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

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

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