

Vancouver, Canada
March 2013

GMI2/Doc.4

Mechanisms to Increase Sector Subcommittee Engagement Discussion Paper

I. Purpose

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide an overview of Global Methane Initiative (GMI) subcommittee meeting formats (e.g., co-located, joint or partnership-wide, Internet-based), as well as initiate dialogue regarding future funding opportunities for developing country meeting participants.

II. Meeting Formats

Over the years, the GMI subcommittees have employed a variety of meeting formats to help increase sector engagement.

Conjoined with Larger Conferences

In 2009, the Steering Committee tasked/encouraged the subcommittees to hold meetings in conjunction with a larger, sector-specific conference (e.g., International Solid Waste Association), in hopes that potential subcommittee participants might already be attending the larger event. Since that time, most in-person subcommittee meetings have been held in conjunction with a larger event and/or a GMI sector-specific workshop to attract greater delegate and Project Network participation.

Joint or Multiple-Sector Meetings

In November 2010 (Venice, Italy) and again in July 2012 (Singapore), the Agriculture, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), and Municipal Wastewater Subcommittees held joint or tri-sector meetings based on the premise that combining sectors with “like” or cross-cutting issues (e.g., anaerobic digestion) might encourage and/or increase participation since some delegates represent multiple sectors.

Partnership-Wide Meetings

Since the Initiative’s launch, GMI has periodically held partnership-wide meetings (exclusive of Expos) where all subcommittees have met concurrently. Partnership-wide meetings include: Buenos Aires, Argentina (November 2005); Monterrey, Mexico (January 2009); Mexico City, Mexico (October 2010); and Krakow, Poland (October 2011). Similar to joint or tri-sector meetings, partnership-wide meetings allow delegates that represent more than one sector to attend at least part of multiple subcommittees. All-partnership meetings have been particularly successful in attracting a critical mass of participants to GMI meetings (over 160 participants at Krakow and similar attendance in Monterrey). Additionally, they have provided the host countries with a unique venue to showcase methane reduction activities within their countries (via site tours and case studies) while also offering excellent training and networking opportunities to host country participants.

While all-partnership meetings have been found to be a successful mechanism for garnering additional participation at GMI meetings, they do have significant associated costs and logistical burdens. To date, no host has yet been identified for a next all-partnership meeting in 2014. One option that could reduce logistical burdens on both the ASG and host countries is to pursue an interim strategy for 2014 of holding

three separate sector-specific sessions: (1) a biogas-focused meeting that would include all three sectors of Agriculture, MSW, and Wastewater in a combined forum; (2) coal mines, perhaps in conjunction with an appropriate meeting (e.g., the UNECE Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane); and (3) oil and gas, also linked as appropriate to an existing conference, workshop, or other event of interest to the sector. There would need to be a plan for a Steering Committee meeting in 2014. Holding these meetings in this way in 2014 would enable more time to plan for and find a host for an all-partnership meeting in 2015, though it could potentially incur more burdens for meeting participants.

Web- or Internet-Based Meetings (Webinars)

In recent years, GMI subcommittees have utilized emerging Web-based technology to convene meetings via the Internet. These types of meetings go beyond traditional teleconferences in that participants can log into a website and view/follow along with presentations as the speaker is talking. They can also e-mail or submit questions to the subcommittee chairs and/or speakers in real-time. One of the primary benefits of Web- or Internet-based meetings are that no travel is involved, thereby, reducing costs and the associated carbon footprint. Increased participation is also possible since many “attendees” that might not have been able to set aside several days for an in-person meeting can usually make time for a two- to three-hour virtual meeting. The drawbacks to webinars are their limited ability to allow discussion, conversation, in-depth exchanges and development of interpersonal relationships. They are an excellent mechanism for interim meetings between face to face discussions.

Suggested Next Steps:

- The subcommittees should continue utilizing meeting formats that allow for the greatest number of participants while still achieving the subcommittee’s work.
- The subcommittees should utilize at least one webinar or virtual meeting format per year or more frequently if desired / needed.
- The Steering Committee should consider whether GMI (and the ASG) should work towards an all-partnership meeting in 2014 or later.
- Partners should consider whether they might be interested in hosting a partnership-wide meeting in 2014 or at later dates for future all-Partnership meetings.

III. Funding Assistance Available for Developing Countries

Throughout GMI’s history, there has been a need to provide travel support for participants (e.g., subcommittee co-chairs, delegates, speakers) from developing countries to ensure well-rounded and more robust meetings.

Examples of Travel support

During the initial years of the Partnership, the Japanese New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) supported developing country participation in several coal sector meetings and activities (e.g., 2006 Coal Subcommittee meeting and workshop in Brisbane, Australia). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) also provided travel assistance for select attendees to the 2007 Partnership Expo in Beijing, China.

Environment Canada has provided significant travel support to the Methane Expo 2013 for developing country delegates. Additionally, since CCAC has co-located meetings with the Methane Expo 2013, they have provided travel support for their participants which in some cases overlap with GMI (and all their participants will participate in the Expo).

In the past, the U.S. government has provided travel assistance for GMI meeting attendees from developing countries. There are, however, several limitations on U.S.-supported travel and typically only airfare and/or lodging accommodations can be provided. Moreover, U.S. policy stipulates the fundee should play a key role in the meeting (e.g., serving as subcommittee co-chair or delegate, making a technical presentation).

Future Assistance Opportunities

Many of GMI's developed partner countries are currently conducting methane work in developing countries. The ASG is interested in exploring possible linkages between this ongoing methane work (which may be in support of other development for foreign assistance efforts, or the initiatives under other partnerships such as the CCAC) and GMI activities. By making appropriate connections between related efforts, it could be possible for developed countries to support travel and provide Partners with an opportunity to share their experience(s) at GMI events. In particular, Partners are encouraged to consider how a portion of project development funds might be reserved or allocated to support travel for the recipient country to report results of ongoing methane reduction projects at GMI events. Many methane-related development programs might find their project beneficiaries could receive very cost-efficient and complementary support by participating in GMI activities and events, providing further justification for building travel to and time spent at GMI events into project plans and budgets.

There is also a need for better/more timely communication between Partners and the ASG when countries might have funding available (e.g., grants, other Requests for Quotations or RFQs) that could support developing country study tours and/or meeting participation. Many times, the ASG does not learn of open solicitations until the Steering or Subcommittee meetings and it is often too late to share this information with the broader GMI community. When Partners issue RFQs (particularly developed countries with funds to be used in developing countries), the ASG would welcome the opportunity to post the RFQ or related information on the GMI website and/or link to the Partner's website. If the RFQ might be time sensitive (e.g., have relatively brief response period and/or require quick turn-around), the ASG might also consider sending a broadcast email to the Partnership announcing the availability of funds.

Suggested Next Steps

- Partners are encouraged to inform the ASG as soon as possible when funding might be available so it might be posted on the GMI website and/or shared with the Partnership via broadcast e-mail.

IV. Items for Steering Committee Consideration

- Does the Steering Committee wish to charge Partners with sharing solicitations and/or availability of other funding with the ASG for posting on the GMI website (or sending broadcast email if the information is time-sensitive)?
- Does the Steering Committee wish to encourage developed Partner Countries to support participation of their developing country project partners in subcommittee and other GMI-related meetings (e.g., Expo, partnership-wide) for the purposes of sharing their experiences (i.e., making a presentation)?
- Does the Steering Committee wish to develop a plan for more systematically meeting the GMI's needs to provide travel support to developing countries for their participation in GMI-related meetings?
- Does the Steering Committee wish to task the ASG with organizing a partnership-wide meeting in 2014 or should the ASG pursue a sector-oriented approach in 2014 and a partnership-wide meeting in 2015? Any volunteers to host a partnership-wide meeting in the future (2014 or 2015)?