

Proposal to Facilitate Desert Discovery Center Planning

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

Dear Commissioners,

We share this proposal to facilitate Desert Discovery Center planning with you today as a continuation of our long-standing practice of open communication with the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission, Tourism Development Commission and other community partners.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy has long supported the creation of a Desert Discovery Center. As interest in the DDC rekindled in recent years, the Conservancy formed a DDC committee of volunteers, staff members, and board members to think more deeply about the facility and how we might contribute to its development.

In mid-2007, the Conservancy's board accepted a set of objectives for the DDC developed by this committee. These objectives (along with much of the prior research and analysis behind them, including meetings with other constituencies) were shared with the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission, the Tourism Development Commission, and other interested parties. The committee continued working and in late 2007, after more research and an informal public survey, the Conservancy developed and shared with the commissions and others a suggested overall theme and general concept for the DDC.

MSC has continued to think about the DDC, focusing on how to use the work being completed by the consultants hired by the City of Scottsdale as a springboard to continue planning for and ultimately completing the DDC. Once again, we are sharing our thinking publicly with the commissions and others. We believe this proposal combines the best features of a broadly-based steering group, the efficiency and capabilities of a private community-based organization, the focus and expertise of an experienced project leader, and the transparency with which MSC has partnered with the City and the commissions.

As always, we appreciate the comments and observations of all the commissioners.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

Proposal Overview

- Working with the existing private group, additional commissioners from the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and the Tourism Development Commissions, City of Scottsdale representatives, additional community leaders, and additional MSC board and staff members, MSC will assist in the formation of a broadly-based DDC committee. MSC board and staff members will be a minority of the DDC Committee.
- MSC will fund and hire a project director (individual or firm) selected by the DDC Committee to lead DDC planning activities and to develop an implementation plan for the DDC. The project director will work with and lead the DDC Committee.
- MSC will assist the DDC Committee with contracting, hiring, fiscal agency, logistics, and communications support, and provide other appropriate support as requested by the project director and the DDC Committee.
- Since MSC will be the fiscal agency, hiring, and contracting body of record for DDC planning activities, the MSC board legally must retain responsibility for these decisions and any other formal commitments. On such matters, MSC will act on the recommendations of the project director and the DDC Committee. On other matters, the project director and DDC Committee will make and act on their own decisions.
- MSC commits that key decisions will be made in a transparent manner with appropriate community information and input. Examples include the purpose, contents, and size of the DDC and eventual DDC governance and operating structure, etc.
- The project director and the DDC Committee will communicate regularly with the MSPC, the TDC, Scottsdale City Council, and the community.
- This commitment by MSC will last until the DDC can be turned over to an operating entity selected through an independent, objective process.
- The project director and DDC planning activities will be funded through the joint efforts of MSC, the project director, and the DDC Committee. It is not expected that public funds will be required.

Roles and Responsibilities

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

Review and approval of:

- Hiring Recommendations
- Contracts
- Formal Commitments
- Fiscal Agency Matters

Coordination of:

- Fundraising

Support of:

- Logistics
- Outreach
- Communications

Project Management

Project Management Team
(3 or 4 DDC
Committee Members
led by Project Director)

Develop Planning
Process

Lead Planning

Make Recommendations
to DDC Committee

Communicate

DDC Committee

Carla	Art DeCabooter	Bill Eider-Orely
Dan Gruber	Melinda Gulick	Frank Jacobson
Virginia Korte	Linda Millhaven	Tom Morrow
Rachel Sacco	Tom Silverman	Bob Vairo

Additional Community Leaders
Additional MSPC / TDC Commissioners
City of Scottsdale Representatives
MSC Executive Dir. and Board Members (minority)

Policy guidance, input, support, and oversight for
DDC planning activities

Selection of project director

Review and approval of DDC planning process,
timetable, and progress

Selection of consultants

Review and approval of consulting deliverables

Fundraising participation and support

Process and criteria for selecting operating entity



Subcommittees as needed
(i.e. Fundraising, Public Outreach, Exhibit Design)

Supporting Questions and Answers

Q: Why is MSC doing this?

A: MSC's mission focuses entirely on the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. MSC is the City of Scottsdale's primary partner in the Preserve, annually contributing thousands of hours and large amounts of money to support the Preserve. MSC provides educational programs, activities, and resources about the Preserve and the Sonoran Desert to thousands of people every year, and the DDC will be the focal point for education in the Preserve. MSC also has the capabilities and the resources in place today to facilitate DDC planning. It is a natural partnership.

Q: Who will control the planning process?

A: The planning effort will be led by a broadly-based DDC Committee on which MSC board and staff members will be a minority and by a project director who will be selected by the DDC Committee. All major decisions will be made in a transparent manner and in active communication with the public, the two commissions, and City Council. MSC is contributing resources and capabilities to the DDC planning effort. This proposal will get the required DDC planning done in a professional and timely manner.

Q: But won't the MSC board have ultimate control over DDC planning?

A: No. Because of its fiduciary role and the associated legal obligations, the MSC board must approve any formal commitments, contracts, hiring decisions, and fiscal agency activities recommended by the project director and the DDC Committee. Other decisions by the project director and the DDC Committee will not be subject to MSC board approval, although they may be subject to review by the commissions and City Council.

Q: Will MSC govern and operate the DDC?

A: Decisions about governance and the operating entity will be made later, ultimately by the Scottsdale City Council. This proposal is for support of planning and development activities. The process and criteria for making these decisions will be developed by the DDC Committee and the project director. MSC may ask to be considered for a governance or operating role, but the actual selection of a governing body and operating entity will be made in an objective, transparent manner by a neutral body independent of MSC and all other applicants.

Q: If a new entity is needed eventually to govern and operate the DDC, why not form it now?

A: This is an option. It would take time for a new entity to develop bylaws and basic business policies, get 501(c)3 status, hire staff, raise money, etc. MSC already has all necessary capabilities and resources and is willing to share them. MSC can be a bridge to the future time when a new DDC entity may be necessary.