Multidisciplinary Safety Team (MDST) Factors of Success

Final Report
November 2014

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Technical Report Documentation Page

1. Report No. InTrans Project 14-510	2. Government Accession No.	3. Recipient's Catalog No.	
4. Title and Subtitle Multidisciplinary Safety Team (MDST) Factors of Success		**5. Report Date** November 2014	
		6. Performing Organization Code	
7. Author(s) Keith Knapp and Paul Albritton		**8. Performing Organization Report No.** InTrans Project 14-510	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address Institute for Transportation Iowa State University 2711 South Loop Drive, Suite 4700 Ames, IA 50010-8664		**10. Work Unit No. (TRAIS)**	
		11. Contract or Grant No.	
12. Sponsoring Organization Name and Address Iowa Department of Transportation 800 Lincoln Way Ames, IA 50010	Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau 215 E 7th Street, 3rd Floor Des Moines, IA 50319	**13. Type of Report and Period Covered** Final Report	
		14. Sponsoring Agency Code	

15. Supplementary Notes

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16. Abstract

This project included a literature review and summary that focused on subjects related to team building, team/committee member motivational strategies, and tools for effective and efficient committee meetings. It also completed an online survey of multidisciplinary safety team (MDST) members that focused on methods to increase meeting attendance and the identification of factors that make MDSTs successful. The survey had a response rate of about 15 percent. Finally, three small MDST focus groups were held and the participants discussed information similar to that investigated by the online survey. The results of these three activities were similar and complementary. In general, the outcomes of all three tasks show that a well-designed agenda that has items relevant to the meeting attendees is very important. In addition, the literature, online survey, and focus group results identified other characteristics that define a good team or MDST. Some of these characteristics included effective and consistent leadership, members that are allowed to provide input and have an impact, members that are vested in the activities of the group, and a match between the interests of the members and the focus/mission/purpose of the meetings/group. Meetings that are scheduled well in advance of the meeting date, include time for networking, local safety activity discussions, hands-on activities/tasks, and/or some type of educational or informational presentation or activity also appeared to be the most desirable. Lastly, it was shown that MDSTs can thrive and be successful through various means, but the ability to focus on a specific safety issue when the group is first organized was suggested as a benefit that could be of assistance for long-term sustainability.

17. Key Words		18. Distribution Statement	
multidisciplinary safety teams—factors for success		No restrictions.	
19. Security Classification (of this report) Unclassified.	**20. Security Classification (of this page)** Unclassified.	**21. No. of Pages** 35	**22. Price** NA

Form DOT F 1700.7 (8-72)   **Reproduction of completed page authorized**

MULTIDISCIPLINARY SAFETY TEAM (MDST) FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Final Report
November 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Multidisciplinary safety teams (MDSTs) are active throughout Iowa. The objective of the project described in this report was to investigate the factors that help make MDSTs successful. Methods to increase meeting attendance and MDST participation were explored. Three tasks were completed to accomplish the objective of this research project. These tasks included a literature review and summary, an online survey, and three focus groups. The results of these activities are summarized in this report.

The first task completed as part of this project was a review of the literature on team building, team or committee member motivation, and effective/efficient committee meetings. A large amount of material is available on these subjects, and a few resources are described in this report. Overall, it was concluded from the literature review that there are three interacting components that can have positive or negative impacts on committee or team operations. These components include the leader, the team members, and meeting content/facilitation. It was also concluded that the documentation on the three subjects of interest to this project had a number of commonalities related to effective committees/teams and their meetings. These commonalities included the following:

- Well-defined and well-designed agendas (distributed in advance)
- Shared purpose, focus, and/or mission for the team and meetings
- Matching team or committee purpose and member interests
- Allowance and encouragement of input from all team members
- Ability to make decisions and authority to implement
- Use of team members' skills in the completion of challenging tasks
- Effective leadership (e.g., communicate, delegate, listen, facilitate, remove barriers, lead by example)
- Communication that is effective and often
- Acknowledgement of contributions
- Defined outcomes/results and success
- Good interpersonal relationships of team members

The literature reviewed also identified some of the characteristics of the three interacting components noted above. It was shown that strong leaders communicate, organize, delegate, and guide and that members listen, provide input, and complete tasks. In addition, meetings, as noted above, need to be well planned, have a purpose, and be developed through input from all the committee or team members. Overall, it was noted that the most effective teams had a clear purpose/focus/mission, open communication, and a clear understanding of success. It was also important to note that team members were most motivated when the purpose and activities of the group matched their interests.

The second task completed as part of this project was an online survey. The survey link was provided to more than 400 people who were regularly invited to MDST meetings in Iowa. A total of 64 people responded for a response rate of approximately 15 percent. More than 75

percent of the respondents had attended a MDST meeting in the last six months. The survey consisted of six questions. These six questions included the following:

1. When was the last time you attended a MDST meeting?
2. When deciding whether to attend a MDST meeting, what are 2 to 4 of the most important factors that you consider (e.g., date, time of day, length, location, agenda, subjects, attendees, workload, etc.)?
3. Do you have any suggestions to improve the value of MDST meetings?
4. Do you have any suggestions that might increase attendance or involvement in MDSTs?
5. If we scheduled a 2 to 4 hour focus group meeting on the subject of this survey and its answers, would you be interested in being involved/invited? If so, please indicate your name, email, and phone number.
6. Bonus question: Do you have any additional recommendations, suggestions, or comments about MDSTs?

Most of the questions above focused on the factors that influenced meeting attendance and MDST involvement. Overall, it was noted that the word "agenda" was mentioned more than 50 times in the survey results. In fact, the agenda and its relevance appeared to be a determining factor for many respondents when they considered attending a meeting. A diverse meeting agenda (and group of attendees) that focused on local safety issues was most desirable. Other suggestions related to the desirable characteristics of MDSTs and/or their meetings were related to the ability of members to provide input to the agenda, scheduling meetings well in advance, changing the location, and providing an educational opportunity in the meeting agenda. The need for a specific purpose for MDSTs and MDST meetings and a local champion were also noted. The consistency and patterns in the answers to the online survey led to the following list of desirable MDSTs and/or MDST meeting characteristics:

1. Well-defined purpose/focus/mission
2. Well-designed agendas that should include one or more of the following:
   a. Relevance to multiple agencies
   b. Discussion of current/ongoing local safety issues by all agencies
   c. Discussions about or focus on specific safety issue or locations
   d. Evaluation and application activities
   e. Speakers or educational opportunities and/or examples
   f. Focus on local roadways and needs
   g. Input from all the team members
   h. Proper facilitation
3. Effective scheduling of meetings, as follows:
   a. Well in advance of date (e.g., all the dates for a year)
   b. Notification or reminder in advance
   c. Possibly scheduled around other regional meetings
4. Diversity of attendance and invitations (e.g., engineering, education, emergency management, enforcement, planning, towing companies and others, general public)
5. Possible adjustment of location and/or agency lead changes

6. Defined exercises, tasks, or projects that take advantage of MDST member expertise and the activities of all MDSTs in Iowa
7. Statewide program coordination assistance

The third task completed as part of this project was to conduct three MDST focus groups. These focus groups included a discussion of the draft results from the online survey. The attendees were also asked to expand upon the summarized answers and provide new input if they had something to add. Overall, approximately 25 people attended these three focus group meetings. The results from the focus group meetings were similar to those from the literature summary and the online survey. The attendees agreed that scheduling, goals/tasks, diversity, and effective leadership/facilitation were important to MDST and/or MDST meeting success. However, there were also suggestions for a MDST statewide coordinator, leadership conference or meeting, and informational resource (e.g., website). In addition, the importance of MDSTs being locally organized was discussed. Finally, it was also noted that MDSTs can thrive under various scenarios, but having a specific safety issue to address early in their organization can be beneficial and help them thrive as well as expand into other areas of local safety concern. Overall, the sustainability of MDSTs generally appears to be based on good leadership, relevant meetings, and an understanding by the membership that roadway safety can and is impacted by various activities and agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Multidisciplinary safety teams (MDSTs) include a wide range of local and state safety participants from various backgrounds. These teams meet on a regular basis to discuss safety topics, problems, projects, and improvements along local roadways within several regional areas of Iowa. The backgrounds of the members vary and can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Engineering
- Planning
- Law enforcement
- Emergency response
- Education
- Research
- Towing
- Media/marketing
- General public

The background of the members of these groups is generally focused on the resolution of local safety issues through problem identification, countermeasure proposals and implementation, and evaluation. The diversity of the team member backgrounds enables MDSTs to focus on solutions to local safety issues from various viewpoints.

This report describes the tasks completed as part of the MDST assistance and evaluation project. The objectives of this project were to investigate, identify, and document the factors that make a MDST more or less successful. These objectives were accomplished through the completion of the following tasks:

- Summarize a sample of the literature focused on team building, team member motivation, and the characteristics of effective committee meetings
- Create and distribute an online survey and summary of the results
- Schedule and summarize the results of MDST focus group meetings

This report summarizes the results of the activities listed above. It is essential to the development and continuation of effective local MDSTs that there be a consistent multidisciplinary guidance effort that understands, identifies, and appropriately assists and responds to the factors that impact their successful initiation, continued operation, growth, and/or re-establishment (as necessary). The content of this report is intended to assist in that task.

LITERATURE SUMMARY

A search of the literature for guidance on effective team and/or committee building and operations was completed as part of this project. Several documents are summarized below that provided input related to activities that can be used to build volunteer teams (e.g., why people join committees and components to build volunteer teams), motivate team members, and run effective committee meetings (*1, 2, 3, 4, 5*). A summary of the commonalities in the content of these documents is also provided.

Building a Team

Grazier described factors that he believes people consider when joining a team and also what motivates team members (*1*). He noted that all decisions by people tend to be made with a "hope of benefit or the fear of consequence" (*1*). In the case of joining a team, however, the consequences are related to the decision-maker's needs and these, in turn, are the potential motivation (*1*). The nine points that Grazier provided as reasons why people join teams are listed below (*1*). He indicated that people consider the following in making this choice:

- Team purpose
- Focus topic
- Team members
- Authority or decision-making capabilities
- Importance to management
- Reward for participation
- Risk of not participating
- Length of effort
- Personal benefit ("Will I be better off as a result of my participation?") (*1*).

Several of these points are relevant to the effective operation of teams and committees (e.g., MDSTs). More specifically, they impact whether those invited (e.g., potential MDST members) decide to be involved and/or attend meetings. In general, there is a need to have a clear purpose and topic, good team members, the ability to act on decisions, and a good balance between risk and reward, and it is better if the team or committee activities match with the interests of the invited individual.

Burgher also summarized 12 components that he believes should be in place to help build a "great volunteer team" (*2*). These 12 components are listed below with a short description of their meaning. It is believed that some or all of these 12 points may be of value to those starting or restarting MDST committee efforts.

1. Have a work plan. Use the work plan to assign tasks and show the team how the goal will be accomplished. The work plan also documents the purpose of the group.
2. Use effective communication. Communication can be done through various means but needs to occur between the leader and members and among members themselves.

3. Outline clear team objectives and expectations. The objectives and expectations of the group should be documented and the result also noted.
4. Learn how to motivate. Some of the methods to keep team members motivated are described below.
5. Make decisions that are prioritized. Burgher notes, however, that one wants to get input from the team on these decisions (*2*). The collection of input is a good characteristic of leadership and one of the motivation techniques mentioned below.
6. Understand the membership skills. Assign or delegate tasks to the members in the most appropriate manner and recognize that they are volunteers. Also recognize that the guidance needed by volunteers to complete tasks can vary.
7. Define success. Burgher calls this "creating a vision of success" (*2*).
8. Lead by example. Leaders need to act as they expect others to act with respect to the completion of tasks.
9. Provide criticism that assists the members. Constructive criticism to assist in the completion of tasks is often appreciated.
10. Care for the team by being a good listener, helping to solve issues, and resolving conflicts.
11. Facilitate success. Similar to other input, Burgher suggests praising in public and, when needed, criticizing in private, as well as sharing the successes of the committee (*2*).
12. Have fun! This suggestion includes the completion of efforts outside the committee meetings or team activities and is included to form stronger relationships and provide members with a better understanding of each other.

Burger summarized the list of components above by noting that organization and planning in advance of efforts is important and that a continuous assessment of activities throughout the team effort is key (*2*). In addition, he noted that good communication is critical, along with remaining positive and leading by example (*2*). Many of these factors, of course, are also motivating factors to assist in the retention of team members.

The content of three articles about team motivation is described below. Several of the "build a great volunteer" factors above are included (*1, 3, 4*).

Team Member Motivation

It is assumed that motivated team members are more effective and continue to participate for a longer period of time than unmotivated team members. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines having a motive as "something (as a need or desire) that causes a person to act" (*6*). Three articles are summarized below that focus on team motivation (*1, 3, 4*). These articles were written and/or published by Grazier, Bogorad, and the Washington State Technology Transfer or Local Technical Assistance Program (*1, 3, 4*).

Grazier listed and summarized six factors that he believes influence and help sustain team motivation (*1*). These six factors include the following:

1. Clear purpose, focus, and/or mission: Grazier notes that this factor is the number one answer provided to him when he asks people about motivation (*1*). For longer term motivation, this

purpose, focus, or mission must also match member interests. Grazier also indicates that when a team or committee becomes complacent the purpose, focus, and/or mission should be revisited (*1*).

2. Challenging tasks: It has been found that the activities of a team or committee must be challenging but attainable. The challenge can't be too difficult or too easy (*1*). In addition, it is suggested that for ongoing committees (e.g., MDSTs) a periodic challenge can be used to raise the motivation level of the team members (*1*).

3. Good camaraderie: The focus of this discussion by Grazier is the need to consider not only the knowledge and capabilities needed to complete committee tasks, but also the interpersonal relationships that will need to be built. He suggests the completion of activities that help members develop better relationships and an understanding of each other.

4. Responsibility for outcomes: Grazier indicates that providing responsibility for tasks to team members is one motivating factor (*1*). He also notes that an even bigger motivator for team members is having both the responsibility and authority to complete a task (*1*). Grazier warns, however, that if the consequences of not accomplishing a task are too high, it may reduce motivation.

5. Personal and team growth: The next motivating factor listed by Grazier focuses on the need for personal and team growth of the team members (*1*). Members generally want to learn something new through their experience. Grazier suggests asking team members what they want to learn from their participation and adjusting as necessary (*1*).

6. Leadership: Several characteristics of effective leaders are noted by Grazier (*1*). Overall, he notes that a good leader will create an environment for self-motivation by the team (which is better than depending on something else) (*1*). In addition, he indicates that good leaders help others see the "best in themselves" and understand that all the above factors need to be nurtured to create that environment. Lastly, he notes that active team members tend to continue to be motivated if their needs are met through the group in some manner (*1*).

In summary, team member motivation comes from the desire to continue toward completion of a goal (i.e., a purpose). Team members also appear to function at their highest level when the purpose or mission matches their interests, the tasks are challenging but not too challenging, the team members work well together, the team members have responsibility and authority to act on decisions, there is both personal and team growth, and the committee has a good leader (*1*).

The Washington State Department of Transportation and Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) published an article in its newsletter that included "Tips on Team Motivation" (*3*). This one-page article provided a list of suggestions to motivate employees that was part of a larger workshop the agency completed entitled "Motivating Your Team" (*3*). The suggestions were listed under eight categories, and several of these are listed below. Many of these suggestions are relevant to the motivation of committee members in groups like MDSTs.

- Acknowledgement (e.g., thanks, praise, gifts, recognition, feedback, celebrations)
- Inclusion (e.g., develop a vision/theme, share results and information, ask for input, effectively meet with staff)
- Communication (e.g., provide clear expectations, listen, show full attention, respond quickly, foster teamwork)

- Motivation (e.g., match skills and tasks, discuss careers, motivate the person, understand needs)
- Empowerment (e.g., delegate, provide independence, provide the tools and give feedback, foster a positive work environment, provide training)
- Be an example (e.g., get out of your comfort zone, be enthusiastic, believe in yourself, have a purpose)
- Trust (e.g., fair and equal treatment, respect)
- Fun (e.g., provide opportunities) (*3*)

These factors align with some of those suggested in other documents. In addition, these factors generally focus on good communication and allowing people not only to make decisions but also to accomplish them. In turn, it is good to acknowledge accomplishments through various means. As noted in the other documents, team member motivation is easier if it matches the personal interests of the members.

A third article on team motivation was written by Bogorad (*4*). This document had a number of commonalities with those described above. Bogorad described what motivates people and what is needed to successfully motivate people (*4*). He also listed 20 activities or actions that should be implemented to motivate team members and 10 activities or actions that should be stopped if they are occurring (*4*). Bogorad notes that people are motivated when the following occurs:

- All their skills are used (versus underutilization)
- Tasks produce clear results (with even more satisfaction shown when innovation is involved)
- Input is allowed that impacts decisions and approach
- Tasks match member values/beliefs
- There are challenging schedules and tasks (but not too many or too few) (*4*)

Many of the items in the list above are also in the other two documents summarized. However, Bogorad also noted that to successfully motivate team members the leader needs to be in charge, work well within the overall organization for which the committee or team exists, and have the ability to make decisions related to the team (*4*). These characteristics generally focus on conditions that work within a corporate environment. They may not all be relevant to the volunteer conditions that exist with MDSTs. It was concluded by the project team that over half of the 20 activities that Bogorad suggests to leaders or committee chairs to motivate their team members are focused on the corporate environment. The eight suggested actions that appear to translate well into the volunteer situation are listed below:

- Be enthusiastic
- Have team members bring solutions to problems rather than just problems
- Ask for input from team members
- Have team members decide on methods to complete tasks
- Have a "shared meaning" (e.g., purpose, focus, or mission)
- Communicate and explain
- Reward results and positive actions

- Promote the team and its results (*4*)

The similarity of the factors above to those already discussed is clear. The 10 actions that Bogorad listed that he believes should be stopped in order to motivate team members also included several that may be relevant to MDST committee operations. These included the following: complaints about impediments, the allowance of "pessimists, doomsayers, and curmudgeons," censoring of ideas, and telling team members how to complete tasks (*4*). It is clear that not all of what Bogorad described in his article will be relevant to the volunteer membership of MDSTs, but some ideas may be helpful (*4*).

Effective Committee Meetings

The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) has provided guidelines to its membership for effective committee meetings (*5*). These guidelines were adapted from a group called Volunteer Now from Belfast, Ireland (*5*). Some of the information provided in these guidelines may be of value to the operation of MDSTs. The NSGIC guidelines note that meetings are needed to assist with decision-making, reporting, review, problem solving, and discussion (*5*). The council proposes, however, that meeting characteristics like long conversations with no decisions, low attendance, and unbalanced participation can be reduced through several actions. These actions include planning meetings that have the following:

- A clear purpose
- Good leaders
- A decision-making focus (*5*)

In addition, some of the NSGIC suggestions for planning meetings that may be helpful to MDSTs could include organizing the agenda in advance, setting dates in advance, defining a purpose or focus, and agreeing to a meeting agenda (*5*). It is also suggested that any reports or minutes be circulated and/or read before the meeting (*5*). It is noted that a "well-planned agenda should clearly communicate the purpose and objectives of the meeting" (*5*).

The NSGIC guidelines also list some actions that make an effective committee leader or chair before, during, and after the meeting (*5*). Among other things, before the meeting, the leader or chair plans the agenda, including those items brought by other members (*5*). During the meeting, an effective leader or chair guides the meeting discussion, works to meet the objectives of the meeting, follows the agenda, and attempts to address each agenda item (*5*). More specifically, the guidelines indicated that the chair should communicate (e.g., state the objectives of the meeting and each item), control (e.g., set time limits if necessary and keep to the agenda), coax (e.g., ensure full participation and encourage quieter members to provide input), compare (e.g., weigh contributions), clarify (e.g., make sure everyone understands the discussion topic, summarize, and make sure decisions are recorded), make decisions (e.g., make sure proper decisions are made within the larger context), and guide (e.g., guide the meeting, encourage working together, watch the time) (*5*). Finally, at the end of the meeting, the guidelines suggested that the decisions made and the action points should be summarized, the next meeting dates determined, and input

on the next agenda and who needs to do what noted. Meeting minutes will also need to be prepared (*5*).

Summary of Findings

In general, there appear to be three primary interacting components that can have a positive or negative impact on effective committee or team operations. These components include the leader or chairperson, the members, and the meeting content and/or facilitation. Each of these components has particular characteristics when teams and committees and/or their meetings are efficient and effective. The paragraphs above summarize several documents or articles that focused on building committees or teams, motivating team members, and holding effective committee meetings. These documents all include some commonalities that will lead to more effective and efficient committees/teams and/or meetings. Some of these commonalities included the following:

- Well-defined and well-designed agendas (distributed in advance)
- Shared purpose, focus, and/or mission for the team and meetings
- Matching team or committee purpose and member interests
- Allowance and encouragement of input from all team members
- Ability to make decisions and authority to implement
- Use of team members' skills in the completion of challenging tasks
- Effective leadership (e.g., communicate, delegate, listen, facilitate, remove barriers, lead by example)
- Communication that is effective and often
- Acknowledgement of contributions
- Defined outcomes/results and success
- Good interpersonal relationships of team members

Effective teams and committees tend to have similar characteristics that result in the completion of tasks that meet the objective or purpose of the group. Many of these characteristics are discussed and listed in the paragraph above. Strong leaders communicate, organize, delegate, and guide. Members of teams listen, provide input, and complete tasks. Meetings are well planned, have a purpose, and include input from all members. They can be used to discuss task progress, delegate tasks, and plan activities. Effective teams need a clear purpose/focus/mission, open communication, and an understanding of success. The team members are motivated the most when the purpose of the team or committee and the tasks it completes challenge the individuals and match their interests. The literature review results summarized above were also supported by the results from the online survey completed as part of this project and described in the next part of this document.

ONLINE SURVEY AND RESULTS

In August 2014 an online survey was provided to people who had been regularly invited to attend MDST meeting(s). The purpose of the survey was to gather information about the success of MDSTs that might be beneficial to all the teams. The objective was to help investigate, identify, and document the factors that make MDSTs more successful. The survey included six questions.

These questions included the following:

1. When was the last time you attended a MDST meeting?
2. When deciding whether to attend a MDST meeting, what are 2 to 4 of the most important factors that you consider (e.g., date, time of day, length, location, agenda, subjects, attendees, workload, etc.)?
3. Do you have any suggestions to improve the value of MDST meetings?
4. Do you have any suggestions that might increase attendance or involvement in MDSTs?
5. If we scheduled a 2 to 4 hour focus group meeting on the subject of this survey and its answers, would you be interested in being involved/invited? If so, please indicate your name, email, and phone number.
6. Bonus question: Do you have any additional recommendations, suggestions, or comments about MDSTs?

Overall, the survey was sent to approximately 415 people, and a total of 64 responded. This is a response rate of 15.4 percent. The answers to the survey questions are summarized in the following paragraphs. The appendix includes a representative sample of the responses to the open-ended questions asked.

Question 1. When was the last time you attended a MDST meeting?

The first question in the survey asked respondents to indicate when they last attended a MDST meeting. Attendance at meetings is important to the success of MDSTs. This question was answered by all 64 respondents (see Figure 1).
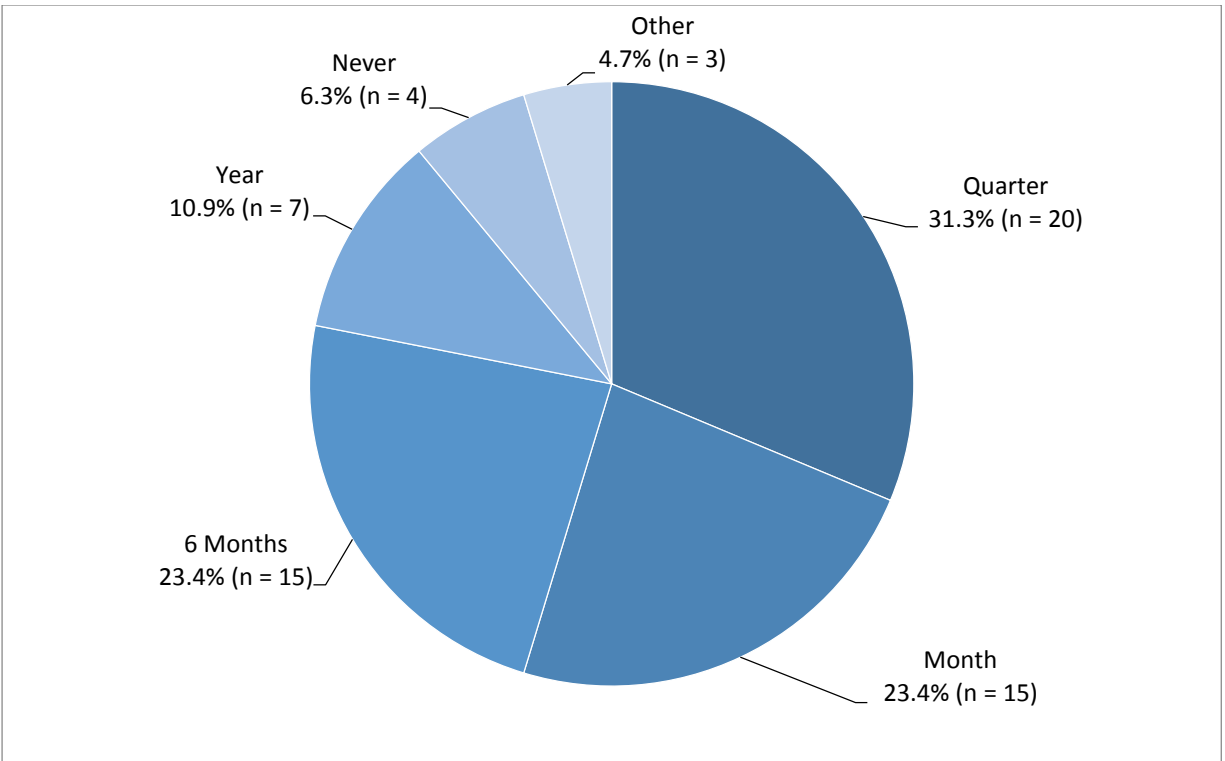
Figure 1. Answers to "When was the last time you attended a MDST meeting?"

More than half of the respondents (55 percent, n = 35) have attended a meeting within the last quarter or month. In addition, 15 respondents (23 percent) had attended a meeting within the last six months. Seven people who answered the survey had attended within the last year, and four had never attended a MDST meeting. It is important to recognize that some MDSTs meet quarterly and others monthly. The majority of the respondents (78 percent, n = 50), however, are active in their MDST and had attended at least one meeting within the last half year. Attendance at these meetings would appear to show a commitment to safety and the mission of the team.

Question 2. When deciding whether to attend a MDST, meeting what are 2 to 4 of the most important factors that you consider (e.g., date, time of day, length, location, agenda, subjects, attendees, workload, etc.)?

The second question in the survey was intended to investigate the factors that respondents considered when they decided whether to attend a meeting (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Answers to "When deciding whether to attend a MDST meeting, what are the 2 to 4 most important factors that you consider (e.g., date, time of day, length, location, agenda, subjects, attendees, workload, etc.)?"

Ninety-five percent (n = 61) of the people completing the survey responded to this question. A number of responses were provided, but the three that occurred most often as determining factors for MDST meeting attendance were agenda subjects (n = 40, 63 percent of respondents), conflicts or workload (n = 25, 39 percent of respondents), and date (n 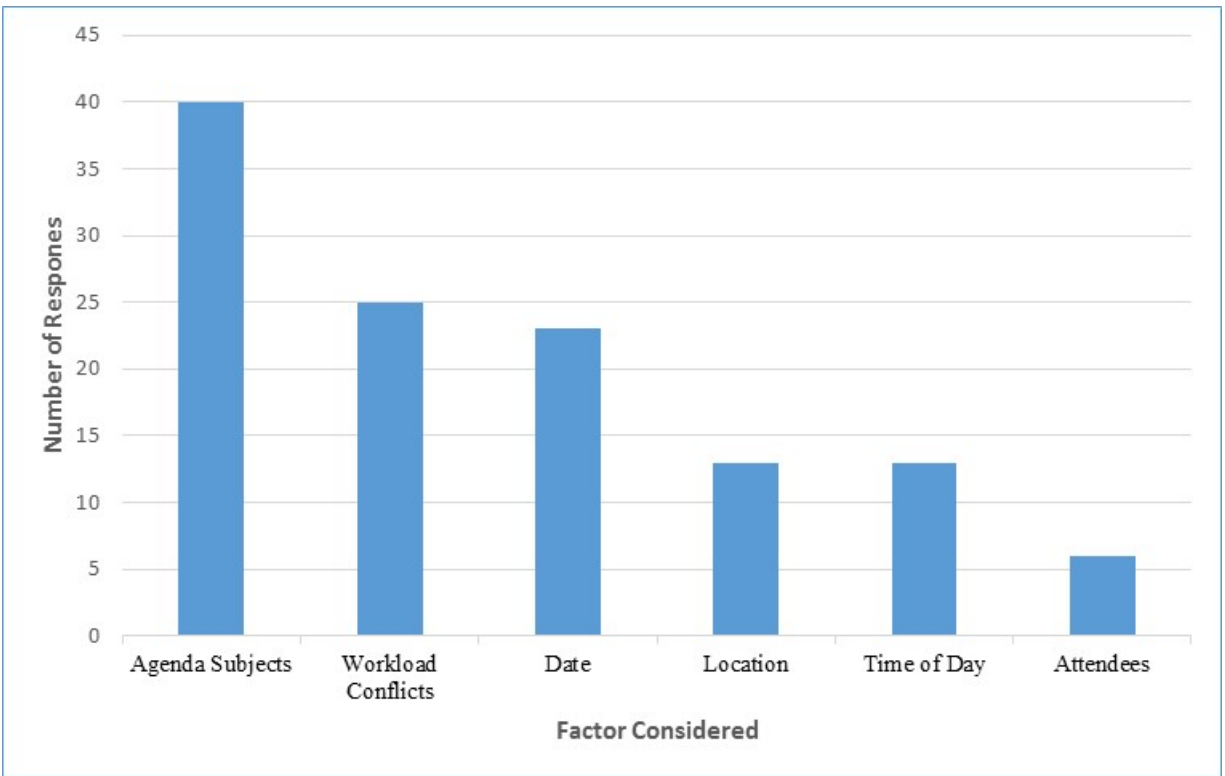= 23, 36 percent of respondents). Location and time of day were also noted as a consideration when MDST team members made a decision to attend. Respondents were asked to provide more than one answer to this question. A representative sample of the answers to this question is in the appendix.

Question 3. Do you have any suggestions to improve the value of MDST meetings?

The third question in the survey was more open-ended than the second. It asked the survey respondents what suggestions they might have to improve the value of MDST meetings. A total of 53 people (83 percent) responded to this question. Clearly, the responses to this question are dependent upon the experience each person has had with his/her individual MDST and its meeting(s). A relatively wide range of responses was provided, and a representative sample of these is included in the appendix. However, several patterns or commonalities in the responses were observed, and these are summarized below.

The most commonly discussed subjects in the answer to this question were agenda, diversity of subject material, and attendees. A number of respondents indicated that the items in the agenda needed to be relevant to safety and that the team members should suggest or bring subjects of

discussion to help get a diversity of items. It was also suggested that the agenda be sent out in advance (e.g., 7 to 10 days) and that one item on the agenda might have an educational component. A variety of subjects and information was also important due to the diversity of the MDST member backgrounds. However, a common goal and focus for each meeting might also help. It was proposed that the invited attendees might be expected, if needed, to include public works departments, emergency medical services, and fire departments.

Other improvement ideas for MDSTs that were mentioned more sporadically in the survey responses included a need to define the purpose and a local champion for each MDST along with the completion of effective, efficient, and focused meetings. For example, the respondents wanted the meetings to consider local safety-related issues and include presentations applicable to the MDST. Respondents also wanted, as appropriate, confirmation information to be sent after the meetings to questions, activities, or tasks that might have been discussed. Good examples of projects and initiatives that have resulted from the MDST process would also be of interest. In addition, it may be of value to the MDSTs to discuss high crash locations and propose countermeasures. Some "homework" or tasks for MDST members, now and again, might also help to keep people engaged.

In general, the responses to this question appear to focus on several factors that have been shown to produce effective volunteer-based committees and teams. In general, these factors include well-designed and/or well-defined agendas, team missions and tasks, strong leadership, diversity of membership, and a vested and involved membership through the application of efforts during and outside the meeting time period.

Question 4. Do you have any suggestions that might increase attendance or involvement in MDSTs?

The fourth question in the survey focused on suggestions to increase attendance. Only 46 of the 63 people completing the survey (72 percent) responded to this question. It is expected that this smaller response rate is related to the potential similarity in the answers between this question and the previous two. In fact, the suggestions provided to this question were very similar what was found previously. For example, the respondents repeated the need to try different approaches to MDST meetings, but that strong and/or relevant agenda subjects were the most important factor. There were suggestions, however, that involving team members in the development of the agenda and moving the meeting location might help attendance. The need to focus on local safety-related issues and specific locations was also reiterated. Some of the other common suggestions were the advance scheduling of meetings (e.g., six months or a year of meetings) to get the meetings on attendee calendars and the need to send out dates and agendas early (e.g., 7 to 10 days).

Suggestions to improve the interaction at the meetings were also mentioned. For example, it was suggested that speakers from different parts of the state be invited to discuss unique programs and initiatives of interest and that, once again, part of the agenda have an educational focus. It was emphasized that all the attendees should be encouraged to provide input and that hearing from everyone in attendance was an important component to team- and relationship-building and initiating new ideas. It was suggested that if everyone had a stake (i.e., was vested) in the

process, tasks, or activities they might see more value in the meetings. Finally, it was again noted that some type of confirmation was important after the meeting with respect to questions, activities, or tasks that might have been discussed. Similarly, the need for a MDST champion was also noted again. It was suggested that MDST meetings might be used to supplement local disaster response plans and be scheduled around other regional meetings. A representative sample of the answers to this question is included in the appendix.

Question 5. If we scheduled a 2 to 4 hour focus group meeting on the subject of this survey and its answers, would you be interested in being involved/invited? If so, please indicate your name, email, and phone number.

The fifth question in the survey focused on the potential attendance of the respondent at a focus group discussion on the subject of this survey. Fifty-eight of 64 respondents (91 percent) answered this question. Overall, about 52 percent (n = 30) of the people that answered this question indicated they were interested in attending or being invited to a focus group meeting (see Figure 3).
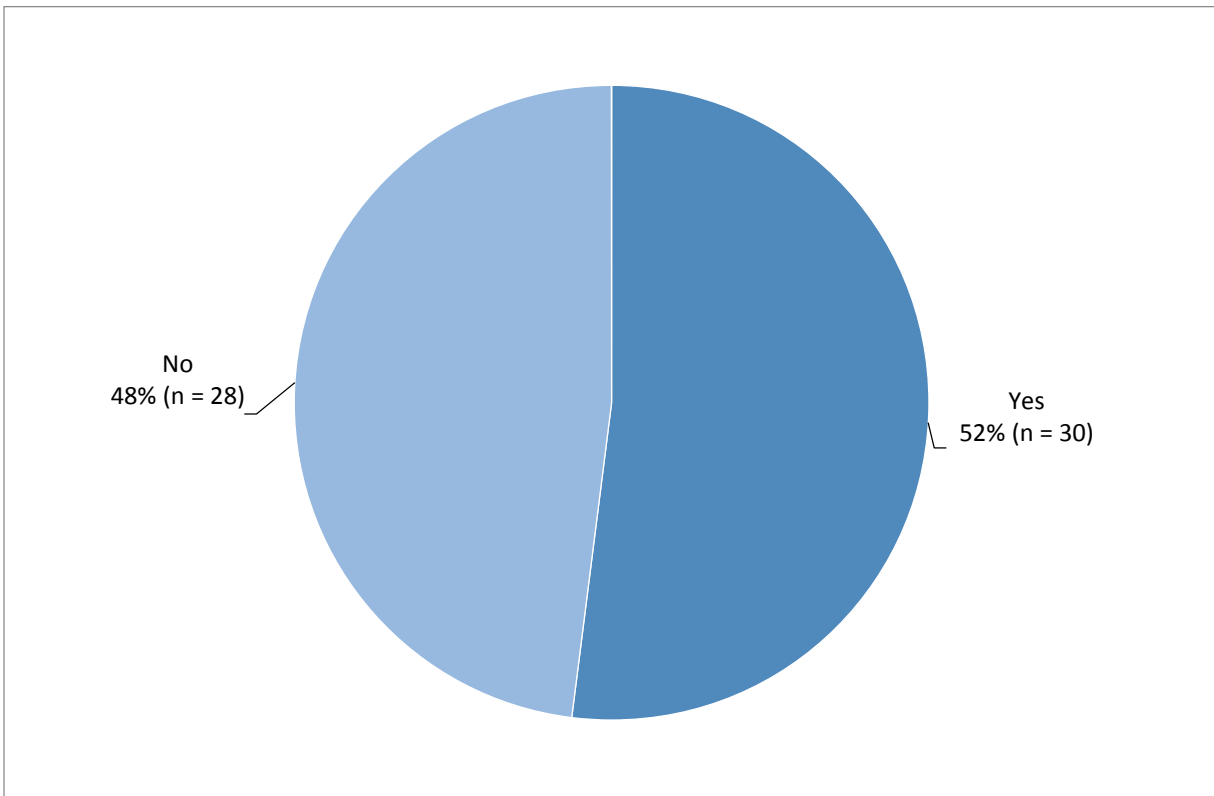
Figure 3. Answers to "If we scheduled a 2 to 4 hour focus group meeting on the subject of this survey and its answers, would you be interested in being involved/invited? If so, please indicate your name, email, and phone number."

In general, one or more people from each of the nine MDSTs in the state responded in a positive manner to this question. The proportion and spread of the respondents that indicated they might attend a focus group may also be a measure of the location of all the survey respondents. About

25 percent of those volunteering to attend a focus group came from the Des Moines and Ames area. Approximately 14 percent of the respondents each came from Fort Dodge, Mason City, and Sioux City. In addition, about 10 percent of the volunteers were each from the Quad Cities and Iowa City.

Bonus Question 6. Do you have any additional recommendations, suggestions, or comments about MDSTs?

The sixth question in the survey was a general "bonus" question that was open-ended and asked about any additional MDST recommendations, suggestions, or comments. Only 48 percent (n = 31) of the people answering the survey responded to this question. The majority of these answers were positive in nature. One respondent indicated the meetings were a "great way" to solve a problem or concern, but that the benefits needed to be tangible and local. It was also emphasized that everyone on the MDST needed to be heard, particularly when the team was just getting started. It was noted that the value of MDSTs and the information gathered at the meetings also needed to be shared within each partnering agency. There was also an acknowledgement that MDSTs can always improve, but that they provide a "huge benefit" and more need to be started. It was noted that even those people with a minor interest in safety can gain better insight and create a better operational network for those times something does occur (e.g., route diversions, weather, and construction). The need to involve emergency medical service (EMS) personnel, responders, and/or emergency managers in the MDST process was mentioned more than once throughout the survey. Finally, it was emphasized that MDST must have value, particularly with busy schedules, or they could fail due to lack of interest. The worthwhile nature of the MDSTs, however, was noted as a reason that this shouldn't happen. A representative sample of the answers to this question is included in the appendix.

Summary of Findings

The word "agenda" was mentioned more than 50 times in the MDST survey results. In fact, many of the respondents appeared to use agenda subjects as the determining factor in meeting attendance decision-making. The most common question that appeared to be considered about agendas was "Do the items on the agenda affect me or my community, or my agency/job, directly or indirectly, and are they relevant to my agency?" It was also noted that the agenda should not be too general or it may have a negative impact on attendance, but that a more detailed and diverse agenda that focuses on local safety challenges might bring the right people to the table. It was suggested that team members should have an opportunity to provide input on agenda items and that scheduling a number of meetings in advance (followed by an additional notice nearer the meeting date) might help get the meetings on team members' calendars. Changing the location of the meeting was also suggested to improve attendance, along with inviting speakers from throughout the state for an educational component to the agenda. Expanding the invitee list for MDSTs to include public works, EMS, and fire departments also appeared to be important. It was suggested that an effort also be made to "vest" the team members in the process or activities (one suggestion was that "homework" be assigned) and that then the members may see more value in the meetings.

Not surprisingly, it was suggested that MDSTs and MDST meetings need to have a specific purpose and a local champion. In addition, all the meetings need to be effectively and efficiently run, but all the team members need to be active in the discussion. It was also suggested that local issues (e.g., specific intersections, roadways, and other problem areas) could be discussed to keep people engaged and that good examples of projects and initiatives from other MDSTs around the state might be of interest.

Overall, it was noted that MDSTs may need to have a project, a challenge, or an area of concern to focus on and to continue to grow. For example, they might become known as a group able to solve safety problems at the local level, and there are many areas of roadway safety that could be addressed. In general, these teams have the skill set to assist in improvements to roadway safety.

The consistency and patterns seen in the answers appear to emphasize the consideration of the following desirable characteristics about MDSTs and/or their meetings:

1. Well-defined purpose/focus/mission
2. Well-designed agendas that should include one or more of the following:
   a. Relevance to multiple agencies
   b. Discussion of current/ongoing local safety issues by all agencies
   c. Discussions about or focus on specific safety issue or locations
   d. Evaluation and application activities
   e. Speakers or educational opportunities and/or examples
   f. Focus on local roadways and needs
   g. Input from all the team members
   h. Proper facilitation
3. Effective scheduling of meetings, as follows:
   a. Well in advance of date (e.g., all the dates for a year)
   b. Notification or remainder in advance
   c. Possibly scheduled around other regional meetings
4. Diversity of attendance and invitations (e.g., engineering, education, emergency management, enforcement, planning, towing companies and others, general public)
5. Possible adjustment of location and/or agency lead changes
6. Defined exercises, tasks, or projects that take advantage of MDST member expertise and the activities of all MDSTs in Iowa
7. Statewide program coordination assistance

MDST FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY AND RESULTS

One of the questions in the online survey that was completed as part of this research included an invitation to a MDST focus group. Approximately half of the respondents to the survey indicated that they would be willing to consider attendance at a focus group. These focus groups had two objectives. The first objective was to share a summarized version of the online survey results. The second objective was to gather additional input that may assist in meeting the objectives of this project. Three MDST focus groups were held as part of this project, and their results are described below.

Focus Group #1: Fort Dodge

The first MDST focus group was held in Fort Dodge on September 17, 2014. A group of survey respondents from central and northern Iowa that indicated a willingness to attend a focus group were invited. In addition, the membership of the entire Fort Dodge MDST (which met before the focus group) was also invited. A total of 12 people attended the Fort Dodge MDST focus group. Three of the 12 were from the Iowa DOT and two others were from the project technical advisory committee. The meeting lasted about an hour and included a good discussion of desirable MDST characteristics. First, it was suggested that having presentations was good for MDST attendance and that shifting the location of meetings or the leader for the meetings might be a good idea. It was also suggested that different perspectives and facilitation ideas are something to consider and that the networking opportunities provided at MDST meetings are important. The ability to talk about significant events and get feedback and input was of great value. The "lunch-style" approach followed by the Fort Dodge MDST was also of interest, and the value of table top exercises similar to the one completed recently in Sioux City discussed.

Focus Group #2: Cedar Rapids

The second MDST focus group was held on September 22, 2014, in Cedar Rapids. Only three people attended the meeting, and one was from the project technical advisory committee. Only 10 people were invited to this meeting, and an offer to call in at the focus group on September 29, 2014, was made to those in Dubuque and Davenport (which represented 7 of the 10 invited). This meeting was also not held in conjunction with a previously scheduled MDST, and there is no MDST group that currently meets regularly in Cedar Rapids. The discussions during the focus group revolved around improving the MDST meetings in the area by encouraging a more widespread attendance. There was a discussion about the fact that members of some MDSTs may be from rural areas and some from relatively urban or suburban areas. The need to have topics of interest to all these people was noted. The need to have multidisciplinary attendance was also stressed for networking purposes and the discussion of major events. A goal to encourage the attendance of emergency responders was noted for more multidisciplinary involvement. Diversion routes were discussed as a potential subject area of interest, along with general and/or specific crash analysis discussions (with fatal crashes being of particular interest). The time period between meetings was also discussed. It was noted that there was a need to have subjects to discuss, but that meetings that were too far apart also had an impact on attendance. Finally, it was proposed that a statewide coordinator for MDSTs was needed, and help was

offered to determine if that was possible and/or to fund that type of position. The idea of a MDST leadership position was also suggested for learning and networking purposes. The coordination of this leadership meeting with one that was already scheduled (e.g., a track at the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau [GTSB] safety meeting), or possibly as a separate effort, was discussed.

Focus Group #3: Ames

The third MDST focus group was held on September 29, 2014, in Ames. Nine people attended the meeting, and it lasted about an hour. In addition, two people teleconferenced with the group and provided input. This MDST focus group was not held in conjunction with the regular Ames MDST meeting. Some valuable input was provided by the attendees at this meeting after a summary of the survey results. For example, the majority of the attendees agreed that scheduling MDST meetings well in advance, and possibly having a regularly scheduled day or week (e.g., every second Thursday of the month), was a good idea. In addition, the value of starting a MDST with an initial focus on a very specific safety subject was noted. It was suggested that having a common safety focus and/or task at the beginning of a MDST was good and would help the group members see the value in meeting, build on the initial effort, and then expand and progress to the next step. It was noted that continuously meeting was very positive and that diversity in MDST membership was valuable because it would build on itself (i.e., a diverse group tends to become more diverse). It was suggested that having some type of statewide coordinator or assistance (e.g., crash analysis) for MDSTs would be good, but that each MDST group needed to direct itself and its activities. An attendee at the focus group also indicated that the involvement of local enforcement was good for a MDST and that the reporting out of efforts completed by the different groups or agencies in attendance was good information to share. The focus group attendees also agreed that a strong leader and facilitator was important, but that key MDST members from multiple disciplines were also important. It was suggested that the development of a resource (e.g., a website) for the MDSTs that contained helpful information (e.g., agendas, speakers/subjects) would be valuable and that the chairs or leaders of each MDST should perhaps be on all the MDST mailing lists. Finally, it was suggested that a gathering of MDST leaders and/or members within Iowa might be a good idea. This meeting could be done separately or as part of a meeting already scheduled (e.g., the GTSB safety conference). The objective of this meeting would be to discuss different success stories from various MDSTs. This type of meeting has been held in the past, but not for many years.

Summary of Findings

The output of the MDST focus groups primarily agreed with the results of the literature summary and online survey previously described. Scheduling, goals/tasks, diversity, and effective leadership and/or facilitation are important to MDST success. There were also suggestions for some type of MDST statewide coordinator and for a MDST leadership meeting. The focus group results, however, provided one piece of information that was not immediately apparent in the survey results. The growth of MDSTs was discussed at the Ames MDST focus group meeting, and it was noted that MDSTs, given the correct conditions, can start and thrive following various growth scenarios. However, the focus of the Ames focus group discussion was on the value of

having a specific safety issue to address at the beginning of a MDST. Overall, it would appear that the sustainability of MDSTs is generally based on effective and consistent leadership (with a succession plan as needed), effective and relevant meetings with activities/presentations, mutual respect and interest in different safety perspectives, and a general understanding and agreement that MDST meetings can lead to improvements in roadway safety.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature summary, online survey, and focus groups completed as part of this project produced similar and complementary results. A summary of the results from each of these activities is included in this report. The primary points made in these summaries are described below.

The literature reviewed as part of this project focused on team building, team member motivation, and the typical characteristics of effective teams/committees. These characteristics are relatively well known and appear to generally focus on leadership qualities, meeting organization, and methods to increase member/attendee involvement and continued team/committee participation. Some of the factors that appeared to lead to more effective or efficient committees/teams and/or meetings were listed in the literature review summary above and are repeated below:

- Well-defined and well-designed agendas (distributed in advance)
- Shared purpose, focus, and/or mission for the team and meetings
- Matching team or committee purpose and member interests
- Allowance and encouragement of input from all team members
- Ability to make decisions and authority to implement
- Use of team members' skills in the completion of challenging tasks
- Effective leadership (e.g., communicate, delegate, listen, facilitate, remove barriers, lead by example)
- Communication that is effective and often
- Acknowledgement of contributions
- Defined outcomes/results and success
- Good interpersonal relationships of team members

In general, the literature showed that effective/efficient teams/committees need to have strong leadership or champions that are well organized, understand potential members'/attendees' interests and backgrounds, and allow for input from all the members/attendees on various topics through proper meeting organization and facilitation. In addition, members/attendees also need to become "vested" in the group through the provision and application of their input, sharing in the group purpose/vision/mission, and/or the completion of tasks/activities.

The online survey that was completed as part of this project produced results similar to the literature review output. However, the answers provided in the survey came directly from those involved with MDSTs in Iowa. In general, the survey results emphasized the importance of a well-designed agenda. In fact, the agenda and its relevance to the potential attendees'/members' jobs or agencies were shown to be two of the primary factors considered by those thinking about attending a MDST meeting. The survey answers showed that agendas that included a local safety focus, networking time to discuss important safety issues, and an educational component were also of interest. In addition, advance scheduling of meetings, an expansion of invitees, and periodic changes in meeting location were considered to be positive MDST characteristics. The

summary of findings from the online survey in this document listed a series of desirable characteristics for MDSTs and/or MDST meetings. These characteristics are repeated below:

1. Well-defined purpose/focus/mission
2. Well-designed agendas that should include one or more of the following:
    a. Relevance to multiple agencies
    b. Discussion of current/ongoing local safety issues by all agencies
    c. Discussions about or focus on specific safety issue or locations
    d. Evaluation and application activities
    e. Speakers or educational opportunities and/or examples
    f. Focus on local roadways and needs
    g. Input from all the team members
    h. Proper facilitation
3. Effective scheduling of meetings, as follows:
    a. Well in advance of date (e.g., all the dates for a year)
    b. Notification or remainder in advance
    c. Possibly scheduled around other regional meetings
4. Diversity of attendance and invitations (e.g., engineering, education, emergency management, enforcement, planning, towing companies and others, general public)
5. Possible adjustment of location and/or agency lead changes
6. Defined exercises, tasks, or projects that take advantage of MDST member expertise and the activities of all MDSTs in Iowa
7. Statewide program coordination assistance

Three MDST focus groups were also held as part of this project. The discussions during these focus groups produced results similar or complementary to those summarized above. However, during these meetings it was also emphasized that it was always desirable for MDSTs to be locally organized and led to be successful (i.e., the local or regional agencies/groups and their representatives need to be "vested" in the MDST and see its value). It was also noted that MDSTs can thrive through various growth scenarios, but having a specific safety issue to initially address was valuable. The consideration of this specific safety issue by the MDST would show the value of the group to its members and lead to growth into other locally focused safety issues that need to be addressed. In addition, a statewide MDST coordinator, MDST leadership meeting, and a MDST information resource (e.g., website) were suggested as desirable activities. Overall, as noted previously in this document, MDST sustainability appears to generally be based on effective/consistent leadership (with a succession plan as needed), relevant meetings with activities/presentations, assistance with the development of networking relationships, mutual respect and interest in varying safety improvement perspectives, and a general understanding and agreement (from attendees and their superiors) that MDST meetings can lead to improvements in roadway safety.

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APPENDIX: REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Question 2: When deciding whether to attend a MDST meeting, what are 2 to 4 of the most important factors that you consider (e.g., date, time of day, length, location, agenda subjects, attendees, workload, etc.)?

1. Agenda and attendees
2. Date, time, agenda, workload
3. Date and location
4. Current work load and conflicts
5. What issues are we discussing, are the issues directly/indirectly my community, is it a long meeting (long agenda), will the meeting conclude before my next meeting (both are standard times/dates)?
6. Agenda subjects, and whether they are unique/different topics versus standard agenda items, location and length of meeting
7. I try to make it a priority to attend each month. I think the communication with other agencies in our area is valuable.
8. Date and time are important, but agenda subjects are most important.
9. Either I or one of my sergeants attends every meeting because they are simply invaluable. It is two-pronged. The relationship building opportunities are limitless. That benefit alone has been worth the attendance. Secondarily, the safety information shared which has led to real physical changes to roadway design, signing and safety is significant.
10. Subjects or events, de-construction of incidents and analysis by participants - what went right, what went wrong, and why?
11. Agenda - will the time spent be valuable to me and the department, workload - do I have the time needed to attend, or should the time be spent on other projects.
12. Agenda subjects, whether there is a good cross-section of disciplines
13. Relevance of agenda, location, attendees

Question 3: Do you have any suggestions to improve the value of MDST meetings?

1. Expanded involvement - do not focus on tight local projects
2. The MDSTs could play a part in the development (maybe an outlet for outreach, public input) and implementation of the State's safety plan.
3. Move it around to different departments, stay on point and not drift to other subjects
4. A diverse group allows input and the presence of more attendees resulting in a more interesting meeting with a variety of information being shared.
5. More focus on local issues, like areas with a high number of crashes. Bringing in speakers from around the state that have tried unique safety solutions in their area.
6. Expand to include other agencies such as public works, EMS and Fire Departments.
7. More notice would be good. The farther out you can schedule the better.
8. Make sure the agenda topics are relevant to most, if not all attendees. Something for everyone. Having some homework / project once in a while keeps you interested in attending.

9. Perhaps having the agenda / program sponsored by different members of the group.
10. I think you just need to keep people engaged. At times, we don't have much going on, so interest dies off a bit.
11. More safety analysis of high accident locations and developing countermeasures
12. Notification of meetings, agenda, goals, and action results updates.
13. Have a common goal and focus for each meeting
14. Strong agenda items - present at least one item of interest for learning experience, follow up on issues presented - when issues are discussed, document and bring back findings to group.
15. Good examples of projects/initiatives that have resulted from the MDST process
16. They run very well with a broad mandate - allow the group to discuss a variety of matters/issues that affect their jurisdictions / areas of responsibility. Initially they need a specific project to address, but allowing/encouraging the group to discuss a variety of issues can be very beneficial.
17. Continue to stress focus on local issues and include applicable presentations
18. Does the group have an established purpose that is specific? Goals?
19. Send out agenda in advance, send out minutes within a week (in 2 days would be best), set recurring meeting times appropriate to discussion items. (i.e., some MDSTs may not need to meet monthly), must have a local champion
20. More open discussion on what the members have experienced lately. Discuss ways to do better or change the methods that were done. Maybe set up a mock demo and have the parties do their part and then an open discussion again.
21. Less repetitive review of matters covered in previous meetings.
22. After action review of real world incidents.

Question 4: Do you have any suggestions that might increase attendance or involvement in MDSTs?

1. Evaluate current, consistent attendees and determine what other agencies are absent and need representation at the meetings and why. Contact those agencies and explain why they should attend and how doing so will benefit them.
2. Be sure all agencies are aware of the meeting. I happened to hear about it on a non-related discussion.
3. Do more than one in various locations to make it easier for more to attend. Or, use technology and use platforms like Go to Meeting/Webinar to make it easier. I do a lot of meetings like this and they work very well. Documents can be shared and viewed easier than if you were in a meeting room with a lot of people.
4. Trying more to get speakers in from different parts of the state to go over unique programs and initiatives regarding safety improvement might generate more interest.
5. Increased focus on local projects/safety issues (specific intersections, roadways, etc.)
6. Vary the location of the meetings so that some months it is closer to some other potential attendees so the same people don't have to drive all the time to the meeting. Have some sort of educational component to each meeting as it relates to transportation safety or emergency response, etc.

7. To me it's critical that those attending feel that their voice is heard. Respecting what one brings to the table and realizing it has to be a team effort will break down barriers and hopefully spawn new relationships. But it has to be genuine. Egos checked at the door. The computer age has taken over. Computers have their place, but unfortunately, in my opinion, have also contributed to the growing lack of personal contact. This then, in the long run, directly impacts how various agencies interact with or trust one another.
8. Ask members what they want on agenda.
9. Notification of meetings, information of goals and feedback.
10. Provide additional training on relevant subjects 2 or 3 times per year.
11. Combine the timing of the MDST with other regional meetings.
12. Topics covered more frequently. We seem to focus on one topic for several meetings in our area.
13. If everyone identifies a stake in the process, they will see more value in meetings. If it is only run by one person with one person's agenda, the value is diminished to the many.
14. Get people involved. Just don't have them sit there and be spoken too. Get them in the conversation and discussions.
15. Shortened agendas - and focus on who needs to participate - department CEO, Executive Staff and or line management. Be appreciative for executive level commitment to meetings and times. Cut out the redundancy and concentrate of areas that need consensus of the executives to function and move forward to the policy conclusion.
16. The meetings have to have a little something for everyone. Data on traffic flow, speed, time of day, occupancy, etc. new technologies, construction updates, enforcement efforts, diversion route planning, emergency response planning, after action reviews

Question 6: Bonus Question: Do you have any additional recommendations, suggestions, or comments about MDSTs?

1. I feel our MDST is productive and a worthwhile endeavor. I hope we continue to work together to enhance the safety of our pedestrians and motorists. Stay the course.
2. Keep it Simple.
3. It's great to resolve a problem/concern that involves everyone when you're in the beginning stages of starting a group and make sure everyone has a voice.
4. They are only good if the right players participate and then pass down the information within their organizations.
5. I think there is good info provided at this meeting. Wish others from EMA, hazmat and other various emergency responders attended.
6. I believe the GTSBs and DOTs involvement is essential to the group.
7. Not really, other than, I would like to see more meetings and less cancellations
8. We can always make them better but they have HUGE benefit and need to be made better and started in areas that may not have them regularly.
9. The state transportation officials provide good context and are good discussion leaders. Even participants with a very minor interest or role to play gain better insight and create a better operational network that can help them to be prepared and ready to act if needed.

10. I believe MDSTs are a good idea as it gets everyone together in the same room and allows them to work through issues they may have when there are route diversions, bad weather, construction etc.
11. Getting tangible benefits enumerated would be helpful
12. Provide additional information in establishing the MDST. I think are is fizzling out because attendees are not quite sure what they are getting out of it.
13. They are a great idea if run by the locals. Locals must see the benefits, if they don't attendance will be low.
14. Be conscious of time commitments being asked of participating agencies and their personnel.