To enhance background and understanding regarding next steps in advancing appropriate conversion of public and private facilities to wood-to-energy systems, the Endowment engaged Dovetail Partners to:

1. Complete an assessment of the opportunities and barriers to successful stand-alone (institutional) wood-to-energy facilities that would aid in understanding the role that capital (non-grant) plays in their construction/operation; and then, additional learnings that would incent creation of clusters of such facilities/investments to support development of more efficient technical/logistical/supply support to those facilities.
2. Complete an assessment of the non-traditional revenues that could be identified and then tested in a western public lands environment to enhance the economic viability of larger wood-to-energy facilities.
3. Produce a report of findings that includes recommendations and a checklist of findings that address “lessons learned” and common considerations about what does and doesn’t work, including regional differences. Several model projects will be evaluated in depth and 3-5 case studies created.
4. Create a model to “test” a case – likely with one or more agencies and one or more state/local government/non-profits – to show the benefits of infrastructure in the form of a facility to take/convert low-value wood into energy.

The production of energy using a renewable material such as wood can have positive impacts on all three legs of the sustainability stool - society, the economy, and the environment.

Biomass energy development has the potential to foster economic development, address wildfires and associated risks and costs, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. There are critical strategic, organizational, and financial issues that need to be addressed in order to realize the considerable potential of biomass energy. First and foremost, biomass energy needs to become an attractive and financially viable investment alternative.

To view the full report: “Financing Woody Biomass Clusters: Barriers, Opportunities, and Potential Models for the Western U.S.”