources, there may still be barriers for communities. The community itself also has a big impact on this project and whether it is a community that is resistant to change, does not want to attract “outsider tourists”, or does not have many active community members. Due to this process being voluntary, it may be difficult to recruit community members to the team.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant factor in how the CORR process played out in the pilot communities and had impacts on every aspect of this project. The pandemic was detrimental to the initial timeline of CORR, resulting in the process taking several more months to complete compared to what was expected. Because of this, meetings were far less efficient and less frequent as communities and the CORR facilitator team had to spend meetings going over what was previously discussed, which took up valuable meeting time. Community members felt as though the important parts of meetings were then rushed due to this time taken in the beginning. Additionally, community outreach and, specifically, community engagement could have been different had the COVID-19 pandemic not played an influence in this process. Overall, the pandemic is a factor that greatly impacted the results of this review but will likely not affect future communities.

Having professional planning experience, but also the knowledge and resources to complete projects is necessary to the CORR process. Community members will be taken through the time-consuming process of finding applicable, useful resources and applying them to the actual projects. Taking action, even with the proper resources, can be a daunting task for rural communities. Projects also require money that communities are unlikely to have designated for recreation. This requires more research and technical skills necessary for finding grants and applying to them. Additionally, access to stable internet and technology skills are necessities for

not only research, but also for virtual meetings and communication. Many communities, especially rural ones or ones with older individuals, may find that the lack of internet/technology skills will make this process far more difficult.

Conclusion

This report aims to adapt, improve, and refine the CORR process by evaluating interview responses from the two pilot communities and the CORR facilitators. The CORR project was created to provide Montana communities with a framework to plan and implement their community's outdoor recreation potential. Since this is the first implementation of the CORR process in two Montana communities, this report is vital in gaining feedback from participants. This feedback will ultimately inform CORR stakeholders of ways to improve the process before publishing the CORR framework to communities all over Montana.

Through the feedback from interviews with the pilot communities and CORR facilitators, recommendations for the CORR process and a polished CORR toolkit were developed. It should be noted that every community is unique, and these two pilot communities had different experiences with the CORR process. The interview feedback from these communities revealed similar themes about their suggestions for the CORR process. The findings of this report are as follows:

1. Interview results revealed a theme of confusion about the wording and order of the CORR steps. Results indicate the wording of a few of the CORR steps, such as step 8, "Take Action", could be altered for clarity. It was found that the order of the CORR steps should be adjusted as it would make the process easier to work through.
2. Interview results revealed a theme of frustration with the timeline of the CORR process. The pilot communities started the CORR process during the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021, which undoubtedly affected the timeline. This result informed the recommendation for the CORR process to include a defined timeline to set clear time expectations. This lowers the risk of participant frustration and encourages participants to stay engaged for the duration of the process.
3. Interview results revealed a theme of dependence on facilitation. Communities expressed concern that the CORR process would be extremely difficult without a facilitator. This result led to the recommendation of communities establishing a coordinating team member that will be the leader of the CORR process.
4. Interview results revealed a theme that the CORR process was daunting, would be hard to do without a facilitator, and that it would be difficult to do without

resources. These results led researchers to develop a “CORR Toolkit” to support future communities who want to use the CORR framework. This toolkit helps guide communities through the process, provides resources, and is formatted in an approachable manner.

Overall, CORR is full of project planning; it is a long process that requires patience and determination. Coordinating teams may lose interest or motivation and could find themselves with less participation overtime. The community may not support bigger projects due to long timelines, adversity to change, or financial concerns. Projects, especially ones that may be complex with many moving parts, can go through many changes. In reality, some projects may not work out. CORR is intended for smaller, rural communities, who are likely to face barriers when attempting major projects. There can often be a debilitating mindset that only larger communities can develop projects, and rural communities can feel defeated when projects do not work out as intended.

With the help of the CORR Toolkit and informed recommendations, there is substantial hope Montana will see rural communities successfully implement projects and change their communities for the better. Rural communities make up a large part of Montana and cannot be left behind when it comes to developing community intended projects. Accessible recreation opportunities are vital for all communities, making the CORR process worth the time and effort required by communities. As more rural areas in Montana seek to improve their communities by investing their time and effort into planning processes such as CORR, the more interconnected these communities will become with one another, and ultimately, the more connected Montanans will be with each other.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CORR Step Action Details:

Step 1 - Community Engagement

- Community contact begins with building the community stakeholders list. Who should be at the table? Who are the land managers in the area? Municipal recreation providers? Are all age and ability groups represented? Businesses? Existing community groups?
- CORR team (UM) assists in building stakeholder contact list and sends out community meeting invitations via email/mail.
- At community meeting, attendees are given the following brainstorming prompts:
 - Top 5 reasons why outdoor recreation is important to you?
 - What is the overarching vision for outdoor recreation in your community?
 - Define YOUR outdoor recreation area?
 - Where should recreation be limited?
 - What are the outdoor recreation challenges in your community?
 - Where can outdoor recreation be expanded/where do opportunities exist?
- Attendees are asked to self-select if they'd like to be a member of the CORR coordinating team.

Step 2 - Form a Coordinating Team

- If little to no self-selection out of community meetings, CORR team sends follow up email to stakeholder list to recruit. Focus on recruiting community leaders, “movers and shakers”, etc.

Step 3 - Develop a Shared Vision

- Once coordinating team is established, CORR team hosts meeting #1. In meeting #1, the coordinating team is reminded of the outcomes from the stakeholder meeting as prep for crafting a shared vision (organized by general themes, visual as word cloud, stakeholder vision statements).
- CORR team provides building blocks for shared vision:
 - What are the outcomes we're trying to achieve?
 - How do we accomplish this?

- Who is this for?
- What's included?
- Outcomes are central themes and statements agreed upon by the coordinating team (statement refined offline)

Step 4 - Recreation Asset Mapping

- In meeting #1, CORR team presents coordinating team with list of recreation assets identified in stakeholder meeting. What's there? What's missing?? Utilizing mapping tools (ArcGIS or Google Maps), drop pins to present visual of existing assets identified by community.

Step 5 - Information Gathering

- Overall goal is to identify where outcomes from this process can be nested into existing or potential community planning efforts.
 - What plans already exist?
 - What do we want with this information
 - What is missing from these plans?

Step 6 - Identify Opportunities and SWOT Analysis

- In between steps 5 and 6, offline communication may be necessary in order to revise and refine shared vision. In beginning of meeting #2, discuss and approve the shared vision.
- Conduct SWOT analysis exercise:
 - What do you feel are your community's strengths as it relates to recreational amenities and opportunities?
 - What do you feel are your community's weaknesses as it relates to recreational amenities and opportunities?
 - What opportunities exist that could enhance recreational amenities and opportunities in your community?
 - What potential threats exist that could prevent your community from effectively improving recreational amenities and opportunities?

Step 7 - Determine Priorities for Action

- In meeting #2, conduct the following exercise to determine priorities for action (identification of potential projects):
 - Quick wins (high impact, low effort)
 - Major projects (high impact, high efforts)
 - Fill ins (low impact, low effort)
 - Thankless tasks (low impact, high effort)

Step 8 - Take Action

- In meeting #3, revisit priorities for action as a group and determine if anything has changed (projects in progress, projects completed, etc.)
- Introduce priority/project ranking matrix (tailorable and adaptable to shared vision elements)
- Rank priorities for action:
 - Prompt coordinating team to pick top six priorities (projects)
 - From those six, pick top three
 - Determine top three group priorities based on highest # of votes (emphasize that all priorities will be identified in the final plan, top three will receive in-depth action planning).
- Begin action planning:
 - Utilizing action plan template, break coordinating team into groups and have them complete template for two ranked priorities.

Appendix B: Suggested CORR Toolkit:

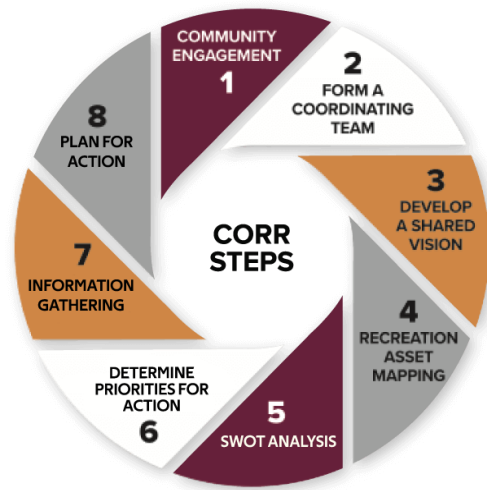
Community Outdoor Recreation Realization Toolkit

What is CORR?

Goal: To provide guidance to communities throughout Montana to support the planning, vision, and implementation for outdoor recreation.

Objectives:

- To enhance community well-being and way of life
- To assist in growth of the outdoor recreation economy through the public and private sector



Who is CORR For?

CORR is for Montana communities seeking to realize their recreation vision. Communities are encouraged to tailor CORR to their specific community needs. The process is encouraged to be inclusive of various partners at the local, state, tribal, regional, and federal levels.

The Process:

CORR is an iterative process available for communities to use to realize their outdoor recreation potential. The process consists of eight steps, each of which has its own directions included in this guide. With the guidance provided here, a community should be able to complete this process in a 6-12 month period.

Contents:

This guide contains an outline of each step of the CORR process with resources and examples for completion. Appendices include example worksheets to complete steps. Appendix A includes an outline of the CORR timeline, and suggestions for meetings content.

Step 1: Community Engagement

Community engagement is a very important step in the CORR process as it influences who is involved with the CORR process. It is important to reach out to stakeholders and local community members that this process will affect. The first CORR meeting should be community engagement. The whole community should be invited to give their input on outdoor recreation in the community and be invited to be part of the CORR coordinating team.

How to get the word out:

- Postcards
- Emails
- Newsletters/Newspaper
- Social Media
- Posters
- Word of mouth

Helpful Considerations:

- Where will the meeting be held?
- How will the room be set up?
- Who is facilitating?
- How can you make people feel welcome/comfortable?

Questions to ask in the Community Engagement Meeting:

- Why is outdoor recreation important to you?
- What is the overarching vision for outdoor recreation in your community?
- Define your outdoor recreation area?
- What are the outdoor recreation challenges in your community?
- Where can outdoor recreation be expanded/where do opportunities exist?

Resource Name	Description	Link
An Overview of Effective Community Engagement Methods	Different types of community engagement methods, with pros and cons.	https://sustainet.com/community-engagement-methods/
Find The Right Room Setup For An Engaging and Successful Conference or Meeting	A guide with examples of room set ups to best fit your community meeting.	https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/room-setup/
Tips and Best Practices for Engaging Your Community	Breaks down the process of engaging the community and tips to help this process go smoothly.	https://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/tools_and_resources_2016/ACS_Engaging_Community_new_blue_reverse.pdf

Engaging Diverse Groups in Building Community Resilience through Stewardship	This resource reviews building community trust and engagement with case study examples.	https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/5d909e4664be4027ac2e4c4be029f533/2021diversegroupsreport-1021.pdf
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Step 2: Forming a Coordinating Team

This step occurs behind the scenes and between meetings. Community members should be invited to be part of the coordinating team if they would like to continue with the CORR process. Reaching out to as many people as possible can help ensure no one is left out. These will be the people who guide the rest of the CORR process.

Helpful Considerations:

- Send reminders of upcoming meetings and keep the key leaders interested and engaged in the process.
- Good candidates to be on the CORR team are people who are driving members of the community and are known for getting projects done.
- A good leader is beneficial to keep other participants engaged in the process. Getting to know community members is a key component to creating a coordinating team.
- Consider selecting a community member to be the leader of the group. This person can keep meetings moving and ensure tasks are completed.
 - Additional roles could be assigned to cover tasks such as taking meeting minutes, sending out agendas, and coordinating a meeting space.
- Make sure the coordinating team is representative of the community.
- Consider what meeting times make being part of the coordinating team accessible to the most people.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Next Levels Coaching	How to Build Community within your Team	https://www.nextlevelcoaching.com/blog/2020/2/18/how-are-you-building-a-community-within-your-team
Social Ladder	Tips for Engagement with the Community	https://socialladderapp.com/blog/community-engagement/
Towns and Trails Toolkit Outdoor Towns Toolkit	Tips for forming your Action Team. The benefits, and essential ingredients to forming a great outdoor team.	https://townsandtrailstoolkit.com/step-1-organize-an-action-team/

Step 3: Develop a Shared Vision

This step lays the foundation for the rest of the CORR process. A vision statement is what future success looks like. Brainstorming exercises reveal a community's values and hopes for recreation. These are combined into a sentence that encompasses the future of recreation in the community. Each subsequent step of the CORR process will return to the vision statement for direction.

What is a vision statement?

- What future success looks like!
- An illustration of what your group could create with all the time and resources in the world

Helpful Considerations:

- What does your community value?
- What did the community say about recreation in the community engagement meeting?
- How does recreation impact your community?

Examples of vision statement

Columbia Falls CORR vision statement:

“To improve the lives of local residents by enhancing connectivity, diversification, and universal access to outdoor recreation opportunities through stewardship of the region’s natural and cultural amenities connecting people, places, and history.”

White Sulphur Springs CORR vision statement:

“To create and enhance economically sustainable recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.”

Resource Name	Description	Link
How to Write a Vision Statement (With Examples, Tips, and Formulas)	Although designed for a business setting, this resource has important prompts to complete the vision-writing process	https://www.cascade.app/blog/write-good-vision-statement
Writing a Vision Statement as a Group	This link walks through the process of brainstorming and writing a vision statement as a group	https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/group-exercises-business-leadership-2765.html

Step 4: Recreation Asset Mapping

Recreation Asset Mapping is a brainstorming activity that creates a map that could be used as a tool throughout the rest of the process. This map will feature your community and the surrounding area, showing each recreation opportunity that your community uses, or would like to use more. This provides a great visual on where resources are, and is an effective brainstorming process, allowing individuals to add their input on various recreation assets.

Helpful Considerations:

- This step will look different for every community and their abilities. Don't let technology be a barrier. Handing out paper maps for people to annotate can be effective in brainstorming.
- Think about where YOU like to go and visit or recreate within your community.
- Determine what the boundaries of the community are. This will help to narrow the scope on what can be considered an asset specific to the community.
- Recognize that people who work for land/resource management agencies will have various perceptions of assets that can be valuable, in addition to individual suggestions.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Guide to Asset Mapping	Made by UCLA, this guide to asset mapping walks through the steps one could take when wanting to create an asset map. It is not specific to recreation, but still provides helpful guidelines. It also includes an example.	http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/documents/tw_cba20.pdf
Guide to Asset Mapping	This is an additional guide that contains an example and lists out several community aspects that can be included. This is not specific to recreation.	https://www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/creative-placemaking/main/creative-placemaking-toolkit/asset-mapping/
Recreation Asset Map Example	This is an example of a recreation asset map from one of the CORR pilot communities, created using "Google My Maps", which is a free program. Directions on how to use this tool are widely available online.	https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?ll=48.33097616722958%2C-114.1974123857617&z=10&mid=1Kh-wof5wHyKrlh9G0p5s1ySmF9ARzV_7

Recreation Asset Map Example	This is another example of a recreation asset map from a pilot community using ArcGIS. This program is ideal for creating maps, but is generally less available.	https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=85a00cc985b64112886e77694de45804
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Step 5: SWOT Analysis

This step connects the brainstorming activities and information gathering that have happened in previous steps. The CORR team will assess the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats when it comes to recreation through a S.W.O.T. Analysis. This tool will be used to help communities assess the feasibility of projects and plan action to fulfill their goals and vision.

What is a SWOT Analysis?

- Analyzes Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Strengths and Weaknesses are internal to your community
 - These are the ones that intuitively make sense - what are you good at vs. what you struggle with
- Opportunities and Threats are external pressures
 - Example of Opportunities: grant programs for recreation, state-led initiatives
 - Example of Threats: weather, fire, loss of nearby recreation assets

Appendix B shows a SWOT Analysis worksheet and an example from White Sulphur Springs

How to use the SWOT analysis

The SWOT Analysis is helpful as a brainstorming tool to determine priorities for action. Refer back to this resource when completing Steps 6-8.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Investopedia: SWOT Analysis	Although designed for a business setting, this resource describes what a SWOT analysis is, how to do it and why, and shows an example.	https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/swot.asp
City of Mill Valley SWOT Document.	An example SWOT analysis completed by a parks and recreation commission	https://cityofmillvalley.granicus.com/DocumentViewer.php?file=cityofmillvalley_9ee19620c7a75c7c2edaf219ff649176.pdf
Gamestorming	SWOT Analysis could be a difficult step to complete. These are tips to keep it fun and engaging for participants.	https://gamestorming.com/swot-analysis/

Step 6: Determine Priorities for Action

By reminding your coordinating team of the vision statement they created for this process, you can confidently move into step 6, determine priorities for action. This step is very important and can take some time. It is recommended that this step falls into its own meeting. Have your CORR coordinating team make a list of projects that would improve outdoor recreation in your community. These can then be categorized based on the amount of effort and impact for the project. These categories include Quick Wins, Major Projects, Fill Ins, and Thankless Tasks. Once a list has been brainstormed, tasks will be prioritized to determine where to start.

Appendix C shows Priorities for Action worksheet that can be used for listing projects in categories

Strategy for prioritizing these projects: Pick a top 3!

- Step 1: List out project ideas for each of the 4 categories listed above
- Step 2: Using colorful stickers, have every on team chose their top 6 projects
- Step 3: Discuss all projects with stickers next to them
- Step 4: Using red stickers have everyone pick their top 3 projects
- Step 5: Determine a team top 3 but seeing what 3 projects have the most red stickers
- Note: You can do this many different ways! This is just an example that was used in pilot communities. Any voting method could work here.

Helpful Considerations:

- We are talking about projects, not programs!
- Narrow down lists by lumping them into common themes.
- Look back at the vision statement!

Resource Name	Description	Link
The Difference Between a Project and a Program	Helps define what a project and program looks like, with examples.	https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2009/05/difference-between-projects-and-programs/
Action Priority Matrix Excel Template	Template to help organize and assign priorities for action.	https://www.someka.net/products/action-priority-matrix-excel-template/

Group Agreement for workshops and meetings	Helps tackle group disagreement and provides advice for group compromise.	https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree#create
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Step 7: Information Gathering

Gathering information is a key bridge between Steps 6 and 8. This process will be completed individually outside of meetings. Assign individuals to gather information related to a specific priority for action. Information to gather may include who, how, steps to complete the project, organizations that need to be involved, and any regulations relevant to the project.

Helpful Considerations:

- It could be helpful to include all gathered information in a shared folder or drive
- Remember to record where you got your information from so it can be referred to later
- Refer to a document's table of contents to avoid reading through unnecessary information
- It is important to note that resources may vary by County and State. Look into your own community's websites and surrounding areas.

Questions for Brainstorming:

- What approvals need to be obtained and from who?
- Are there organizations working on this already?
- What funding sources are available?
- Who will carry out these plans?
- Are there companies in your community who could be helpful?
- Who will be in charge of maintaining these after implementation?
- How will this plan be carried out?
- Are there accessibility concerns? How do you follow ADA guidelines?
- Do public lands around you have management plans that are impactful?

Step 8: Plan for Action

This final step in the CORR process is when your coordinating team comes together to flesh out the details of your prioritized projects. You may use the CORR Action Plan as a guide for each project. This worksheet helps you determine who will be involved, what resources are available or needed, how things will get done, and what a successfully completed project will look like. The steps of the Action Plan worksheet are described below, and an example Action Plan is included. Refer to the appendix for a blank action plan.

Appendix D shows the Example Action Plan and a worksheet

CORR Action Plan Steps

Action: The action is what you want to get done.

- In the example action plan, the project is to implement trail signage at a city owned trail.

Final Goal of Action: The goal of your action item is the *why* of the project. Why was this project prioritized by the group? What will this project accomplish?

- It may be helpful to refer back to your shared vision statement as a reminder for why this project was prioritized in the first place.
- In the example worksheet, the goal was to provide guidance and information.

Action Item: The action items are different from your action. Think of your action items as steps on stairs that lead to your action; action items are the steps you must take to get the project done.

- It can be helpful to start with these two questions to begin creating your action items:
What is already available for this project and who is in charge of that?
- In the example below, it is unknown what signage is currently at the location, so an inventory of existing signage would be a great place to start. In this case, the person in charge of signage at this location is the city.

Who: The “who” of your action item will include any person or organization that may be associated with the project. This step will also include someone from the CORR group who will act as the lead contact for the action item and is responsible for getting the action item done.

- It will be helpful to know what connections and information the CORR group has. “Knowing who knows who” will help this step go smoother. If it isn’t clear who needs to be involved, take time to do some research.
- In the action plan example, Emily Johnson from the CORR group is in charge of completing the first action item, and Theodore Peters is the person Emily needs to contact.

What: This step of the action plan is broken in two parts: what is available already and what is needed. This will help you identify what assets can be used, and what will be necessary to complete the action item.

- It will be helpful to think along the lines of tangible assets (existing budgets, people from agencies, established resources, etc.), as these are what are already available.
- Knowing what is needed to complete an action item is a step closer to the final goal. It often can result in a list of what will be the result of an action item.
- In the action plan example, you can see how the steps are broken into the two steps and how they are often related to each other.

How: The how part of the action plan breaks down the pieces of completing a step. This often includes communication among the coordinating team and partnering organizations/agencies as this is the first step that must be taken to get the ball rolling.

- Refer to “who” will be in charge of the action item. Identify who the lead of the action item can connect with and the best way to go about it.
- In the action plan example, you can see that the “how” for some action items may require preliminary work before completing the other items in this step. Example: It would be useful to find out a cost estimate of a project before scheduling a meeting to discuss funding.

Why: In this step, the reason an action item is being completed should be elaborated. This is a great opportunity to step back and remember why you want a project done, why it is done in this way, and why this action item connects to the final goal of the action.

- It is extremely important to keep your shared vision statement in mind throughout the entire process, especially for this step. Projects should not stray far from the initial goals set out by the community, as they are who will benefit from all this hard work.
- In the action plan example, you can see how all of the “why”s connect to the final goal of the action and to other action item steps.

When: To ensure that the action is completed, it can be helpful to create deadlines for when communication needs to occur. This section can also create timelines for the action as a whole.

- Note that some action items cannot occur until a previous action item is completed, so this “when” section can be flexible. Make sure you know which steps are limited by others.
- It can be helpful to establish communication standards for the progress of each action item. How will leads let the CORR group know the status of an action item? How often should the communication be? Will action item leaders report back to a central source, such as a CORR member or document?
- In the example, you can see how establishing a timeframe on action items sets expectations so the other action items can “gear up” when it’s time.

Helpful Considerations:

- Constantly return to your shared vision statement when planning for your projects.
- We recommend working through the Action Plan with an example project as a group. This will help everyone

understand how to use this worksheet and will help establish the kinds of information and detail the group wants. This will also help if you want to split into smaller groups and work on several project action plans at one time.

- Be sure to plan for the goals set for each project. What does success look like for this project?
- Understand that this final step will take time and patience. This step may require more than one meeting to accomplish.
- Remember, this is a planning *process*—this is not a static process. If something changes or goes a different way than expected, that is okay! This action plan will be a living document that can be revisited and edited to your heart’s desire.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Recreation Toolkit	Put together by the Montana Access Project, this website provides communities with many recreation development resources as well as webinars.	https://mtaccessproject.com/recreation-toolkit/
Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals	This website is a huge list of resources from DEIA to estimating recreation demand and livability to concessions. Also, all of the links on this website are kept up to date!	https://www.recpro.org/technical-resources
Grants.Gov	While the other resources have grant resources, this website is only about grants. Even though this has an emphasis on federal grants, the information is still useful. It has a Grants 101, a community blog, and writing resources/trainings.	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101.html https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/events/
Sports & Recreation Grants	Sports grants & recreation facilities grants to enhance the lives of girls and boys through physical activity and responsible sports, youth sports,	https://www.grantwatch.com/cat/34/sports-and-recreation-grants.html

	wildlife sports, and community sports programs.	
Recreation, Park, and Health Promotion Grant and Program Resources	This website from the Osteoarthritis Action Alliance is a great compiled list of resources related to community facility development.	https://oaaction.unc.edu/recreation-grant-and-program-resources/

Appendices

Appendix A: Suggested Timeline

Appendix B: Example SWOT Analysis and Worksheet

Appendix C: Priorities for Action Grid

Appendix D: Example Action Plan and Worksheet

Appendix A: Suggested CORR Timeline

General length of meetings: 1.5-2 hours
Meeting frequency: Once a month
Project Duration: 6 to 9 months

Refer to Toolkit for details on each step

Before Meeting 1

Community members who are introducing the CORR process will need to organize community engagement, and determine how they can best reach out to the community to recruit members.

Meeting 1: Community Engagement *Step 1*

See Community Engagement step in the CORR Toolkit for details on meetings, and other factors that would be kept in mind when inviting the community to a meeting.

Between Meetings 1 and 2: *Step 2*

Complete step 2, forming a coordinating team.

Meeting 2: *Steps 3, 4, 5*

This meeting can be a combination of steps 3, 4, and 5. These three steps are all crucial to the rest of the process as they provide opportunities for brainstorming, information gathering, and generally learning about everyone's ideas, it would be ideal to have them all in one meeting. This meeting could be lengthier, so try to plan for at least 2 hours, or take two meetings completing these steps.

Meeting 3: Determine Priorities for Action *Step 6*

Complete Step 6, Determine Priorities for Action. See the toolkit for more information.

Between Meetings 3 and 4 *Step 7*

Coordinating team members will complete Step 7, Information Gathering. This step is completed individually as homework.

Meeting 4: Plan for Action *Step 8*

Complete Step 8, Plan for Action. This step is complex and will likely take more than one meeting. We suggest having an initial Plan for Action meeting where coordinating team members walk through the example action plan and create their own action plan. Future meetings will need to occur so the group may continue to plan and be updated. Other meetings may be used to plan for additional projects.

Appendix B: SWOT Analysis Example from White Sulphur Springs

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
<p>What are your community's strengths related to outdoor recreation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Potential</u>: New grant writer, planning for the future and addressing deferred maintenance, strong ideas, big picture thinking, clean natural resources - <u>Community Character</u>: Hard working community members with "Get it Done" attitude, established parks committee, creative talent, willingness to collaborate, welcoming and friendly - <u>Community layout/Location</u>: Tourist location (halfway point), natural beauty, size of community - <u>Local Amenities</u>: New racquet court, hot springs, golf course, brewery 	<p>What are your community's weaknesses related to outdoor recreation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Coordination/Communication</u>: Between different groups - <u>Volunteers/Resources</u>: Volunteer burnout, support inconsistency, funding sources, training/knowledge/risk management - <u>Conditions</u>: Aging infrastructure, dated playground equipment, no ADA accessible parks, decades since any formal recreation program - <u>Community Mindset/Demographics</u>: Some resistance to change, "fix it yourself" mentality, half the population is low income
Opportunities (External)	Threats (External)
<p>What opportunities exist that could enhance recreation in your community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Infrastructure/Community</u>: Scenic areas for expanded recreation opportunities, grow volunteer pool, boost youth involvement, new events, capitalize on summer tourism opportunities - <u>Education/Outreach/Messaging</u>: Centrally located information board/kiosk/online, utilization of visitmeaghercounty.com to advertise community events and opportunities, develop formal communication strategy - <u>Collaboration/Partnerships</u>: Partnerships with Arts Council on music stations/art stations along 	<p>What potential threats exist that could prevent your community from effectively improving recreation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Seasonal unpredictability</u>: weather, wildfire, snow - <u>Community Resistance</u>: Some resistance to or fear of change, "negative nelly's" - <u>Youth Interest</u>: lacking youth interest in getting outside - <u>Access</u>: Lack of transportation options to recreation sites - <u>Politics/Economics</u>: State and federal politics, housing prices, some feel the community is seeing too much or the wrong growth, balance between tourism and housing

<p>walking path, collaborative “group of groups”, coordination between city/county, engage with private landowners/outfitters/local business to build outdoor recreation opportunities</p>	<p>- <u>Capacity</u>: Background checks for volunteers, lacking ability to jump on all opportunities</p>
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SWOT Analysis Worksheet

Use this template to aid in completing the SWOT Analysis in Step 5.

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
What are your community's strengths related to outdoor recreation?	What are your community's weaknesses related to outdoor recreation?
Opportunities (External)	Threats (External)
What opportunities exist that could enhance recreation in your community?	What potential threats exist that could prevent your community from effectively improving recreation?

Appendix C: Priorities for Action Grid

Use this template to help you organize possible projects in Step 6.

Quick Wins (High Impact, Low Effort)	Major Projects (High Impact, High Effort)
Fill Ins (Low Impact, Low Effort)	Thankless Tasks (Low Impact, High Effort)

Appendix D: Example Action Plan

Use this worksheet as an example to create an action plan for your projects in Step 8

CORR Action Plan (Example)						
ACTION: Trail Signage for city owned Silly Park Trail System						
FINAL GOAL OF ACTION: Directional signs along trail to guide users and provide information about the trail and what they can expect						
ACTION ITEM	WHO (Who is going to be the lead? Who needs to be involved?)	WHAT		HOW (What are the steps to get it done?)	WHY (What's the impact? Who does this benefit/serve?)	WHEN (When does this need to happen? Timeline?)
		What's available already?	What is needed?			
Inventory what signs are already there and where signage gaps are	Theodore Peters (City Parks and Recreation dept. employee) Emily Johnson (on coordinating team - will contact Theodore)	Primary map at trailhead Existing inventory from city Existing sign designs	Trail markers Annotated map of trail system with gaps	Contact Theodore for park signage inventory	Identifies how many signs are needed & location Serves city and informs CORR team	Contact Theodore this week Analyze inventory (1-2 weeks)
Find funding (talk to city)	Dawn Smith (City Parks and Recreation dept. employee) Adam Davis (on coordinating team - schedule meeting with Dawn S.)	Existing budget? (will get this info from Dawn S.) Local trail nonprofits who help maintain signs	Inventory of wanted signs (sizes, how many, etc.) Estimated costs of signage for city	Adam D. will research sign costs Adam D. will contact Dawn S. and schedule a meeting	Inform city of cost Do we need to find additional funding?	After inventory assessment has been conducted, Adam. D will schedule a meeting with Dawn. S (≈ 2 weeks)

Sign Design	<p>Emily Johnson (on coordinating team- working with Parks and Recreation dept.)</p> <p>Emily will work with the sign and interp. specialist at Parks and Recreation dept.</p>	Existing sign designs at this park, and at other community parks/trail systems.	<p>Annotated map for sign</p> <p>Coordinating group input on sign design</p> <p>Ensuring that new signs are uniform with existing signs AND are ADA compliant</p>	<p>Emily will contact Parks and Recreation dept. and get put in contact with sign specialist</p> <p>Schedule a meeting with sign specialist</p>	Signs should be visually appealing and uniform in order to be effective	When this happens is dependent on other meetings, allow about a month from this step
Installation and maintenance	<p>Installation contactor recommended by city</p> <p>Volunteer group/nonprofit for maintenance</p>	Volunteers to maintain signs	An agreement between city and volunteer group for sign maintenance	<p>Contractor and city will collaborate for installation</p> <p>Nonprofit/volunteer and city will collaborate for maintenance</p>	Links back to goal - ensure trail is navigable and accessible for users	Following sign production

Action Plan Worksheet

Use this worksheet to create an action plan for your projects in Step 8.

CORR Action Plan						
ACTION:						
GOAL OF ACTION:						
ACTION ITEM	WHO (Who is going to be the lead? Who needs to be involved?)	WHAT		HOW (What are the steps to get it done?)	WHY (What's the impact? Who does this benefit/serve?)	WHEN (When does this need to happen? Timeline?)
		What's available already?	What is needed?			