Montana MARA Model

INVENTION WITH INTENTION

CHAIR OF MARA, REP. LLEW JONES

THRIVING IN A CHANGING WORLD
DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Legislative *non-partisan* staff under the direction of the Modernization and Risk Assessment (MARA) Committee compiled data from across Montana. Once the data was put together, economic, demographic, and financial interactions and trends emerged providing a glimpse at the future.

> MARA's work is important because it puts together tools for legislators, other decision makers, and citizens that use real Montana information to answer questions that we are facing. I believe that the tools MARA assembles, on topics ranging from cost of living data to taxation issues, and health care to education, will be invaluable in making decisions that benefit Montanans.
>
> Senator Janet Ellis, Vice Chair MARA Committee

> Legislators are consistently asked to address problems and challenges. . . MARA is all about making sure well vetted data is readily available to inform legislative decision making.
>
> Representative Llew Jones, Chair MARA Committee

LFD
MONTANA LEGISLATIVE FISCAL DIVISION

To survive the political process legislators often must focus short term. Term limits and election challenges pressure short term planning at the expense of long-term thinking.

• A range of policy problems—from climate change to pension sustainability to skill shortages—confront governments with intertemporal dilemmas: trade-offs between maximizing social welfare in the present and taking care of the future. There is, moreover, substantial variation in the degree to which democratic governments are willing to invest in long-term social goods.

Outlook 2025/2027 versus MARA Model

OUTLOOK

3-5 years out

Relatively detailed

Focused on state general fund

Focused on present law, but also introduces expenditure pressures

Primarily internal LFD work, with relatively little outside input

2040 MARA MODEL

18 years out

Less detail but covers all state, local & schools

Considers more global trends

Considers items that capture demands anticipated with the new economy and other trends

Looped through various committees and stakeholders for input

2040 MARA MODEL

IS

Tool to provide insights to the future

Pinch points

Values in context

Example how big of a problem shortfalls in gas tax be in comparison to shortfall in capacity at the state prison

IS NOT

Not a precise calculation of revenues or costs in the future

Not tell the legislature what it should do

Not a budget

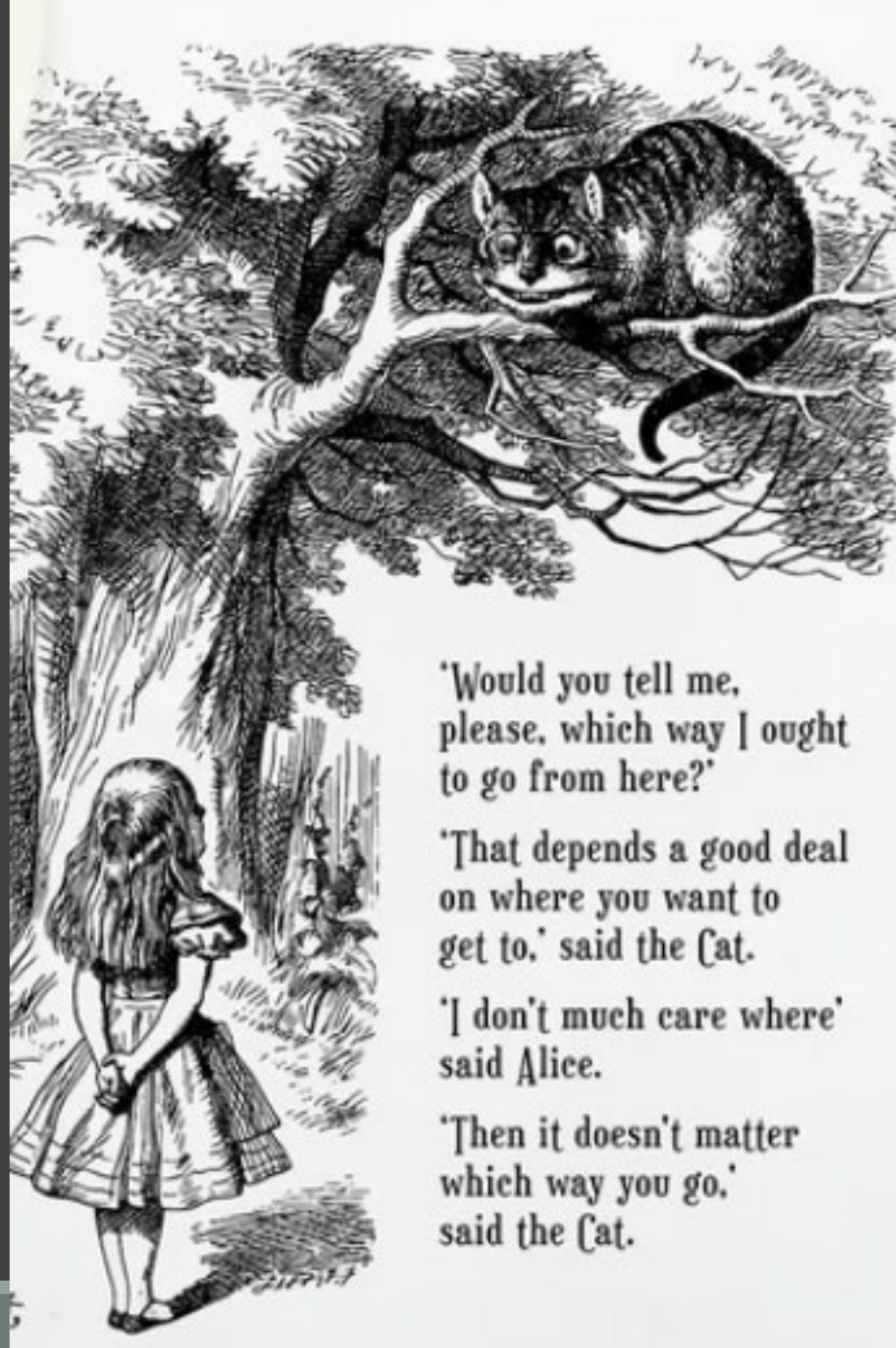# Data Driven by the Legislature

Holistic approach to gathering data and building models from many sources

Choose data sets that are unbiased

Legislators with different perspectives can see the data from different lenses, but the data set remains the same

MARA offers a long-term perspective based upon input from thought leaders in each field as to what the future might hold. This in turn provides insight into what policy choices and pathway might lead to a more successful long-term outcome.

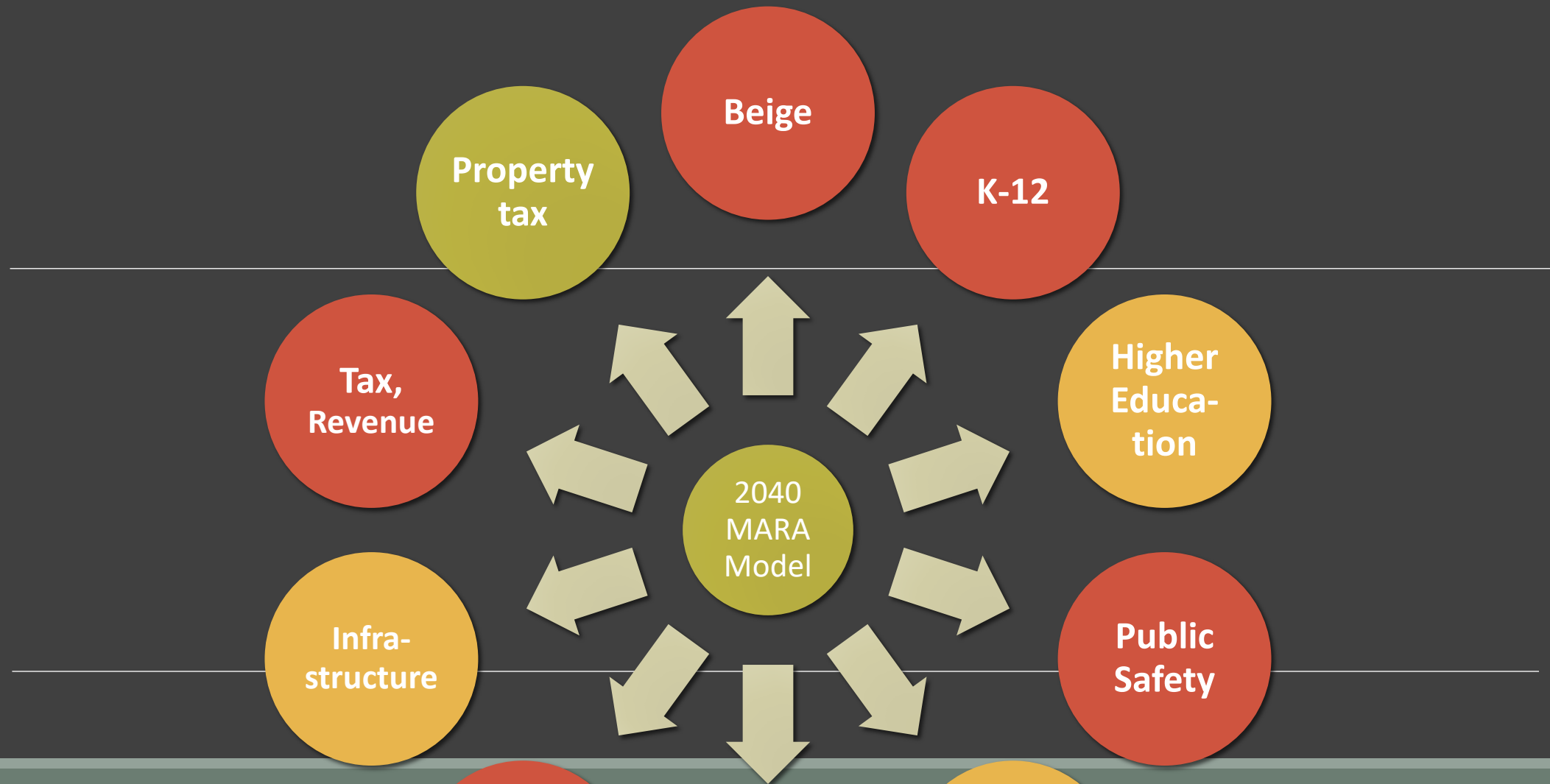'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go.' said the Cat.

Precision is not always possible in long distance decisions, but always generally heading in an informed direction matters.
My analogy is the Sextant.

MODULAR

Website of MARA

https://leg.mt.gov/lfd/mara-data-project/

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