

Pilot Framework Subcommittee Meeting Notes

Background

The pilot subcommittee met on 16 and 23 April: 1) to determine a process for selecting host counties and their private sector partners; and 2) to establish the scope of the pilots. The tasks in the process we recommend are outlined below. Some of these are sequential, others should be carried out simultaneously.

We had a number of considerations in mind as we defined this process. Most important, we felt that the potential participants are only now beginning to absorb what a pilot would entail. BenNevis's products are acting as the catalysts to start thinking seriously about the implications of electronic real estate recording. People are sorting out all the different scenarios that the task force has discussed in the past and starting to focus on what the practical options actually are.

As a result, everyone still faces a rather steep learning curve and still needs to consult and negotiate with all the people and offices that have to play a role in a pilot. Because of this, we think it imperative to allow for a thorough examination of the issues, in which all the participants should be involved. Everyone who will have to volunteer time, resources and energy to making a pilot work should have sufficient opportunity to understand what that commitment means.

To narrow the field, Beth McNerny sent two email messages to the 21 counties that BenNevis interviewed to see if they would volunteer for the pilots. The counties that responded positively are Anoka, Stearns, Carver, Hennepin, Lyon, Renville, Roseau and Washington. The project budget calls for three pilots, but, as we do not know precisely what the costs of a pilot will be, the subcommittee suggests keeping an open mind for now on the exact number of participants.

The subcommittee would like a "small" (measured in annual volume of filings) county to participate in some fashion, although we recognize that it is particularly difficult for a county with limited resources to commit to a pilot, especially when so many issues are still unclear. Some additional facts, particularly in terms of real costs and benefits, would be persuasive; this suggests that small counties might best take part in a second phase of pilots. In that context, it would be interesting to test a portal, especially as that may help interest smaller counties, but the only practical prospect is that planned by the Association of Minnesota Counties. It is not yet clear whether that will be in operation and available for the pilots.

The subcommittee also determined that Hennepin's participation, as the single largest county in terms of filings, was necessary to attract private sector participants. The costs and benefits of electronic recording are most clear and most pertinent to counties doing a large volume of business. As such, they would be most likely to volunteer and most able to afford to commit the resources to participate. The most likely documents to use would

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be satisfactions and releases, as (relatively) they generate a high volume, have the least impact on offices other than the recorder and have a lower legal profile.

To achieve all this, the work plan schedule needs adjustment. Currently, it has the pilot RFP done by 10 May, but that cannot be completed until the standards are issued, reviewed and approved. The deadline for submission of the standards is 17 May; at best, an RFP could follow several weeks after. We are continuing to collect information for the RFP. Maricopa and Broward Counties have forwarded information about their processes.

The subcommittee also discussed the intent of the RFP. Ideally, the goal of the task force is to facilitate electronic real estate recording in all 87 counties. The RFP should emphasize that the pilot is a step in that direction and that a statewide solution is the ultimate destination, even though only three counties may participate in the pilots.

Whatever the pilots accomplish, then, should be a foundation for further work: to extend electronic recording across the state, to expand the number and types of documents that can be submitted electronically and to work entirely within the framework of the standards established by the task force. The RFP should ask all vendors to address these three issues in their proposals. To help them understand that context, the RFP should include aggregate and/or raw data from the BenNevis surveys of counties.

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Tasks

1. The eight counties will identify and contact their primary private partners. They will report the names of those willing to take part in the pilots to the subcommittee.
2. The counties will review the hardware and software specs for the pilots and report on their infrastructure capacities to the subcommittee.
3. The counties will provide staff from both the business and IT departments to participate in drafting an RFP for the pilots.
4. If, by this point, none of the counties has dropped out of the process, the subcommittee will make a provisional selection of the participants on the basis of at least these two criteria: volume of filing and type of back office system. A mix of both would be ideal.
5. Simultaneously, the subcommittee and the potential participants will evaluate the costs and benefits of the three different levels of electronic recording. This discussion must include the private sector partners, as their willingness to submit electronic records is the necessary first step.
6. The subcommittee will identify which levels are practical, feasible and affordable and make a recommendation to the task force about the optimum match of counties, levels and partners to test in the pilots.
7. Working with the task force, the subcommittee and the potential participants will draft an RFP and have it ready for posting by early June.
8. Following whatever process the task force approves, the subcommittee and participants will select a vendor and begin the pilots.