



INNOVATIVE TRAVEL, TOURISM, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION AWARDS

National Governors Association and Oregon State
University

Authors: Jessica Rackley and Sally Rood (NGA), and Dr. Randall Rosenberger
(OSU)

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I. Executive Summary

This report is about the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation (TTOR) grants made by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) based on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) passed by Congress. Congress passed the ARP Act in 2021 to provide federal funding to help every state and U.S. territory impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's economic downturn. EDA oversaw the disbursement of several ARP grant programs including the TTOR awards distributed to all 59 states and territories on a [formula basis](#), along with 126 competitive awards sought by states, regions and localities.

For two years, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) partnered with Oregon State University's Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy (CORE) [to research and assess the TTOR awards](#) and identify and highlight innovative projects through quarterly webinars and newsletters. The NGA Center and CORE also developed a data survey to collect information about the implementation or expected results from all the TTOR projects and sent it to the 185 TTOR project leads via the Qualtrics platform. The intent was to collect economic and impact data resulting from the TTOR awards to date to help identify and assess promising or best practices. The research team also conducted phone interviews of select TTOR awardees to gather additional project details.

Based on the data survey results, phone interviews findings and other factors such as project diversity, the research team identified the following projects as having innovative elements worth profiling in case studies in this report. This report profiles these competitive EDA TTOR awards:

- 1) Skowhegan River Park, Maine.
- 2) Frost Fire Park, North Dakota.
- 3) Hawai'i Island Trail Stewards Program.

The report also profiles these statewide formula-based TTOR awards:

- 4) Colorado.
- 5) Indiana.
- 6) West Virginia.

Each of these projects help inform how states, regions, and localities can think about investing in TTOR industries -- with an emphasis on outdoor recreation -- for the purpose of expanding economies and building economic resilience.

The projects also exemplify best practices and promising practices -- as some projects are not completed at the time of this report publication. The promising/best practices are:

- 1) Strong TTOR projects have clear ***project champions***.
- 2) An ***equity component*** can help ***ensure resiliency to climate*** and ***economic shocks***.
- 3) Place-based economic benefits accrue from ***well-designed training programs*** focused on ***local workers***.
- 4) Successful TTOR projects ***gather data*** on critical indicators -- visitors, stays, spending, and more -- and ***use data*** to help inform future work.
- 5) ***Shovel-ready*** TTOR projects have dedicated research, planning, and collaboration in their portfolio.
- 6) Visionary TTOR projects have ***long-term, sustainable funding*** in place.
- 7) The design and implementation of projects benefit from ***local stakeholder engagement***.

- 8) Flexible TTOR projects *expand their outreach* to include *new categories of stakeholders* who may unexpectedly contribute toward an objective.
- 9) Resourceful *TTOR project leaders* connect and *leverage separate funding sources* to attract a new amount greater than the sum of the parts.
- 10) *Unique TTOR project design* is recognized not only by state legislatures, but may also be *honored by peers and competitors*, further extending project impacts.

In terms of data, early indicators are demonstrating that the suite of EDA/TTOR funded projects are realizing significant impacts on eight key indicators described here. The projects are collectively meeting or exceeding expectations in the number of:

- 1) Businesses created in TTOR industries.
- 2) Businesses retained in TTOR industries.
- 3) Jobs created in TTOR industries.
- 4) Jobs retained in TTOR industries.
- 5) Workforce development solutions implemented.
- 6) Increases in visitation rates and length of stay through marketing and site quality improvements.
- 7) Incidences of equity in access and inclusion by business ownership, employees, and visitors. And
- 8) Economic resilience strategies designed and implemented.

While final impacts are yet to be realized, the early indicators are suggesting a substantial return on investment from the EDA/TTOR program. Specific details are included in the Full Report that includes case study profiles and in an accompanying Data Survey Summary Report.

II. Introduction

With a lens towards outdoor recreation, this report profiles six case studies of innovative projects that received awards under the American Rescue Plan's (ARP) Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) program administered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) partnered with Oregon State University's (OSUs) Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy (CORE) to conduct this research to identify innovative TTOR awards. The NGA Center and CORE researched each TTOR award through a variety of methods – press releases, phone interviews, webinars, and then created a data survey specific to the TTOR awards to collect project information from all grantees. The NGA Center and CORE then worked with EDA officials, including the six EDA regional offices to determine the six TTOR awards profiled as case studies in this report based on their representative uniqueness within the projects covered under the TTOR program. This study looks at the effectiveness of EDA/TTOR recovery grants to date, with the goal of promoting best practices and highlighting program outcomes based on implementation data collected at the state and local level.

The NGA Center's objective is to expand the impact of successful EDA TTOR recovery projects by sharing successful strategies with Governors' tourism, outdoor recreation, workforce, and economic development advisors. This will assist Governors and their staff in adopting best practices, policies, and strategies to increase economic development by expanding and diversifying local outdoor recreation economies, making them more inclusive, and increasing higher skilled, higher wage job opportunities.

III. Background

Economies throughout the U.S. and its territories were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly hurt travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation economies in 2020 and part of 2021. TTOR accounted for 5.3% of U.S. GDP in 2019 in comparison to 4.0% in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, BEA).

Tables 1 and 2 provide the total value added and percentage share of total U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) annually from 2018 (pre-pandemic) to 2022 (post-pandemic) for the travel and tourism sector (Table 1) and outdoor recreation sector (Table 2), respectively.

Table 1. Travel and Tourism [Value Added or GDP](#).

Year	Travel and Tourism Value Added [millions of chained (2017) dollars]	Travel and Tourism Value Added as Share of U.S. GDP
2018	\$612,000	3.0%
2019	\$650,000	3.1%
2020	\$458,000	2.2%
2021	\$652,000	2.8%
2022	\$764,000	3.0%

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#).

The travel and tourism industry (includes economic sectors of transportation, accommodation, food & beverages, recreation, entertainment, and shopping, as well as connected industries such as financial services, tour operators, travel agents, and tourism and education organizations) fell from accounting for more than 3% of U.S.GDP in 2019 to accounting for about 2.2% of U.S. GDP in 2020. Recovering to pre-pandemic levels required more than two years, with such levels not being met again until late 2022.

The outdoor recreation industry (includes economic sectors associated with core goods and services purchased directly for outdoor recreation such as bicycling, boating, hiking, hunting, gardening and outdoor concerts and supporting goods and services such as construction, transportation, and government) accounted for [2.3% \(\\$468.6 billion\) of GDP in 2019](#); this fell to 1.8% (\$365.1 billion) GDP in 2020, and recently recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 at 2.2% (\$469.6 billion) of GDP.

There are wide geographic differences in the contribution of TTOR to GDP at the state, local, and regional levels, and the pandemic had different geographic impacts. For example, Hawai‘i, a state that relies heavily on tourism to support their economy completely shut down during the height of the pandemic. At the state level, value added for outdoor recreation as a share of state GDP in [2022 was 5.6% in Hawai‘i, which is the highest of all states](#). In 2020 outdoor recreation was 3.8% of GDP in Hawai‘i; however, overall GDP was down by 8.0% for the state with even greater decreases in the travel and tourism sector.

Inflation-adjusted (real) GDP for the outdoor recreation economy decreased 19.0% from 2019 to 2020, compared with a 3.4% decrease for the overall U.S. economy. Real [gross output for the](#)

[outdoor recreation economy decreased 17.4%](#), while outdoor recreation compensation decreased 12.5% and employment decreased 17.1%.

Table 2. Outdoor Recreation [Value Added or GDP](#).

Year	Outdoor Recreation Value Added [millions of chained (2017) dollars]	Outdoor Recreation Value Added as Share of U.S. GDP
2018	\$464,521	2.3%
2019	\$468,572	2.3%
2020	\$365,148	1.8%
2021	\$448,059	2.1%
2022	\$469,634	2.2%

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#).

A. Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) Award Overview

To address the economic impacts associated with the pandemic, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021. States and competitive awardees used this funding on a number of initiatives such as statewide marketing campaigns to increase visitors; purchasing detailed TTOR data to better target visitor audiences; workforce training programs in the TTOR sectors; the development of economic resilience plans for a region and/or state; building new trails and investing in other outdoor recreation infrastructure like campgrounds, whitewater rapids, and snowmaking equipment. Some of the TTOR funding was also used for cultural investments such as museum additions, outdoor amphitheaters, aquariums, programming for tourists with disabilities and more.

The EDA’s [TTOR grants](#) were distributed in two separate ways in 2022 – all the U.S. states and territories received a [formula-based award](#) (based on levels of economic injury¹), and then a portion of the funding was distributed through a competitive grant process. In total, \$750 million in ARP funding was distributed under the TTOR program across 185 awards. \$510 million in formula-based awards went to the 50 states and 9 territories including Washington, DC and then \$240 million in competitive awards that went to 126 communities “hardest hit by challenges facing the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sectors...” The awards went to initiatives such as “workforce training, new construction or upgrades to existing tourism infrastructure, tourism marketing and promotion, and tourism-related economic planning.”

In 2022, EDA released a competitive solicitation asking for organizations to research the effectiveness of ARP funding streams. EDA chose the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Oregon State University’s (OSU) Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy (CORE) to collect economic data on and identify best practices from the

¹ The allocation was developed based on the levels of economic injury, defined as employment loss and share of state GDP in the Leisure and Hospitality sectors (NAICS 71 & 72). The higher the level of economic injury in these sectors, the higher the state amount. See: <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/american-rescue-plan/travel-tourism-and-outdoor-recreation/grant-allocations>.

TTOR award program. The NGA Center’s teams develop innovative solutions to today’s most pressing public policy challenges. The Center is the only research and development firm that directly serves the nation’s Governors. The NGA Center runs many policy learning networks for Governors’ advisors with the two main groups for this work being: 1) Governors’ outdoor recreation policy advisors, and 2) Governors’ economic development advisors and economic development leaders.

The NGA Center partnered with OSU/CORE to provide expert data collection and analysis. CORE works with leading OSU faculty and researchers and partners with trade and professional associations to identify, assess and analyze the biggest issues facing the outdoor recreation economy today. The NGA Center and CORE worked collaboratively with EDA and its six regions on all aspects of the research, such as the design of data collection instruments, key economic metrics to collect, selection of TTOR projects to highlight in webinars and other outlets, the identification of case studies to profile, and other activities.

Expected Economic Benefits: Competitive TTOR Awards

The competitive TTOR funding is expected to generate \$1.1 billion in private investment and to create or save 10,291 jobs, according to grantee estimates. This program was designed to prioritize equity, and as a result, more than 50% of competitive awards are expected to directly benefit historically underserved communities and populations. In addition, \$29.3 million across 12 awards is supporting coal communities and \$21.2 million across 9 awards is supporting Indigenous communities.

--[EDA/TTOR Fact Sheet](#)

IV. Research Approach

This section (Section IV) summarizes the research approach: the key metrics assessed, project year 1 approach, and project year 2 approach. Several report appendices provide additional background on the research methodology and other aspects of the research approach.

A. Key Metrics Assessed

When researching effective TTOR awards, the NGA Center and CORE looked for projects that met one or more of the following criteria:

- Expanded the outdoor recreation economy.
- Created equitable opportunities for underserved populations.
- Built diversified local recreation economies that are resilient to future economic shocks and climate change.
- Fostered higher-skilled, higher wage job opportunities.

B. Project Year 1 Approach

In year one of this 2-year effort, the NGA Center and CORE’s goal was to identify the EDA/ARP funded TTOR recovery projects being implemented in innovative ways and that have the greatest potential to demonstrate economic growth in a locality/region. NGA and CORE initially researched all the 185 TTOR projects, reviewing press releases on the projects and other web resources and initially scoring all of the awards based on the four criteria noted above (expanded

outdoor recreation; opportunities for equity and underserved populations; diversified economies; and job opportunities).

NGA and CORE also consulted with EDA and the EDA regional offices on their suggestions for innovative projects being developed and conducted a series of [webinars](#) for Governors' advisors in 2023 highlighting innovative projects. The purpose was to help improve the understanding of economic development principles associated with outdoor recreation and create opportunities for states and local jurisdictions to quickly replicate successful examples using their TTOR funds or be prepared for future fund availability from any source.

The main effort in the first year of this work was developing and refining a data survey to send to all TTOR awardees. The purpose of the survey was to collect economic impacts resulting from these EDA funded TTOR projects to date along with information on innovative elements, stakeholders involved, and other metrics. The full data survey for [competitive awards](#) and [state/non-competitive awards](#) were sent to all project leads and can be found in Appendix B to this report. In addition to the webinars, deliverables in Year One included the draft and then the finalized data survey to send to all TTOR grantees in Year Two (see more below).

C. Project Year 2 Approach

During Year Two of this research effort, the NGA Center conducted phone interviews with a number of TTOR grantees (see Appendix F for the questionnaire) that met certain key criteria such as using novel project approaches, increasing economic resilience and those focused on underserved communities, along with other characteristics. The NGA Center then worked with CORE to narrow down the 185 TTOR awardees to 15 awards considering the key characteristics outlined and other factors such as geographic diversity, project variety, political balance, a mix of statewide and competitive awards, along with other considerations based on the phone interviews, project research and EDA input.

Also, in Year Two (January 2024), the data survey was sent to the main points of contact for each TTOR award, with the survey closing in February 2024. The NGA Center and CORE then analyzed the results from the data survey, worked with the EDA team, and conducted additional research to determine six TTOR awards to feature as case studies. As noted, they are a mix of competitive and statewide awards profiled as case studies further below in this report.

V. Data Collection

This section describes the data collection method for the case studies and the development and administration of the data survey. More specifically, it:

- provides an overview of the phone interview component of this project and additional criteria considered,
- provides an overview of the data survey component, including the survey response rates and key trends and economic indicators.

A. Overview of Phone Interview Component

In the fall and early winter of 2023 after the data survey was designed, but not yet sent to all awardees, the NGA Center conducted phone interviews of a number of TTOR recipients whose projects had innovative elements based on research. In total around 20 phone interviews were conducted lasting 45 minutes each. Both a mix of competitive and statewide awardees were interviewed.

These interviews helped NGA and CORE propose to EDA an initial list of 15 innovative projects to potentially profile in this research report based on qualitative factors (as the data survey had not yet been sent to all awardees). In addition to the interview questions, Appendix F also lists the projects for which project leads were interviewed. The general question categories were:

- 1) Background – Project goals, champions, stakeholders, target audience, innovativeness.
- 2) Economic Growth – Supportive policies, programs, regulations, and project strategies for creating new businesses.
- 3) Resiliency - To economic and climate shocks; Replicability to other regions.
- 4) Equity and diversity – Business diversity within TTOR sector; Increased wages in TTOR for underserved; Partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions.
- 5) Fostering Higher Skills and Wages – Opportunities for skill development training; Resulting wage increases; Numbers of affected employees and businesses.
- 6) Data, Measuring Success – Source of baseline data; Other data being collected; Need for incentives/assistance with data collection.

B. Additional Criteria Considered

The research team (NGA and CORE) considered other qualitative factors when evaluating which TTOR projects to profile as case studies in this report. Other considerations included: projects in transitioning coal economies; indigenous projects; underserved populations; and regional and/or multi-state projects.

C. Overview of Data Survey Component

NGA and CORE developed the draft data survey for EDA review in late 2022. This data survey went through multiple rounds of edits in the first half of 2023. A final version of the data survey, once approved by EDA, was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review. A notice was published in the Federal Register per requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act in the summer of 2023. All TTOR grantees received an advance copy of the data survey questionnaire in early December 2023.

The official survey was sent to all TTOR grantees to complete via the Qualtrics platform in early 2024 with a submittal deadline of February 29, 2024. The NGA Center and CORE hosted several question and answer (Q+A)/information sessions to answer any questions that TTOR grantees had about the survey and also posted online a training video, [frequently updated Q+A documents](#), and other materials. Many of the statewide award recipients gave the funding to multiple projects/awardees in the state (subawards). The data survey was sent to the main statewide award contact who was instructed to provide subaward title and lead contact information before passing along the survey link to all subawardees to complete on behalf of their project.

Economic Indicators and Key Data Survey Trends

A summary of the types of program activities and data/metrics requested from all TTOR awardees is summarized in Table 3.

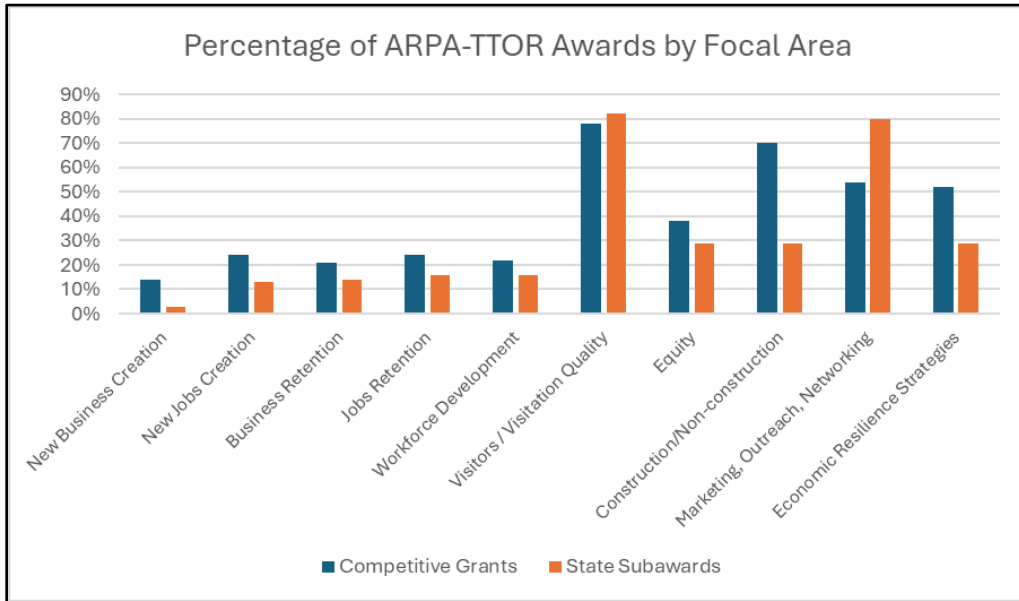
Table 3. Key Indicators, Types of Metrics Collected in Data Survey.

Metrics Collection	
Program Activities	Metrics
1. Planning and Assessment Activities	Number of feasibility and economic impact studies, and type of tools used.
2. Expanding the Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Economy	Number of new private businesses and retention of existing private businesses per-year.
	Number of new private sector jobs created or existing jobs retained per year, average annual wages, and demographics.
	Increase in annual visitors and demographics.
3. Increasing Quality of Visitation	Improvements in attracting and retaining visitors.
4. Stakeholder Outreach	Number and types, participation counts, partnerships.
5. Marketing	Defining goals and identifying modes used.
6. Workforce Training, Skills Training and Certifications	Number of programs held, and certifications earned, types of skills learned, cost to sustain programs.
7. Equity Focused Activities	Increase in diversity of new business owners, new employees, and new visitors.

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Figure 1 depicts the proportion of projects from the competitive awards and the state tourism grant awards associated with the seven key indicator categories in Table 3, above, along with an additional three categories that focused on construction projects, collaborative efforts, and economic resiliency. The suite of TTOR projects including subawards spanned all 10 categories, with variations that align with the primary purposes of the competitive and state tourism grants. The strong focus on visitors and visitation quality is a unique aspect associated with travel, tourism and outdoor recreation. Collaborative efforts through marketing, outreach and networking were also strong among these projects including subawards.

Figure 1. TTOR Award Focus Areas.



Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Survey Response Rates

As shown in Table 4, the overall response rate to the TTOR data survey was 77%. Based on the summary statistics provided below, there does not appear to be any non-response bias or self-selection patterns in the responding awardees. However, given that this survey was conducted prior to the completion of many of the projects, we treat these results as early indicators of outcomes.

Table 4. Data Survey Response Rates

Grant Categories	Total Number	Number Responding	Response Rate
Competitive Grants	126	97	77%
State & Territory Tourism Grants	59	48	81%
State Tourism Grants' Subawards	317*	243	77%

*This total number of state tourism grants' subawards is based on the initial survey response from 48 state tourism grant lead recipients. These lead recipients provided the number of and contact information for all subawards they made from their state tourism grant. If no subawards were made, the state tourism grant was counted as one subaward. Subawards ranged from 1 to 107 across the reporting state tourism grants.

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

The total ARP allocation for the TTOR program was \$750 million. This was allocated by EDA as \$240 million for competitive grants and \$510 million for state tourism grants. The survey responses represent \$619.4 million, or 82.6% of total program funding. Competitive grant funds are represented by 74% of the total allocation and state tourism grant funds are represented by 86.2% of the total allocation of the TTOR program funds. Competitive grant awards ranged from

\$80 thousand to \$8 million. State tourism grants ranged from \$1.6 million to \$45.9 million, while state subawards ranged from \$671 to \$6.5 million.

EDA did not require a matching share for state tourism grants and expressed that they generally expected to fund at least 80% and up to 100% of competitive grants' eligible project costs. An early indicator is that the competitive grants were able to augment EDA/TTOR funds by 66%, and state tourism grants by 20%.

Funding Allocations and Response Rates

The survey responses represent \$619.4 million (out of \$750 million total in TTOR funding), or 82.6% of total program funding.

Competitive grant funds are represented by 74% of its total allocation (\$240 million) and state tourism grant funds are represented by 86.2% of its total allocation (\$510 million) of the TTOR program funds.

Table 5 reports the total amount of supplemental funding by each grant category and the percentage of the total for each source of funding. Most supplemental funding sources are from different levels of government funding. The \$159 million in supplemental funding is 14% of the expected additional investment from the TTOR competitive grant program.

Table 5. Amount and Source of Supplemental Funding.

Source of Supplemental Funding	Competitive Grants	State Subawards
Total amount	\$159,075,904	\$104,266,768
% Federal government	17%	7%
% State government	26%	48%
% Tribal government	<1%	0%
% Region/county government	3%	<1%
% Local/city government	8%	4%
% Private industry	16%	5%
% Nonprofit organization	12%	2%
% Other source	16%	34%

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Additional Funding Data

The Background section (III, above) described the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analyses data and definitions for the travel and tourism sector and outdoor recreation sector. In a similar vein, there were two primary focus areas for EDA's TTOR project awards: 1) travel and tourism, and 2) outdoor recreation.

- Travel and tourism is defined as travel within the U.S. by people for any primary reason, including for leisure, shopping, business, entertainment, medical, and participating in outdoor recreation.
- Outdoor recreation is defined as the engagement in any activity undertaken for pleasure or health and that occur outdoors. Some outdoor recreation participation requires travel and would be included in the travel and tourism area while other outdoor recreation participation occurs close-to-home and is not included in travel and tourism.

The overall percentage of TTOR projects focusing on travel and tourism activities and sectors is 83%, with the remaining 17% of the TTOR projects focusing on outdoor recreation activities and

sectors. Please see the Glossary of Terms in Appendix E for more information on definitions and distinctions.

VI. Results

A. Promising Best Practices

As noted earlier, the NGA Center and OSU/CORE research team conducted phone interviews of select TTOR awardees to gather additional details about those projects. Based on the data survey results, phone interviews findings and additional factors noted, the research team identified the following projects as having innovative elements worth profiling as case studies in this report. This section of the report profiles the following competitive EDA TTOR awards:

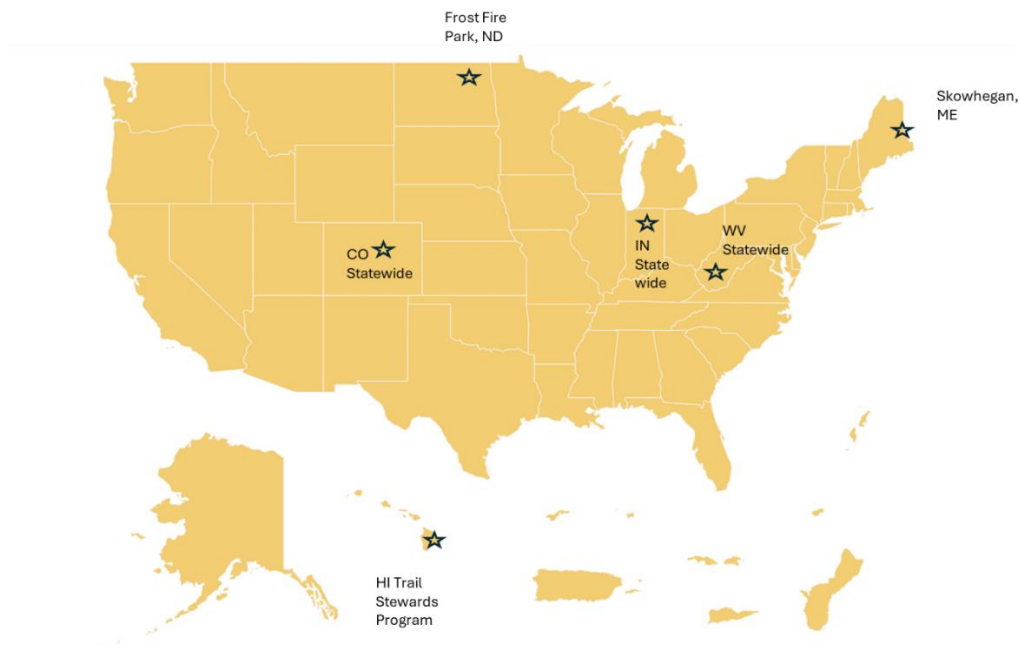
- 1) Skowhegan River Park, Maine
- 2) Frost Fire Park, North Dakota
- 3) Hawai'i Island Trail Stewards Program

It also profiles these statewide formula-based TTOR awards:

- 4) Colorado
- 5) Indiana
- 6) West Virginia

Figure 2 presents a map of the projects profiled as case studies in this report. The projects described here can help inform states, regions, and localities about investing in TTOR industries - - with an emphasis on outdoor recreation -- for the purpose of expanding their economies and building economic resilience. Additional background information on the project case studies can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Figure 2. Map of TTOR Projects Profiled as Case Studies in this Report.



Source: TTOR Data Survey, Research.

Several characteristics stand out among the innovative TTOR projects profiled in this report that are related to their potential for successful outcomes:

- 1) Strong TTOR projects have clear *project champions*.
- 2) Solutions to *climate and economic shocks* are more resilient and stronger when they are built with an *equity component*.
- 3) Place-based economic benefits accrue from *well-designed training programs* focused on *local workers*.
- 4) Successful TTOR projects *gather data* on critical indicators -- visitors, stays, spending, and more -- and *use data* to help inform future work.
- 5) *Shovel-ready* TTOR projects have dedicated research, planning, and collaboration in their portfolio.
- 6) Visionary TTOR projects have *long-term, sustainable funding* in place.
- 7) The design and implementation of projects benefit from *local stakeholder engagement*.
- 8) Flexible TTOR projects can *expand their outreach* to include *new categories of stakeholders* who may unexpectedly contribute toward an objective.
- 9) Resourceful *TTOR project leaders* connect and *leverage separate funding sources* to attract a new amount greater than the sum of the parts.
- 10) *Unique TTOR project design* is recognized not only by state legislatures, but may also *honored by peers and competitors*, further extending project impacts.

These characteristics represent promising best practices for TTOR projects that are in various stages of completion. Each practice is discussed in more detail below.

- 1) **Strong TTOR projects have clear project champions.** All of the TTOR cases in this report have project champions. They are passionate about the project and, as a result, they provide leadership and motivation for others. In several cases, this person was the Governor:
 - In **West Virginia**, Governor Justice has long championed training and education for the state's outdoor recreation workforce. (See page 69 in the West Virginia case study.)
 - In **Colorado**, Governor Polis supported precursor projects and stakeholder engagement efforts to help prepare regions and localities for statewide TTOR grants. (See page 58 in the Colorado case study.)
 - In northeastern **North Dakota**, Governor Burgum designated a state park on land next door to the amenities at Frost Fire Park. (See page 38 in the Frost Fire Park case study.)
 - **Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb** and **Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch** have both been closely engaged with the IN Indiana campaign. Gov. Holcomb partnered with the Indiana Destination Development Corporation and the Indiana Department of Transportation to create new IN Indiana interstate signage welcoming visitors. (See page 59 in the Indiana case study.)
- 2) **Solutions to climate and economic shocks are more resilient and stronger when they are built with an equity component.** Disadvantaged communities are often the hardest hit when disasters or economic shocks hit a region or ecosystem. On the other hand, projects that focus on removing barriers to access and ensuring investments are made in all communities, including those in traditionally underserved populations can help ensure that communities are more resilient to climate and economic shocks.

- The **Hawai'i Island Stewards Program** -- in which native Hawai'ians are sharing their interpretations of the history and culture at certain trail locations -- has, in turn, improved respectful treatment of the trails, protecting sensitive habitats and addressing erosion concerns, and provided better safety at the trail sites. (See pages 44, 46 in the Hawai'i case study.)
 - A priority of the **Colorado** subawards program is assistance to underserved communities such as rural communities, communities with minority populations, and communities still recovering from the economic effects of the pandemic. (See page 55 in the Colorado case study.)
- 3) **Place-based economic benefits accrue from well-designed training programs focused on local workers.** Engaging and building a more highly skilled local workforce through a TTOR project means more of the investment flowing into a community will stay within the community and be absorbed by it, leading to place-based economic benefits.
- **West Virginia**'s "Tourism Works" program is receiving a large return on its investment in education and training for outdoor recreation and hospitality positions. (See pages 70-72 in the West Virginia case study.)
 - The purposes of **Indiana**'s IN Indiana campaign are to: attract visitors to the state's sites and amenities; attract talent for businesses, particularly small businesses; and retain college students in the state to serve as a talent pipeline. (See page 61 in the Indiana case study.)
- 4) **Successful TTOR projects gather data on critical indicators -- visitors, stays, spending, and more -- and use data to help inform future work.** TTOR projects are unique in that they often rely on visitors and visitor spending in realizing economic impacts. Successful projects use data to help design successful new outdoor recreation and other tourism projects.
- North Dakota's **Frost Fire Park** is leveraging the use of digital apps and tools to collect data on increases in the numbers of visitors and their spending. The data serves wide-ranging purposes such as assisting with fundraising, attracting private investment, and determining maintenance needs to avoid depreciation of equipment and infrastructure. (See page 40 in the Frost Fire Park case study.)
- 5) **Shovel-ready TTOR projects have dedicated research, planning, and collaboration in their portfolio.** Longer term projects centered around local and regional outdoor assets have been fortunate to have sustained planning, collaboration, and leadership over time. By the time funding is obtained, the project is shovel-ready or project-ready and does not require lead time to plan and design the project.
- The **Skowhegan River Park** in Maine has been "in the works" since the first feasibility study in the early 2000s. Although enhancing whitewater would take years to accomplish, the town and its partners took advantage of the interim time to do design work, build consensus, and consider related strategies for diversifying the regional economy. (See page 27, onwards, in the Skowhegan case study.)
 - **West Virginia** was committed to a strategy of outdoor recreation. Governor Justice brought together related state agencies – focused on workforce, economic development, and education -- to accomplish the goal of comprehensively developing the state's outdoor recreation workforce. (See page 68 in the West Virginia case study.)

- 6) **Visionary TTOR projects have long-term, sustainable funding in place.** Many economic development programs may have integral components that extend beyond the funding for the actual project or component covered by the TTOR grant.
- **Skowhegan, Maine's** whitewater project has received funding support through a variety of federal, state, local and private sources. Fund-raising partners, such as of Main Street Skowhegan, continue to raise money for other related elements of the River Park activities. (See page 26 in the Skowhegan case study.)
- 7) **The design and implementation of projects benefit from local stakeholder engagement.** Statewide and local community listening sessions led directly to local support in the design and execution of projects:
- **Colorado's** statewide subgrants benefitted from statewide listening sessions conducted to learn about trends in public land use and stewardship. (See page 49 in the Colorado case study.)
 - **Hawai'i's Trail and Access Program** engaged communities and residents near two sacred trails to understand issues at the trails and ways to resolve them. (See pages 43-46 in the Hawai'i case study.)
- 8) **Flexible TTOR projects can expand their outreach to include new categories of stakeholders who may unexpectedly contribute toward an objective.** Thinking broadly about the roles of actors typically on the periphery of an initiative can engage additional supporters in surprising ways.
- From partnering with local schools, **West Virginia Tourism** learned that expanding to include stakeholder groups such as guidance counselors and school administrators helped to open up tourism and outdoor recreation pathways for interested students. (See page 73 in the West Virginia case study.)
 - Governor Holcomb pointed out that the **IN Indiana Campaign** is meant to be flexible in a way that can be magnified far beyond just the state government's efforts. The state is open to partnerships with other public agencies and private organizations based on the campaign's brand. (See page 59 in the Indiana case study.)
 - Efforts by EDA-designated Economic Development Districts and other regional organizations in northeastern North Dakota helped to make the snowmaking improvement possible at **Frost Fire Park**. (See pages 34, 35 in the Frost Fire Park case study).
- 9) **Resourceful TTOR project leaders connect and leverage separate funding sources to attract a new amount greater than the sum of the parts.** When this produces a higher state ROI and positive changes in visitors' perceptions – as documented in tourism data – it is recognized as worthy of substantial budget increases by state legislators.
- **Indiana's Destination Development Corporation** inherited a small budget from its predecessor organization; if not for the TTOR funding coming in from EDA, the organization would not have been able to show impressive results to state legislators, earning a 5-fold budget increase in the state's annual budget. (See pages 66, 67 in the Indiana case study.)
 - Although not supported by the EDA TTOR funding, Phases 2 and 3 in the **Skowhegan** case study are estimated to be about \$17.1 million. Phase 1 is fully embedded in long-term community and economic development that the project lead can successfully leverage (see page 26 in the Skowhegan case study).

10) **Unique TTOR project design is not only recognized by state legislatures, but also honored by peers and competitors, further extending project impacts.** These types of honors can be just as rewarding as compelling data results and enormous funding increases. In the case of a marketing campaign, they could have the effect of multiplying the campaign's impact. And by serving as a model to be adopted elsewhere, its impacts are extended through space and time to affect other communities and economies.

- **Indiana's IDDC** has received awards from such organizations as the U.S. Travel Association, American Advertising Federation, Public Relations Society of America, and many more. (See page 67 in the Indiana case study.)
- Through Governor Justice's leadership and investing in tourism and state parks in the state, **West Virginia** has experienced explosive growth in tourism since 2019. Total visitor spending reached \$6.3 billion in 2023, which is 23% higher than in 2019. (See page 69 in the West Virginia case study).

B. Data Survey Findings on the Economic Indicators

The data survey results are reported at the three levels of aggregation related to the grant categories discussed earlier:

- 1) For the overall TTOR program (competitive and formula-based for the states and territories).
- 2) For competitive grants only.
- 3) For state & territory tourism grant subawards only.

Please see the Data Survey Summary Report for more information.²

These survey results are early indicators of the potential outputs and outcomes from the TTOR program given many funded projects are in their early stages of implementation and have not yet realized their final outputs and outcomes. The survey summary is reported in the aggregate and is not to be interpreted as final outputs and outcomes from the program or for any individual project.

Data on Businesses and Jobs

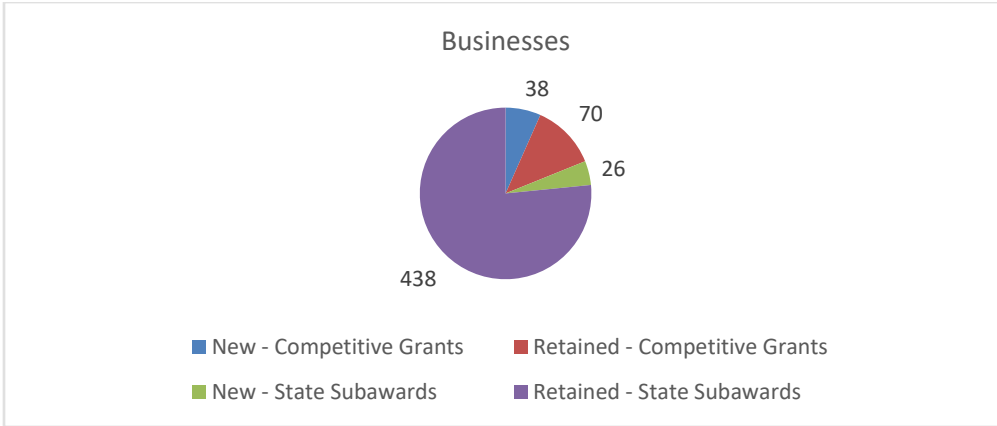
A primary goal of the EDA/TTOR funds was to aid communities and economies in recovery from the significant effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on TTOR-related businesses and jobs. These businesses and jobs may be directly or indirectly related to TTOR economies (i.e., tabulated by BEA). Outputs of the EDA/TTOR investments would be related to those newly created as well as existing retained businesses and jobs. That is, the EDA/TTOR investments targeted the creation of new businesses and jobs, and the retention of existing businesses and jobs.

Several projects self-identified as having a primary focus on new business creation, including 14% of competitive grants and 3% of state tourism subawards. Business retention was also a primary focus of several projects, including 21% of competitive grants and 14% of state tourism subawards. Several projects self-identified as having a primary focus on new jobs creation, including 24% of competitive grants and 13% of state tourism subawards. And finally, some projects focused on the retention of jobs within existing businesses, including 24% of competitive grants and 16% of state tourism subawards.

² Rosenberger, R.S. 2024. Innovative Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Awards: Data Survey Summary. Washington, DC, National Governors Association.

An early indicator from the survey is that projects collectively are reporting 64 new businesses created and 508 businesses retained because of EDA TTOR funding. Figure 3 provides the distribution of projects by new or retained businesses foci.

Figure 3. Businesses Created and Retained.

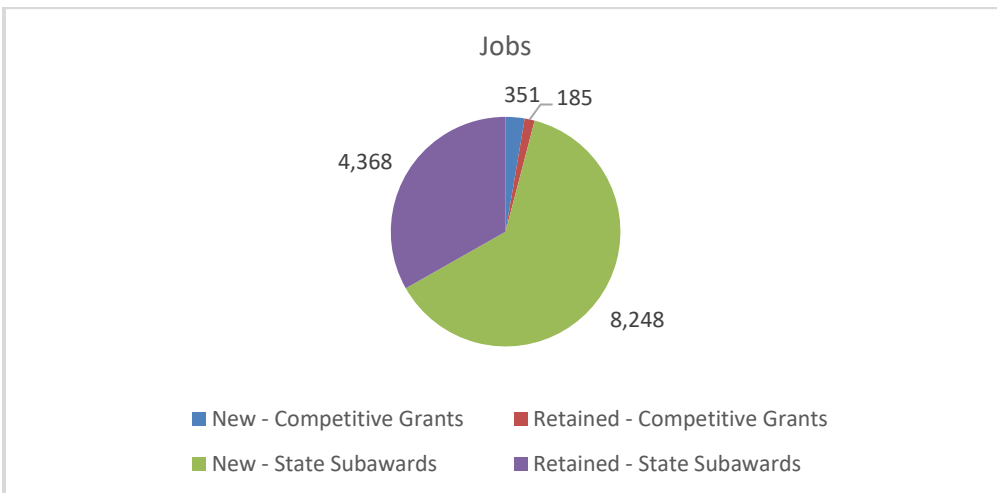


Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Another early indicator from the survey is that projects collectively are reporting 8,599 new jobs created and 4,553 jobs retained because of EDA/TTOR funding, for a total of over 13,000 jobs created or retained.

For the competitive grant program of EDA/TTOR funding, the early indicator is that 84% of the expected total jobs (10,291) created or retained have been realized. Figure 4 provides the distribution of projects by new or retained jobs foci.

Figure 4. Jobs Created and Retained.



Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Most businesses and jobs, whether newly created or existing retained, were located within the 1) Arts, Entertainment & Recreation sector, and 2) the Accommodation & Food Services sector. Most job types reported, whether newly created or existing retained jobs, were part-time (43% seasonal and 21% annual). The remainder of the job types were full-time, with 20% being annual and 16% being seasonal.

The average of all reported annual wages was about \$39,800. This value is based on the raw average wages reported and does not necessarily reflect an annual full-time equivalent (FTE) wage. Therefore, we anticipate that this average annual wage is the lower bound to an annual FTE wage. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2022 data shows that the [Travel and Tourism Satellite Account](#) average compensation per job is \$62,624 annually, and the [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account](#) average compensation per job is \$52,656 annually, where jobs are reported as full-time, part-time, and temporary wage-and-salary jobs. The average compensation per job also varies based on the economic sector in which it is located.

Workforce Development Data

An investment priority for EDA is projects that support workforce education and skills training activities directly connected to the hiring and skills needs of the business community. Sixty projects self-identified as having a primary focus on workforce development, including 22% of competitive grant projects and 16% of state tourism subaward projects.

Three types of workforce development activities were identified in the survey, including: a) training sessions (lasting < half a day), b) workshop sessions (lasting a day to multiple days), and c) certification/licensing courses (lasting a day to multiple days). Early indicators from the 90 EDA/TTOR projects that offered workforce development activities are 2,916 sessions serving nearly 12,000 participants.

Data on Visitors and Visitation Site Quality

Economic development outputs and outcomes that are unique to TTOR projects include increasing the number of visitors to a site or event and enhancing the overall quality of the event or site. Economic impacts from visitation are based on the number of people visiting, how long they visit, and whether they are local or non-local visitors.

There were 258 projects that self-reported a primary focus on increasing the number of visitors to a site or event (55%) or on improving visitor satisfaction through enhancing site quality (45%). This was about 80% of the projects that completed the survey.

Table 6 shows the early indicators of outputs and outcomes from visitor focused projects. A subset of projects recorded or estimated that their collective sites/regions received an additional 227 million visitors since their EDA TTOR projects were initiated. For another subset of studies, they recorded or estimated an additional 157 million visitor days since their EDA TTOR projects were initiated. . Local residents contributed 47 million of these additional visitor days with non-locals contributing the remaining 110 million additional visitor days which demonstrates a strong draw for non-local visitors who typically spend more and stay longer than local residents.

Table 6. Number of Additional Visitors, Visitor Days, and Local Visitors.

Grant Categories	Number of Additional Visitors	Number of Additional Visitor Days	Number of Local Resident Visitor Days*
Competitive Grants	334,528	6,319	217,416
State Subawards	226,863,885	157,260,694	47,004,673
Total	227,198,413	157,267,013	47,222,089

*Local residents were defined as individuals living within 50 miles of the place of an event or site.

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Data on Equity

Equity and inclusion are investment priorities for EDA. This priority focuses on underserved groups and communities including but not limited to women, racial and ethnic minorities, and underserved communities. We asked EDA/TTOR funding recipients about their primary focus on equity for new business owners, new employees, and/or new visitors. More than 31% of all projects reported that they had a primary focus on equity in their funded activities.

Table 7 provides early indicators from equity-focused projects and shows that the results are significant. These projects self-reported high proportions of new business owners, new employees, and new visitors being well-represented by Hispanics/Latinos, racial minorities, and women. The proportions ranged from a high of 80% for Hispanic/Latino new business owners to a low of 38% Hispanic/Latino new visitors.

Table 7. Number of Equity-based Projects and Demographics.

Target Population	No. Projects	Hispanic/Latino	Racial Minorities	Female
New Business Owners	17	80%	48%	50%
New Employees	22	62%	49%	58%
New Visitors	39	38%	45%	63%

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Data on Construction and Non-Construction Projects

EDA supported both construction and non-construction projects through the TTOR program. In the survey, construction projects were defined as any project or program that involves the act or process of building infrastructure such as facilities, utilities, and/or transportation. Non-construction projects were defined as any project or program that *does not* involve the act or process of building infrastructure such as facilities, utilities, and/or transportation.

About 70% of competitive grants identified with providing some form of construction or non-construction project, while 29% of state subawards identified with this category. The definitions of construction and non-construction projects in the survey were not exhaustive and therefore allowed respondents to select out of this question.

Table 8 shows the different types of projects identified in the surveys. Some of the selection criteria for competitive grants included construction projects and precluded primarily marketing projects. Marketing projects were permitted in the state tourism grants.

Table 8. Number of Projects by Construction or Non-Construction Objectives.

Project Type	Number of Competitive Grants	Number of State Subawards
<i>Construction Projects</i>		
Facilities	49	13
Utilities	19	4
Transportation	17	11
<i>Non-construction Projects</i>		
Planning	27	19
Marketing	13	51
Feasibility/research	17	9
Assessment/Analysis	16	10
Other	8	18

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Data on Marketing, Outreach and/or Networking

The data survey asked lead recipients of competitive grants and state subawards if their project included marketing, outreach, and/or networking activities identified as follows:

- Marketing is the dissemination of information to people or groups to increase their level of awareness.
- Outreach is engagement with a set of targeted individuals to build relationships and/or solicit feedback.
- Networking is engaging partners or collaborators in events, meetings, or other opportunities through a collaborative process.

Early indicators are that projects' outreach activities are substantial with more than 1,300 in-person events and over 300 virtual events reported. They also included a good mix of stakeholder affiliations from private industry, government, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and private citizens. More than 1,200 networking/collaboration events were reported and included a healthy mix of interests being represented by participants/collaborators. Another early indicator of collaborative engagement, projects reported engaging over 3,100 collaborators and partners, whether in paid or unpaid positions, in their collective projects.

Data on Economic Resilience

EDA defines resilience in terms of economic development -- as the ability of a community or region to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from pandemics, natural disasters, changing climate, and other disruptions to its economic base. Resilience is a priority investment for EDA, as short-term and long-term economic development planning and coordination are important aspects for contributing to the overall resilience of communities.

The survey asked lead recipients to identify and describe strategies that their project advances to increase the economic resilience of the travel and tourism or outdoor recreation sector to external shocks such as recession, supply chain issues, pandemic travel restrictions, and climate change. Table 9 presents the distribution of projects across 13 different economic resilience strategies. Strategies that respondents could choose from included: technological readiness; business diversification; visitor diversification; production efficiencies; regional, national, and international marketing; collaborations; and natural hazard adaptation and mitigation. Economic

resilience strategies were identified by 52% of competitive grants and 29% of state subawards. Diversifying the visitor and economic base of communities, as well as collaboration and regional marketing were the most-identified strategies as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Percentage of Projects by Economic Resilience Strategy.

Economic Resilience Strategy	Competitive Grants	State Subawards
Visitor diversification	33%	13%
Business diversification	30%	8%
Collaboration with other entities	28%	12%
Regional marketing	20%	15%
Regional collaboration	11%	6%
Production efficiencies	8%	2%
National and/or international marketing	7%	9%
Natural hazard adaptation or mitigation	7%	1%
Technological readiness	6%	4%
Other strategy	5%	3%
Financial incentives	3%	1%
Disaster recovery	2%	1%
Expedited permitting	1%	<1%

Source: TTOR Data Survey.

Summary of Data Survey Findings

Early indicators are demonstrating that the suite of EDA/TTOR funded projects are realizing significant impacts on eight key indicators described here. The projects are collectively meeting or exceeding expectations in the number of:

- 1) Businesses created in TTOR industries.
- 2) Businesses retained in TTOR industries.
- 3) Jobs created in TTOR industries.
- 4) Jobs retained in TTOR industries.
- 5) Workforce development solutions implemented.
- 6) Increases in visitation rates and length of stay through marketing and site quality improvements.
- 7) Incidences of equity in access and inclusion by business ownership, employees, and visitors.
- 8) Economic resilience strategies designed and implemented.

While final impacts are yet to be realized, the early indicators are suggesting a substantial return on investment from the EDA/TTOR program.

Specific details are included in the accompanying Data Survey Summary Report. In addition, some of the appendices to this report provide more details on the survey's research methodology:

- Appendix B summarizes the outreach to the target audience, the EDA TTOR project leads.
- Appendix C links to the data sources used for the baseline and secondary data.
- Appendix D points to the EDA Federal Register Notice fulfilling the federal requirements for the Paperwork Reduction Act.
- Appendix E presents a glossary of terms and definitions, as noted above,

- Appendix F features the phone interview questions.

VII. Conclusion

The [American Rescue Plan's TTOR program](#) is a unique investment in the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors and those communities that are dependent on them. The majority of TTOR projects are still in development, so the data survey designed by NGA and CORE provides early indicators of impacts based on this point in time (through the end of 2023^[1]). Strong responses to EDA's notice of funding opportunity for competitive awards and effective use of state tourism non-competitive disbursements of ARP funds demonstrates the importance of TTOR to economic recovery in many parts of the U.S. TTOR investments also have helped projects become more resilient to future shocks and will continue to have better economic resiliency impacts as these EDA TTOR project investments are completed and full economic and community effects are realized.

The TTOR awards profiled have groundbreaking design elements, such as the Skowhegan, Maine whitewater components or have elements of local cultural significance like the Hawai'i Trail Stewards program. State tourism grants profiled have focused on statewide initiatives in workforce development and marketing or allocated their funding to multiple projects across the state in a competitive and integrated platform. The various design features and other characteristics of these TTOR projects could serve as models for future funding opportunities and TTOR projects in the U.S. The full depth and breadth of ARP-funded TTOR projects' impacts on economic recovery and resilience, delivery on EDA's investment priorities and goals, and ARP's return on investment will only be known by assessing them after their completion. Early indicators from this research suggest that these impacts will be compelling and significant.

VIII. Appendices

The appendices presented here are: A. Case Studies, B. Research Methodology, C. Description of Data Sources, D. Other Federal Requirements, E. Glossary of Terms and Definitions, and F. Phone Interviews.

A. Case Studies

1. Skowhegan (Maine) River Park's Enhanced Whitewater

Project Overview

Grant: Whitewater Recreation Construction Improvements

Grant recipient: Town of Skowhegan (Somerset County), Maine

Type of grant: Competitive TTOR Project

EDA funding: \$4,889,600

Total project funding, including estimated private investment: \$6,112,000 (\$37,750,000 estimated private is TBD)

^[1] Many grantees did not receive their EDA TTOR awards until later in 2021 or some time in 2022.

Project status: Due to the uniqueness of this project, some relating to design and some relating to permits, the project is delayed. Environmental permits are expected in the fall of 2024. Construction is expected to begin in 2025. Fundraising continues for other elements of the park.

What is unique, innovative: Long-term work toward completion of a Skowhegan River Park includes construction of a whitewater recreation area in and around the Kennebec River Gorge in Skowhegan, known as “the downtown portion,” of the larger planned Skowhegan River Park. A 2022 EDA investment of close to \$4.9 million involves redeveloping the industrial downtown river gorge into an accessible outdoor recreation asset with enhanced whitewater. The whitewater portion of the river park will feature adjustable wave infrastructure and rapids, creating a high-quality outdoor recreation opportunity and will be one of only two whitewater parks in the Northeast. The infrastructure for the river park is being planned and undertaken in three phases:

- Phase 1 - The Northeast’s first adjustable wave for paddling and river surfing, with river access and a south bank viewing area.
- Phase 2 – A riverfront promenade and river access via a set of stairs from the north side of the gorge.
- Phase 3 – Construction of two additional non-adjustable wave features, as well as expansion and enhancement of Skowhegan’s trail network.

Figure 5. The Skowhegan Walking Bridge with a Rendering of the Whitewater River Park.



Source: Main Street Skowhegan.

The \$4.9 million awarded from EDA’s Travel Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) program is funding the construction of Phase 1, the subject of this case study. Phase 1 will include construction of one wave – the “adjustable waveshaper” – and access into the river, with some viewing areas on the south bank. Phase 1 is the cornerstone of the vision for the river park and the primary economic driver for a series of construction plans centered around whitewater enhancement. This includes:

- Excavation of existing river and riverbank bedrock.

- In-river construction of the waveshaper controlled by an adjustable metal plate at the bottom of the river to enhance wave performance and increase attributes such as water velocity and drop.
- Wave tuning, once operational.

Although not supported by the EDA TTOR funding, Phases 2 and 3 are discussed in this case study given their close connection with the overall story about community and economic development. The total estimated cost of construction for the first two phases is approximately \$17.1 million.

Phase 2 will include a downtown riverfront promenade or walkway, river access via a stairway from the north bank, overlooks and additional viewing areas. A \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's (HUD) Community Project Funding will be used to partially fund Phase 2. The town of Skowhegan and project partner Main Street Skowhegan are currently fundraising and waiting to hear about another federal grant that could help fund the remainder of Phase 2.

Phase 3 will involve the construction of two additional non-adjustable wave features -- one in the downtown area near the adjustable wave and the other a half-mile downstream for even more enhanced whitewater. These waves will be accomplished by constructing new river rock outcroppings and a divider island for water constriction, and more reshaping of the river bottom to increase drop and velocity. Phase 3 also includes a focus on downtown-adjacent trails and trail accessibility enhancements. The additional wave features and the trail construction work will take place as funding is raised.

Takeaways on What's Replicable: The three planned construction phases are connected to a number of closely related economic and community development initiatives that are already beginning to benefit the community, such as free outdoor recreation opportunities. The package of related outdoor recreation infrastructure projects includes:

- A welcoming riverfront.
- Improved river access.
- A natural river channel for tubing.
- Fishing in an excellent fish habitat.
- Enhanced whitewater waves for surfing and kayaking.
- Whitewater event infrastructure.
- 50+ miles of 4-season trails.

According to Skowhegan's identified transformation strategies, enhanced outdoor recreation is a key brand pillar. Since the current project was first initiated in the early 2000s, the expanded vision above has evolved in recent years. Community transformation through outdoor recreation includes not only the above new outdoor infrastructure, but also free outdoor recreation programming and skills clinics, and free gear and equipment for residents and visitors. The new infrastructure plan, programming and clinics, and available gear and equipment will bolster the regional economy by positioning Skowhegan as a tourist destination attracting visitors, businesses, and new residents — in addition to benefiting current residents.

Background on the Project

The Kennebec River in Maine runs through Somerset County and the town of Skowhegan, Maine. Skowhegan is the county seat of Somerset County and is a large Maine town, with a population of more than 8,600, according to the 2020 Census. The Kennebec River is one of

Skowhegan’s greatest assets, although the portion of the river that runs through the downtown area has been largely inaccessible to the public over time. One area resident said, “I’m excited to see the riverfront developed into something more than just chain-linked fences and dumpsters.” Skowhegan’s historic downtown and commercial district is on one side of the river. A manufacturing district is on the other side of the river, which includes such well-known manufacturers as New Balance and Sappi North America which are considered the anchor institutions in the area along with the General Hospital.

In 2016, [Main Street Skowhegan](#) led a community-wide collaborative process to craft the [Skowhegan Strategic Plan for Community Transformation](#) (and an [abridged version](#)) which was officially adopted by the community at a town meeting in June of 2016. The town’s goal is to make the area a thriving economic, cultural, and recreational destination where residents enjoy a high quality of life. The strategic plan includes innovative strategies for economic and community development and articulates projects and initiatives for the town — with specific action steps to excite and inspire the community.

Community transformation through outdoor recreation will be accomplished through free outdoor/civic infrastructure; free outdoor recreation programming and skills clinics; and free gear and equipment – all discussed in this section.

Free outdoor infrastructure: The EDA-funded whitewater enhancement is the cornerstone of the vision for the overall river park and the primary economic driver of the TTOR construction and related package of initiatives. The adjustable wave will ultimately enhance recreational quality especially for kayaking and surfing. However, the area’s attraction is not just the whitewater portion of the river. The greater vision for the river park, which will be free and open to all, will include a natural river channel for tubing and fishing as well. In all, the outdoor infrastructure includes the whitewater park and riverfront development, along with a trail network.

In addition to the Kennebec River, Skowhegan is also known for being a gateway to the Great North Woods. There are an estimated 28 current miles of trails in the town. A [Trails Master Plan](#) provides analysis, recommendations, and concept plans for an estimated 64 total miles of trails in Skowhegan. Partners of Main Street Skowhegan have already been using the trail plan to start related outdoor projects and initiatives. Main Street Skowhegan plans to commission more substantial designs for the downtown-adjacent trails since the trail network will incorporate the riverfront promenade, overlooks and viewing areas. The intent is to be able to access nearly all the trails via downtown through different connector routes.

Figure 6. Skowhegan River Park Vision.

Skowhegan River Park Vision

Enhancement of our industrial river corridor into an outdoor recreation asset free and open to all

- Welcoming riverfront
- Improved river access
- 50+ miles of trails
- Enhanced whitewater waves
- Natural tubing / fish channel
- Whitewater event infrastructure



Source: Main Street Skowhegan.

Free outdoor programming and skills clinics: To help achieve community transformation through outdoor recreation, offering programming and skill-building workshops is perceived as being critical. Initiated by the nonprofit Main Street Skowhegan, the [Skowhegan AmeriCorps Outdoor Recreation Program](#) offers free outdoor activities and whitewater trainings for community members – such as kayaking clinics and biking camps. The free outdoor programming also includes outdoor yoga, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and more. The enhanced river gorge will also serve as a venue for hosting major paddling competitions and whitewater events that draw paddlers and surfers from around the country, and other visitors who will shop, eat, and stay locally.

Free gear and equipment: The Skowhegan Outdoors “Community Gear Lending Library” known as Basecamp provides more than 200 items of gear (canoes, stand-up paddle boards, camping gear, etc.) for use during programming and for community members to borrow. Its location within a coffee shop downtown makes it convenient for people to walk in and borrow for several days at a time. Somerset County residents can borrow as much gear as they want for free, year-round; those outside of Somerset County are asked to pay a \$50 flat rate annual membership fee.

[Project Actors – State and local leaders, champions, stakeholders](#)

Stakeholder Organizations: In addition to the Town of Skowhegan itself, a major driver for the Skowhegan whitewater park has been the nonprofit Main Street Skowhegan, which is affiliated nationally with [Main Street America](#); the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#); and the Maine Downtown Center, a program of the [Maine Development Foundation](#). Main Street Skowhegan identified the outdoor recreation sector as a primary area for economic growth in Skowhegan in the coming years and, for some time now, has been partnered with the town’s “Run of River” Committee on a major capital campaign for the river park.

Local Champion: Kristina Cannon, the [president and CEO of Main Street Skowhegan](#) and a returning Central Maine native, as well as the project manager of the EDA TTOR project, is a central coordinator of the region’s strategic projects. She spends much of her time managing and fundraising for the river park, as well as the trail network and riverfront promenade, and has raised more than \$8 million for these projects to date. She was named the [2023 Maine Outdoor Industry Leader of the Year](#), and serves on the Maine Outdoor Brands Membership Committee, on the steering committee for [Maine’s 10-Year Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap initiative](#), as Marketing Committee chair of the Kennebec Valley Tourism Council, and as a member of the Committee for Skowhegan’s Village Partnership Initiative through the Maine Department of Transportation.

State Champions: Main Street Skowhegan partnered with the [Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation](#) (part of the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development, DECD, headed by Commissioner Heather Johnson) along with the Roux Institute at Northeastern University and others, to host an Outdoor Rec & Tech Summit in April 2023, culminating the last day with a \$3,000 pitch competition for outdoor recreation and technology startups.

The [Maine Office of Tourism](#), also part of Maine DECD, awarded Main Street Skowhegan the 2019 Governor’s Conference on Tourism Award for Marketing & Promotion based on the organization’s work to promote the town and region during a 2018 Festival in Skowhegan. Main

Street Skowhegan was recently [awarded \\$484,500](#) from the Maine Office of Tourism to develop a destination development plan and brand strategy for the region.

The [Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund](#) (MOHF) also awarded Main Street Skowhegan a set of grants that use proceeds from the sale of a dedicated instant lottery ticket (currently “Ca\$h Lines”) to support outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation projects across the state. In Skowhegan, these grants supported continuation of the permitting process for the whitewater infrastructure construction when it ran into issues that needed addressing.

Congressional Champions: U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King secured a \$2 million grant to support river park construction in the FY2022 Transportation and Housing Appropriations bill. Skowhegan is using this funding to partially fund Phase 2 infrastructure improvements such as the riverfront promenade, paved walkways, access to trails, and shoreline seating. The grant is supporting a design firm’s creation of the Final Design and Engineering for the promenade and stairs from downtown to the river on the north side.

Partners: Certain partners of the town of Skowhegan and Main Street Skowhegan are noteworthy for their work on the river park and are helping to ensure equitable access to the programming, skills clinics, and gear and equipment. They include these actions:

- The [Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program](#) was launched in 2019 in partnership with [Volunteer Maine](#), the [Outdoor Sport Institute](#) based in Maine, and additional local organizations. The program offers free guided outdoor activities and gear. The river-adjacent half of the first floor of the 3,000-square-foot Basecamp gear library features a community gathering place where Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps members host free outdoor-focused workshops indoors or on the river-facing outside deck.
- The [American Canoe Association](#) offers official paddling certifications and plans to be active with events in the Skowhegan River Park. The growing list of paddle sports includes kayaking, canoeing, rafting, paddleboarding, and other small watercraft sports.

Economic Benefits

Due to its special characteristics of adjustable waves and rapids, the whitewater park in Skowhegan is expected to become a destination and national events venue. The whitewater portion of the river park will especially contribute to kick-starting the regional economy, thereby improving the quality of life for the existing residents. Access to the downtown river park, promenade, and trail network will attract new residents who will strengthen the workforce, and entrepreneurs who will start businesses in Skowhegan. As a result, Skowhegan community members will benefit from new jobs and increased property values, and a more diversified tax base.

As the EDA-funded whitewater construction project is embedded within a regional development strategy, it will be difficult to attribute outcomes and outputs to it alone. However, the whitewater construction portion will clearly contribute to the overall goals of the regional strategy listed below and, as such, it serves as a model for other cities and counties with similar goals and objectives, including: 1) Helping to drive visitation, 2) Supporting business growth and retention, 3) Attracting new entrepreneurs and residents, 4) Spurring private investment and job creation, and 5) Diversifying the tax base, resulting in a stronger and more resilient regional economy.

Certain offices in the town of Skowhegan are already collecting baseline economic data at this time. For example, the town pulls public data from its downtown businesses. Main Street Skowhegan collects outdoor program participation and gear rental data via the Skowhegan

Outdoors AmeriCorps Program, as well as additional business data through its Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship. Early indicators of success include:

- Skowhegan Outdoors hosted 202 free outdoor programs and served 1,810 area participants in 2023.
- It is anticipated that 40 jobs will be created from this EDA funding and 136 jobs retained locally.
- New outdoor recreation businesses (e.g., handling transportation for tubers or renting watercraft) are anticipated.
- Local economic impacts -- from the [2016 Whitewater Park Economic Impact Study](#) -- are estimated to be (this study of local economic impacts is in the process of being updated in the summer of 2024):
 - An estimated \$4.6 million increase in spending statewide in just the first year of operation of the River Park.
 - \$1 million in labor income in the base year in Somerset County.
 - The potential for \$19 million in increased spending by year 10 as a result of the River Park as it draws thousands of people annually.

Other Benefits

Health Benefits: In a recent Maine Community Health Needs Assessment, Somerset County ranked 14th out of 16 counties in health outcomes and last for health factors. Nearly a quarter of Somerset County adults lead a sedentary lifestyle. Outdoor recreation provides an alternative to unhealthy distractions, and the impact of a healthier lifestyle would likely include improved mental and emotional wellness. According to a recent Maine Integrative Youth Health Survey, only 46% of youth in the Somerset region feel like they matter to people. With activities and trainings geared specifically to local youth, it is anticipated that the younger population will feel more of a community connection and a sense of value. The community is already starting to see this through two summer youth interns and a number of repeat youth attendees at programs.

So the river park will contribute to combatting obesity, sedentary-lifestyle rates, improved mental health, and poverty rates in one of the least healthy and poorest counties in the state. Through their initiatives, the town of Skowhegan and Main Street Skowhegan are helping to catalyze a shift toward healthier and more active lifestyles accessible to all area residents.

Resiliency Benefits - Strategy to Encourage Startups: Main Street Skowhegan launched the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship and hired a Director of Entrepreneurship to bolster economic growth and business support — strategies of Skowhegan Strategic Plan — and in response to the need for more economic resiliency and as a precaution against future economic shocks. The Center provides business planning support and programming as part of a regional hub-and-spoke entrepreneurial ecosystem partnership. The director runs a business pitch competition through a boot camp for entrepreneurs called [Business Lab](#), a free fast-paced, interactive program of 8 classes held over 8 weeks, followed by a pitch competition. It is designed to help both aspiring entrepreneurs as well as existing entrepreneurs and small business owners looking to evaluate new ideas.

Challenges

Over the 20-year history of developing the Skowhegan River Park, certain roadblocks have been encountered and addressed such as land ownership regulations. For example, to do the construction work, the town secured necessary easements from all adjacent property owners who would be impacted by in-river construction. The easements needed to be secured prior to moving

forward with permitting -- involving, for example, the [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) which has jurisdiction over the river because there is an endangered species present (the Atlantic Salmon).

The town of Skowhegan and Main Street Skowhegan have put together a variety of funding and financing schemes to accomplish their overall goal of developing a river park. In the past, some river park project match funding has come from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) with Sappi when the company was expanding its industrial complex in Skowhegan. At least \$1 million of the increased property taxes collected from Sappi during a previous company expansion were pledged for future river park construction. Based on past success, this economic development mechanism may be used again with future company expansions.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

Key Finding: Based on research site visits to at least 8 whitewater river parks across the country, the project implementers and stakeholders have learned that [whitewater river parks are proven tools for economic development](#). However, the immense success of these parks can be coupled with some unintended consequences, described here, along with how Skowhegan is addressing them.

Lessons Learned: There is a need to plan for, and invest in, additional community infrastructure in conjunction with whitewater park development or similar kinds of economic development attractions. These include the following being addressed in Skowhegan:

- **Housing:** The region already has a need for housing, particularly workforce housing, and now some \$5.4 million is being planned for affordable housing apartments in Skowhegan at 9 or more locations. The town is also projecting a need for hotel rooms for visitors. As an example of how a project such as the whitewater park can attract private investment, a developer has started redeveloping an old 80,000-square-foot yarn and textile mill in Skowhegan to include a boutique hotel, tap room and restaurant, and 45 apartment units — a \$20+ million investment.
- **Transportation, Parking, and Walkability:** Skowhegan is located about 90 minutes north of metropolitan Portland, Maine. Two major state roads merge in Skowhegan connected by a one-way rotary in the middle of town: Route 2 provides east-west access to the rest of Maine, while Route 201 connects the town going south (as I-95) and north to the Canadian border. The town engaged the [Maine Department of Transportation](#) (MDOT) [Village Partnership Initiative](#) to help develop a village master plan that will assess traffic congestion, parking, and bike and pedestrian safety.
- **Tourism Product Development and Branding:** Utilizing the aforementioned \$484,500 grant from the Maine Office of Tourism, Main Street Skowhegan is leading, in collaboration with partners in Waterville, development of a destination development plan and regional brand strategy. Once complete, this work will guide regional tourism product and experience development and narrative economics, while providing a cohesive look and feel for signage and marketing campaigns to generate awareness for the region and attract visitors, businesses, and new residents.
- **Sustainability:** The town and stakeholders are considering how to address an anticipated increased need for safety and emergency response as well as operations and maintenance of the river park and trail system.

The town and its stakeholders are continuing to work through these interconnected issues, as they take time. The timeline that led to this EDA funded whitewater river project starting in the early 2000s is presented in Appendix F.

Momentum is currently building in the region. Some local mottos being adhered to include: Think Regionally (i.e., don't compete for resources); Build your network (local, regional, state, national); Engage the media (for reciprocal relationships), and Build your brand (because storytelling is important!).

Time Factors, Any other Guidance Necessary for Replication: Skowhegan's River Park development has been in an extended planning stage for 20 years. Some key milestones over the 2-decade timeline are:

- 2004:
 - The town's road commissioner commissioned a \$24,000 feasibility study and found that there is enough drop and velocity in the water to sustain whitewater adjustment.
 - Subsequently, a design group collected and analyzed additional river data and developed a \$81,000 Preliminary Design.
- 2016: The town paid \$13,000 for a [Whitewater Park Economic Impact Study](#).
 - Based on positive findings, the city spent an additional \$490,000 to update the whitewater park's preliminary design and to move forward with next steps of the pre-environmental permitting process.
 - Also, Main Street Skowhegan led a community-wide collaborative process to craft the [Skowhegan Strategic Plan for Community Transformation](#) that was officially adopted by the community.
- 2022:
 - January 2022 - To match the EDA/TTOR request of \$4.8 million, Main Street Skowhegan's board [voted unanimously to allocate](#) \$201,240 to the project to be combined with the town's river park reserve account of \$1,021,161 in order for the project to reach the required match.
 - March 2022 - The town received \$2 million in federal funding for related river park construction, one of 105 projects across Maine earmarked by Congress.
 - Summer 2022 - An environmental engineering firm prepared the permit applications for state and federal regulatory agencies and is helping to coordinate the process with 1) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) and Department of Army Permit; and 2) [Maine Department of Environmental Protection](#) for the [Natural Resources Protection Act](#). Other agencies involved in the regulatory process are: [National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA); [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) due to an endangered species; [Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife](#); and [Maine Department of Marine Resources](#).
- 2023:
 - [Fundraising](#) continues for construction of the river park amenities related to the EDA TTOR whitewater portion, such as river accessibility via stairs and a ramp. As of 2023, more than \$7 million had been raised.
 - December 2023 - A regional coalition led by Main Street Skowhegan secured an EDA Distressed Area [Recompete Pilot Program](#) Phase 1 Strategy Development Grant of \$425,000 to create and connect people to good jobs which will incorporate outdoor recreation career pathways, including river and whitewater guiding.
- 2024:
 - Spring 2024:
 - Out of more than 500 applicants, the Recompete regional coalition was invited by EDA as one of 22 national finalists to apply for up to \$50 million in Phase 2 Implementation funding.
 - As of this time frame, the town was seeking contractor qualifications for [preconstruction services](#).

- Permitting delays centered around Brookfield Renewable, owners of the hydropower facility upriver from the river park site, the [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#) (FERC), [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA), and the Endangered Species Act. FERC regulates the hydropower industry and needs to sign off on any project that is within their project boundary of the hydropower dam. The whitewater project is projected to slightly impact the flood plain, and the Town was required to submit a CLOMR (Conditional Letter of Map Revision) to FEMA. In addition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers changed the Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation from an informal review to a formal review.
 - Spring/Summer 2024:
 - The town hired a contractor for \$18,755 for preconstruction services and to help work through in-river construction planning.
 - \$567,000 final design is underway with a Colorado-based whitewater architect and engineer finalizing design of Phase 1, including the adjustable wave feature and river access.
 - Fall 2024:
 - Anticipated federal and state permits in-hand.
 - Final design and construction plans complete; final costs assessed.
- Anticipated 2025, Spring/Summer:
 - Access road construction expected to begin; in-river work anticipated to start July 15, 2025.
 - Because the town went through an EDA-approved, qualifications-based selection process for selecting its pre-construction services contractor, the town is able to engage the same contractor for construction, provided the cost estimate for construction is within 10% of the engineer's opinion of cost.

2. Frost Fire Park (North Dakota) Snowmaking Infrastructure

Project Overview

Grant: Frost Fire Park Waterworks Construction, Urban Utilities

Grant recipient: Pembina Gorge Foundation

Type of Grant: Competitive TTOR grant

EDA funding: \$2,170,488

Total project funding: \$2,713,110 (with \$542,622 local match)

Current project status: Completed

What is unique, innovative: This EDA investment funds the Frost Fire Park Snowmaking Infrastructure Improvement and Expansion Project to update the water and related snowmaking infrastructure that will improve the quality and longevity of skiing in this unique and eclectic park in northeastern North Dakota.

The project supports the Pembina Gorge Foundation -- as a new owner of Frost Fire Park which first opened in 1976 -- with addressing the regional need for resilient outdoor recreation activities at the park. The snowmaking equipment has a direct economic impact on the park's operations, particularly by extending its winter sports season.

The project's unique and innovative aspect is the loose but large local/regional team of numerous devotees who have all worked toward a common vision for the region over the decades of its

existence and contributed to the park’s sustainability. The Frost Fire Park stakeholders are working hard to make this area a more noted destination for their region of the state, just as the Theodore Roosevelt National Park is for the southwestern part of the state.

In the northeastern region of North Dakota, the communities in the Pembina River Gorge area – such as the cities of Walhalla, Langdon, Cavalier, and others -- are the ones that would benefit and prosper the most from any improvements at the park. In addition to its neighbors across the border, Frost Fire Park also draws visitors from North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

The park has been a popular destination for more than 40 years and has expanded its offerings and amenities over that period to include other outdoor sports and to include a theater for arts and cultural activities.

Through the love and devotion of local, regional, and state stakeholders, champions, and visitors, the park has survived several difficulties over the decades -- including the collapse of the theater’s roof due to snow and the main chair lift becoming unsafe for use. In the midst of the pandemic, the failure of the park’s snowmaking equipment caused the park to close down for its entire 2022-2023 winter season.

“Snowmaking has allowed Frost Fire Park to open. Thanks to an EDA grant, we were able to purchase new snowmaking equipment. Our team has been hard at work making snow to make us the first ski park to open for the winter season in North Dakota this year.”

Source:

<https://FrostFirePark.org/FAQ>

Takeaways on What’s Replicable: The early planning efforts of the EDA-designated Economic Development Districts (EDDs) in northeastern North Dakota helped to make the EDA-supported snowmaking improvement possible at Frost Fire Park. These groups included the Red River Regional Council (RRRC) and the North Central Planning Council. EDA provides funding to these and similarly designated EDDs around the country to bring together the public and private sectors to help create an economic development roadmap for the region. Additional supportive organizations included the Job Development Authorities for Cavalier County and Pembina County, among many other organizations.

North Dakota’s Frost Fire Park demonstrates the region’s passion for winter sports and outdoor recreation, and the willingness of the region to dedicate itself to the park’s preservation for a future generation. The entire Pembina Gorge region is building up a cohesive regional tourism and outdoor recreation brand through education and marketing, and the park has been featured in state marketing publications and economic development magazines. An important related strategy involves enhancing the existing assets, especially the amenities at Frost Fire Park to attract more visitors. This project stimulated existing assets in recovery rather than designing a new project that would create competition for older projects.

This project, among the competitive EDA ARPA TTOR recipients, rose to the top based on its data survey results (see the Benefits sections below).

Background on the Project

Pembina Gorge geographical location: This Pembina Gorge project is located in the far northeastern region of North Dakota about 5 miles from the Canadian border and about 1.5 hours south of Winnipeg, the capital and largest city in the Canadian province of Manitoba. The love for the Pembina Gorge runs deep through what is called the “Rendezvous Region” of North Dakota and across borders. The region includes the three counties in the farthest northeastern

corner of the state -- Cavalier, Pembina, and Walsh Counties. It is a uniquely rugged natural area, as steep valley cliffs tower over small, isolated prairies, and continues to be a top destination for adventure seekers with a passion for nature.

Frost Fire Park's origin and expansion: Frost Fire Park opened for skiing as a family business in 1976 by owners Richard and Judith Johnson. The downhill ski area now has about a dozen ski runs. The Johnsons also had a passion for the arts and, in 1985, they added the annual Frost Fire Summer Theater, creating the "Frost Fire Ski Area and Amphitheater," as the park was known at the time. The summer theater has regularly welcomed an average of 5,000 guests during each theater season. During a recent heavy-snow season at the park, the theater's roof and stage collapsed due to the snow load, and the park is already in the planning stages for a new theater using state matching grants. Once the new theater facility is finished being built, the park plans to use that new facility as a venue for weddings, festivals and rock concerts, and other larger scale events.

Frost Fire Park also operates the only downhill mountain bike trails with lift service in the state of North Dakota. These biking trails are separate from the ski runs. With 350 feet of elevation, they are the types of high-quality bike trails that appeal to all levels of riders. The park has 8 trails of varying difficulty. On Fridays through Sundays during the summer months, Frost Fire offers downhill mountain biking tours. All riders must have an access pass to use the downhill trails. There is also a mountain bike terrain park, and hiking-only trails.

Support from regional economic development districts: After Richard Johnson passed away in 2016, the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department and Judith Johnson formed a temporary partnership to help keep Frost Fire open to the public until a more long-term solution could be found to keep it going and sustainable.

In 2017, several regional councils and community foundations worked to make the park a sustainable venture including the Red River Regional Council (RRRC) which is a nonprofit quasi-governmental organization that serves as the EDA-designated EDD for the northeastern North Dakota region of 42 communities and the counties of Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, and Grand Forks. RRRC brings together public and private partners to create a roadmap known as a known as a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or "CEDS." This sort of activity supports business growth, revitalizes Main Streets, and develops vibrant communities where people can live work, learn, visit, and play for generations. The overall goals ultimately are to strengthen regional economies, support private capital investment, and create jobs. RRRC is governed by a 15-member board of directors, which includes mayors, city representatives, county commissioners, local job development corporation members, private business owners, chambers of commerce leaders, educators, and a liaison from the state's job service.

This group of people and organizations formed the Pembina Gorge Foundation that Mrs. Johnson sold the Frost Fire Park to in 2017. The Foundation's board launched Phase I of the "Fire Up Frost Fire" capital campaign with a goal of raising \$3.1 million to:

- Acquire the park.
- Maintain the major equipment, fleet of snowboards, the snowmaker, people movers, and theater equipment.
- Accomplish small renovations.
- Set aside a \$1 million endowment for scholarships.

New snowmaking infrastructure: From the beginning of the pandemic back in 2020, the Red River Regional Council in the Pembina Gorge region led and supported certain significant projects that benefited from the funding opportunities resulting from pandemic appropriations such as the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This resulted in two grants being awarded to the Pembina Gorge Foundation for updates to the Frost Fire Park facility, particularly its snowmaking infrastructure:

- 1) The \$2.17 million EDA ARPA TTOR grant.
- 2) A \$900,000 grant from the state of North Dakota.

New visitors: With EDA's funding, the new equipment was installed in the summer and fall of 2023, and the Frost Fire team immediately got to work making snow for the 2023-2024 season. It produced more and better snow than the old equipment. Although there were warmer winter temperatures than usual, the snow quality led to an increase in the winter visitors.

Financing snowmaking infrastructure, with appreciation: As noted, Frost Fire Park received a little more than \$2 million in funding from EDA for the water/snowmaking infrastructure project. EDA provided 80%, and the state provided a 20% match of just over \$540,000. The Foundation had estimated it needed at least \$3 million to do the project, but the construction bids came in \$1.8 million higher than the originally estimated cost. A new scaled-down estimate was around \$3.6 million. They still have a \$500,000 overrun that the park will now need to borrow. Nevertheless, the EDA funding was crucial for the Frost Fire snowmaking project as the park previously had a 40-year-old system. The Foundation and its stakeholders spent the summer of 2023 installing their new state-of-the-art water infrastructure for snowmaking.

Demographic trend underscores target audience: As in other rural areas of the country, over the last 25 years, many young people from the Pembina Gorge area moved to jobs in larger cities. In the last 5 years, however, the region has experienced a turnaround in that regard. COVID drove a shift back to rural areas of people in their 30s as the younger generation migrated back to their rural roots. The main target audience for the Frost Fire Park improvement project work is their population of youth and young families. But until the trend really takes hold, now there are many open positions, but no people available to fill them. The Foundation is in tune with the youth in the area, and the board is interested in expanding on the options available to local youth through camping and other activities. In fact, about 50 school-age kids are taking part in an arts camp at Frost Fire in the summer of 2024.

Project Actors – State leaders, champions, stakeholders

Local and regional stakeholders are long-standing champions: Frost Fire Park's stakeholders have an ongoing funding effort. They hired a professional fund-raising group to help focus on expansion and capital improvements to existing attractions, and their overall effort will continue for the next 15 months.

A state policy, the North Dakota 40% tax credit for gifts to endowments, has assisted this fundraising effort. The Pembina Gorge Foundation's endowment is held at a local community foundation that qualifies for the North Dakota Endowment Tax Credit.

In addition to the \$750,000 North Dakota Gorge Preservation Grant match back in 2019, the state of North Dakota legislatively appropriated an additional \$900,000 to Pembina Gorge Foundation for additional Frost Fire Park infrastructure enhancements. The Pembina Gorge Foundation and Frost Fire Park also presently have a matching grant of \$1.75 million from the state for

destination development. But without a local match, they can't use this funding source. Thus, they are trying to identify additional support.

Governor Burgum's support for the Pembina Gorge region: In 2023, North Dakota [Governor Doug Burgum announced](#) that the Pembina Gorge

State Recreation Area encompassing 2,800 acres of public land in the Pembina River Gorge area would be developed into North Dakota's 14th state park -- along with a campground through \$6 million secured by the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department during the 2023 legislative session. Development of the park's campground would include underground utilities, roads, a 55-site campground, 6 year-round cabins, a comfort station, a shop, and seasonal staff accommodations at a cost of approximately \$8 million. The additional \$2 million for this initial development is coming from a matching federal Land & Water Conservation Fund grant.

“The Pembina Gorge is one of North Dakota's most beautiful areas, offering an incredible array of recreational activities including canoeing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, hunting and birdwatching.”
– Governor Burgum

A significant aspect of this development is that the 165-acre property for the new state park's campground is about a mile from Frost Fire Park. The Pembina Gorge Foundation's board says that having this new state park and campground nearby will help attract visitors to the area.

Economic Benefits

Frost Fire Park has expanded its business, and increased employment opportunities by creating new jobs, saving other jobs, spurring private investment, and advancing economic resiliency throughout the northeastern part of the state. The actual results have been:

- 44 new jobs created and 22 existing jobs retained (mostly seasonal but a few annual positions in retail, financing, and other supporting services).
- 15 businesses retained that provide supporting services.
- Workforce development training opportunities in customer relations and applying technical outdoor skills.
- An increase of 4,000 new visitors in 2023, visitors staying longer, and with about 63% non-local visitors who spend more on average than local visitors.

Additional results have included:

- New outreach and networking events engaging a variety of stakeholder interests.
- Leveraged additional state and regional funding.
- Increased economic resilience through business and visitor diversification, collaboration and technical assistance, and hazard reductions.

Training and workforce development: In announcing the new state park's campground development, Governor Burgum said, “This project is an opportunity to enhance outdoor recreation, tourism and economic development while helping us recruit and retain much-needed workforce.”

The same objective applies to Frost Fire Park, especially the part about retaining and recruiting a workforce. The Pembina Gorge Foundation has been advertising the open positions at Frost Fire Park using the state's job service, and the park has some local residents working there; however, many of the park's young workers are coming from Mexico. The park is accepting H2B commercial visas for immigrant workers like how the state's nearby agricultural sector has gone to H2A programs to bring in workers from South Africa. Much of the area's farm labor has

retired, and there is no replacement labor force based on the younger generation leaving the area until just recently, as noted earlier. Wages paid at the park range from \$14 to \$20/hour.

Skills development: In terms of skills, there is a need for culinary skills at Frost Fire Park. Local community colleges identified this need early on, and began training in culinary skills. The community colleges are also helping the park to advertise its need for cooks.

There is also a need for skills related to equipment. At Frost Fire Park, this would include having an onsite individual to maintain and troubleshoot potential technical difficulties with the ski chair lift, thereby eliminating the burden of seeking external insight. Similarly, there is a great deal of technical equipment involved with the new water system for making snow, which will require individuals with specific technical skills to maintain and oversee.

Encouraging emerging entrepreneurial opportunities: The Frost Fire Park stakeholders are interested in better assisting the potential entrepreneurial community in the area to help create new businesses. Certain attractions in the Pembina River Gorge area are unique, such as a dinosaur fossil dig that is near Frost Fire Park. The Pembina Gorge Foundation and others involved in regional planning are working toward diversifying the attractions in the gorge area to offer horseback riding and birding - which is very big – along with increasing biking and hiking. Kayaking and tubing are additional opportunities along the Pembina River.

Potential demand: Frost Fire Park now sometimes reaches a total of 7,000 skiers a season. The park's theater recently had 6,000 attendees for a theater season showing the Sound of Music. They are pushing toward bringing in 12,000 visitors per year and would like to see that grow to 20,000 over the next year or two. The current estimate is that -- between Frost Fire Park, the new State Park, and the expanding outdoor recreation opportunities around the Pembina Gorge -- there is the potential for 30,000 to 40,000 visitors annually in the gorge area.

Other Benefits

Supporting youth, equity, disabled persons in the local communities: The Pembina Gorge Foundation hopes to develop a slush fund of donors so that school groups and church groups can plan a ski day. As an attraction, a slush fund of about \$2,500 could be used to help defray the cost of providing lunch to the groups. One donor recently offered a \$2,500 contribution for 4,000 free lift tickets for local high school students over the recent holiday season from December 21 to January 2. For the next ski season, the board hopes to increase the number of free lift tickets to 10,000 to help provide even more of an opportunity for those students who don't have the means to purchase tickets and rent gear. The Pembina Gorge Foundation board would also like to become more involved in helping disabled persons access the facilities.

Challenges

Organizations like Frost Fire Park must break even from the standpoint of a nonprofit's cash-flow business model. There are a couple of interrelated challenges related to the different types of fundraising and donor groups, as described in this section.

- Donors want to see groups of investors or donors, and they want to see a positive cash flow, and investment going back to the local communities. They also want to see state and federal involvement.
- Federal and state investors want to see local involvement. Each of these types and groups of investors and donors are necessary. They operate hand-in-hand and complement and feed off each other.

- The struggle for the cash flow is real. Donors don't want a business that they're investing in to fold in two years. They want to invest in an entity that is cash-flow positive, and they want to make sure their contribution continues to provide opportunities for recreation over time. They don't want to donate working capital or pay for labor or help pay for the light bill or other recurring expenses. They *do* want to see “shiny new infrastructure.”

For any business, the first five years is touch and go. Frost Fire Park is still in its first 5-year period since it was converted from being owned by a private corporation to being owned by a nonprofit foundation. And the foundation is learning these lessons as they continue to work toward sustainability.

The foundation hopes to continue to improve on winter amenities, such as by adding a ski school, ski clubs, and spinning off small businesses associated with the park. The board is considering building an outdoor ropes course and similar types of outdoor facilities that would accommodate fee-paying corporate team-building events and outdoor education. Some of Frost Fire's amenities that will be improved by “Giving Hearts Day” in 2024 are: theater stage reconstruction, kitchen and bath remodeling, and employee housing – and more on this below. Giving Hearts Day is a 24-hour online campaign that raises money for nonprofits in North Dakota and northwest Minnesota.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

Lessons learned: The Pembina Gorge Foundation has learned a great deal from the data being collected at Frost Fire Park. The organizations collect data in a variety of ways. For example, they:

- Use the app called “Square” which most restaurants and bars use. It is a popular app that tracks the numbers of visitors and their purchases.
- Have a state-of-the-art system for ski equipment rentals that tracks the skis going out and coming back in – and which also helps identify replacement needs.
- Have been building a database of visitors from their mail marketing system that provides information on the number of skiers and bikers per weekend.
- Use their nearby Job Development Center, which is a regional state agency, for some necessary data on businesses and job creation within a 60-mile radius around the park.

Need for housing accommodations for visitors, workers: Potential visitors are asking where they can stay if they visit Frost Fire Park. There is a 30-unit hotel in Walhalla, which is 7 miles away, but that is not enough housing over time, so presently there are substantial opportunities for builders. The following are some current activities underway in this regard:

- There are a couple of different builders erecting cabins: one in the area south of Walhalla and one to the west of the park.
- The Pembina Gorge Foundation, itself, is exploring the possibility of building some thirty cabins on the property at the Frost Fire Park. The Foundation's board is exploring the possibility of creating a separate development corporation to help address housing for both visitors and workers.

Anticipated results of increasing housing: By adding overnight accommodations in the region, per-person visitor spending is expected to grow substantially. In 2023, North Dakota Parks & Recreation noted that by adding overnight accommodations and destination property amenities, per-person visitor spending is expected to grow substantially statewide. [Visitor spending](#) increased from \$86 for single-day visitors to nearly \$460 for multi-day visitors to the North

Dakota state park system in 2020. The upgraded level of service and amenities, in addition to increased winter recreation opportunities, improves the region's tourism and economic development, and impacting the entire state.

3. Hawai'i Island Trail Stewards Program

Project Overview

Grant: Hawai'i Island Trail Stewards Program

Grant recipient: State of Hawai'i

Type of Grant: TTOR Competitive

EDA funding: \$600,000

Total project funding: \$780,000 (\$180,000 state match)

Current project status: Pilot program at two trails completed

What is unique, innovative: This EDA investment supports the state of Hawai'i for a unique Trail Stewards Program to integrate native culture and programming into the state's tourism industry and educate visitors about native history. The EDA project supported the hiring of interpretive staff for outdoor recreational sites of special significance to Native Hawai'ian heritage, thereby improving the visitor experience.

In trail locations around the country, the use of trail stewards, trail ambassadors, trail rangers, and tour guides is not a new concept. At certain historically and culturally significant sites in Hawai'i, the communities and the formerly informal trail stewards at these special sites didn't necessarily want *more* tourists. They wanted a better experience and value for the tourists. In response, the state hired the informal stewards as employees to play a role as partners interfacing with visiting tourists and offering stories of their place. Now the stewards continue to be engaged in their passion, as well as being paid for their effort.

The Trail Steward Program was piloted by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority on Hawai'i Island during the pandemic. With some year-end funds, the state's [Trail & Access Program](#) in the [Department of Land & Natural Resources](#) was able to continue supporting the Trail Stewards Program while waiting to hear about potential funding from EDA to support the effort over a longer period.

The Trail & Access Program had already been connecting with the local communities about problems at certain overly-popular trails – problems of overcrowding, congestion, degradation of resources, safety hazards, and an overall negative experience for both residents and visitors. A goal of both the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the Trail & Access Program is to manage these destination management hot spots, or areas that are “loved to death,” with the help of the Trail Stewards Program.

Formally hiring the already-engaged stewards to implement their interpretive approach -- and increase the quality of the visits -- re-focused the Trail & Access Program on qualitative more than quantitative aspects. By adopting this view, the state is managing and bringing down the total number of visitors yet increasing the number of visitors interested in the stewards' interpretation while protecting the places from the negative effects of overcrowding.

The EDA funding is now helping visitors to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for native Hawai'ian history and culture, while helping to better manage the tourism inflow to certain

trails. The funds are having a positive impact by helping to create mindful visitation among those who come to responsibly enjoy the special trails.

Takeaways on What’s Replicable: EDA is dedicated to working with communities, and this EDA project involves a locally driven strategy for recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic. Replicability has everything to do with listening to what the community wants. Communities tend to have a strong voice about their place. Adopting their perspective is useful in empowering and allowing them to take the lead on something they are already inherently knowledgeable about and attached to.

Just like their communities, the trail stewards hired through this EDA-funded program are sensitive to the popular trails as sacred spaces. The special trails are part of the state’s overall trails program, but they are ancient trails that have long been considered sacred by the descendants who live there. They are mostly wilderness with sensitive ecosystems, culturally and ecologically, and they house some endangered species that require care. The state of Hawai‘i is appealing to another side of people – their sense of place -- in trying to encourage respectful and appreciative visitor behaviors. The state is working to adopt a sense of place and appreciation for these locations and to pass it on to others.

Background on the Project

The [Hawai‘i Trail & Access Program](#) is called Nā Ala Hele which means “paths,” “roads,” or “ways to go.” Nā Ala Hele is part of the state’s [Department of Land & Natural Resources](#) (DLNR), [Division of Forestry and Wildlife](#) (DOFAW). The Department of Land & Natural Resources manages one-third of the land in Hawai‘i. There are more than 130 trails listed at [Hawai‘i’s official trails map](#). Users can search from a list of all the trails, or by island, features, amenities, activities, hazards, what’s prohibited, and what is closed.

In 2021 during the pandemic, a small 8-month pilot Trail Stewards Program was started at the popular Pololū Valley site on the northern end of the big island. At that time, there had been no flights to the Hawai‘ian Islands and tourism had decreased to zero. The community saw this as an opportunity to suggest a different approach to managing the site before it increased in popularity again. Community members met with the state and helped to come up with an approach for the pilot which was initially funded by the Hawai‘i Tourism Department on the cusp of tourism coming back. Hearing about the pilot, the DLNR Trail & Access Program Manager for Hawai‘i Island informed the other stakeholders that his agency had a small amount of year-end funding that could be applied to continuing it while submitting an application for EDA ARPA TTOR funding.

The famed Pololū Historic Trail: The Pololū Historic Trail is a short one compared to other Hawai‘ian trails, at a little more than half a mile, one way, but it is one of the most popular trails in the big island even though Pololū is on the northern end of the island, away from much of the population. The trailhead kiosk says the scenic trail is “short but steep and 100% worth it.” Pololū is also one of many “overly loved” places, and was recognized as “Hotspot 1” by the Tourism Authority’s 2021 Destination Action Plan for managing and mitigating further damage.

Figure 8. Pololū Historic Trail.



Source: Hawai‘i Island Nā Ala Hele Trails and Access Program.

Pololū Trail legends and history: The area of Pololū is deeply intertwined with Hawai‘ian heritage from ancient gods to legendary battles and royal historical figures. Wakea, a god of the sky, and Papa, a goddess of the land, lived in the Pololū Valley and gave birth to Haloa, who became the eldest sibling to all Hawai‘ians. The many battles that took place in the valley gave Pololū its name, “long spear,” as the warriors used long spears in battle. Pololū is the burial site for a chief who was killed there. In the early 1800s, Hawai‘ian King Kamehameha was sheltered in the Pololū Valley during a period of exile; during his childhood in the 1700s, the valley protected him so that he could grow up to unite the Hawai‘ian Islands.

The steep sea cliffs surrounding the valley were carved over time from constant rainfall, surging stream flow, and ancient undersea landslides. Early Hawai‘ians dating back to 300AD, grew breadfruit, kava, and taro root in the marshlands -- and later using terraced farming techniques. There was a productive brackish fishpond for the village by the black sand dunes on the beach. In the late 1800s, the Pololū Trail was constructed as an old government mule trail, historic cobblestones are still embedded in sections of the trail.

Today, flowers carpet Pololū Valley, and the area around the trail is a cherished place offering a place for spiritual reflection and an opportunity to reconnect with nature. It is a vital space for local families who go there to ground themselves through their cultural protocols. Visitors are drawn to the place to enjoy panoramic views of the rugged coastline. Hikers ascend and descend a steep switch-back type of trail that goes to a pebble beach where activities might include swimming and horseback riding. The trail begins near the end of the paved road leading to the trailhead and a lookout station and extends down to the shoreline at sea level.

The need for Pololū community engagement: Social media has contributed to attracting an increasing number of visitors to Pololū’s picturesque cliffs and beach. Following the reduced

travel during the pandemic, there was a surge in visitors afterwards. With this crowding, the result has been parking congestion and illegal parking, and disregard for nearby private property. The overcrowding has also resulted in a degradation of cultural and natural resources.

Community sessions: Due to the overwhelming number of visitors and negative impacts, the state legislature is funding the Trail & Access Program to develop a plan for the Pololū Trail – the now ongoing Pololū Planning Project -- through a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) allocation. The project’s goal is to engage with the communities and lineal descendants connected to Pololū to develop a plan for managing the lookout, parking area, and trail by incorporating input from the community and families who have lived near there for a long time.

The Hawai‘i Trail & Access Program initiated a series of talking sessions, or talk story sessions, with local community members. The sessions pointed out that current visitor numbers “greatly exceed” acceptable limits. In 2023, the average daily number of visitors to Pololū ranged from 497 to 709 visitors, including both out-of-state visitors and Hawai‘ian residents. On average for 2023, the trailhead received about 597 daily visitors. The highest number of visitors in a single day in 2023 occurred in January with 1,482 people. The number of visitors to the Pololū lookout and trail has generally only been limited by the small number of parking spaces at the trailhead and along both sides of the road leading up to the trailhead. Some of this area is within DLNR’s jurisdiction, as it includes state lands – the Kohala Forest Reserve -- that have been used for parking near the trailhead.

With decades of experience working with rural Hawai‘ian communities, the planning firm [Townscape](#) was selected to assist in [developing a management plan](#) that explores alternative solutions, including stewardship solutions, to protect the Pololū area from overuse. The plan was developed with extensive input from the trail stewards, families in nearby villages, residents with a connection to the place, and others with intimate knowledge of it. Issues highlighted during community talk story sessions included roadway congestion and parking, overcrowding and impacts to the local way of life, trail and ocean safety and rescues, sanitation, resource degradation, and trespassing and liability. Another issue raised was the lack of cultural awareness on the part of visitors.

The draft management plan was released in January 2024, and comments were accepted during January and February. The management plan is guided by a vision and principles strongly articulated by the community during the talk story sessions. First and foremost, the guiding principles emphasize that solutions should prioritize protecting Pololū Valley and its environment first, and *not* focus on improving people’s access and use of the trail. The management plan’s guiding principles urge that stewardship solutions should focus on improving and increasing visitors’ and residents’ understanding of the cultural/historical significance of Pololū.

Recognizing the trail stewards’ role: A critical component in successful implementation of the management plan is the Trail Stewards Program. The plan notes that the trail stewards play an essential role in raising awareness of the history and culture. Along with interpreting the historic nature of the area and vehicle management, as needed, the trail stewards’ duties also include reporting trail maintenance needs and conducting visitor counts. Their presence has helped to organize the experience at the trailhead, resulting in better vehicle flow. They have further provided information about the physical condition of the trail so visitors can be better prepared for their experience, resulting in fewer emergency rescues.

The management plan proposes to continue the Pololū Trail Stewards Program as a management approach. Following the current structure of the program, the trail stewards would continue to be

on site seven days a week, but with extended hours during the summer with more daylight. There would be a minimum of three trail stewards working at one time, with two at the trailhead and one in the valley. They would continue as paid positions, while volunteer opportunities would also be made available. The success and effectiveness of the program was referenced as a model for other popular visitor destination sites where the presence of trail stewards could be beneficial. DLNR also plans to develop a digital map for the trail stewards' use.

The management plan presents three alternative scenarios addressing the vehicular issues at the Pololū trailhead, differing in terms of their parking configurations. All of the solutions take into account the local residents' needs for access to the area and designated parking for the trail stewards. The preferred parking scenario has yet to be determined at this point. For these physical changes, after completing an environmental review process, DLNR will need to secure funding for land acquisition as the parking solutions are located on privately-owned land and implementation is dependent on the disposition of the land. DLNR will procure professional services to plan, design and construct site improvements, including obtaining necessary permits and approvals.

Meanwhile, the state continues to meet regularly with the local community group and the stewards on how best to implement other aspects of the management plan. The DLNR staff note that really hearing from and listening to the native population, including the trail stewards, and learning about their issues is what is at the forefront of this effort. Understanding what makes sense to *them* about the sacred places -- and then empowering the stewards, as well. It is their land and, once empowered, they are able to help the state frame a perspective.

The Puna Trail: With receipt of the EDA TTOR funding, the sensitive area of [Puna was similarly added as a second location](#) for the Trail Stewards Program. Puna has been ingrained in Hawai'ian spirituality and mythology for centuries. According to legend, Puna is the home of Pele, the goddess of fire and volcanoes. The Puna Trail is an ancient walking path used by Hi'iaka, Pele's younger sister, who came down from the Kilauea Volcano to surf with her best friend and look for Pele's lover. Today's trail extends three miles and ends at Hā'ena Beach, a sacred site where Hi'iaka first learned hula. Native Hawai'ians have long cherished the area around Puna for its rainforests and groves, fertile land, and natural resources.

Figure 9. Puna Trail Planning Project Area.



[Source.](#)

Puna Trail Planning Project: In modern times, some people have mistreated the trail and beach. New recreational behaviors spurred by the pandemic have led to increased use of the trail including continued motorized trail use which is illegal. Also, there is insufficient protection for

the green sea turtles that are common at Hā'ena Beach. Given its wealth of unique stories, cultural sites, and natural resources, the Puna Trail requires a place-based management approach.

A state planning team, consisting of DLNR's Trail & Access Program and [Townscape](#), has asked for help from the local communities and stewards in coming up with [short-term actions and long-term solutions to protect and preserve the Puna Trail](#). The public draft of a [Stakeholder Action Plan](#) was just released in June 2024. The plan is intended to guide trail management so the trail is used in a way that preserves and honors its historic and cultural significance and will better protect the coastal stretch of the trail. The plan's primary objective is to outline actionable steps for educating trail users and recommending next steps for continued stakeholder engagement aiming to build upon outreach activities that have already been initiated.

[Project Actors – State leaders, champions, stakeholders](#)

Champions: The Hawai'i state staff say that the main champions in Hawai'i are the trail stewards themselves who are employed by the EDA grant. The Stewards Program is formally called the Nā Manu 'Elele Stewards Program. In traditional Hawai'ian context, birds, or “nā manu,” represent messengers, guardians and beings of a particular place, while “elele” refers to individuals who act as messengers sent on a mission. The state hired as trail stewards native Hawai'ians with a deep connection to place – Pololū or Puna -- or who are lineal descendants with ancestors buried there. There is not a federally-recognized tribe representing these descendants, but they are native Hawai'ians who are regularly seen hiking at those locations. Leading tours on the trails, these guides tell their own personal stories. Nature-based skills, such as fishing and waterman skills, tend to be inherent to many of the stewards.

Additional champions: The director of the Hawai'i Trails & Access Program at DLNR/DOFAW, Jackson Bauer, provided early funding for this unique and innovative initiative and has been at the heart of it since early-on, working with aligned agencies such as the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. The Tourism Authority, in turn, works closely with and prepares most of the trailhead signs showing trail specifications and interpretive information.

Additional notable champions who understand the native perspective and have fought for high-level support such as through EDA included former Governor David Ige who was Governor at the time of receipt of the EDA grant. The Governor said, “Outdoor recreation areas are precious spaces enjoyed in every community across our state by residents and visitors alike.”

Stakeholders: There are many stakeholders. Important among them are the trails' user groups, the state's target audience. This includes both visitors from out of state as well as the residents of the Pololū and Puna areas who have been the most affected by increased tourism since those areas are their back yards.

[Economic Benefits](#)

The trail stewards educate users on how to behave appropriately around the numerous cultural and historic sites. They serve as eyes and ears for the state trails, report trail maintenance needs, and help to enforce infractions. The stewards also enforce safety measures and educate visitors about any dangers at the sites. The Pololū Trail, for instance, is carved into the red clay cliffs and can be slippery when wet. It is essential to make sure that hikers watch the time and check the weather; the National Weather Service actually provides a spot forecast for this trail. As a result of the stewards' work, the program has helped to increase visitors' awareness of both historical and cultural significance and trail hiking conditions. This, in turn, has helped to decrease hiking accidents, illegal camping, and parking.

With the pilot's success, the state put into place a contract to direct hire 4 the full-time equivalent (FTE) staff persons and this contract will retain them over approximately 3 years to 2025 to tell the stories of places along the two high-use, high-visibility, and high-sensitivity trails. [Kupu](#) is the company doing the contracting. It is a youth-focused conservation and sustainability nonprofit in Hawai'i that was established in 2007 and has an AmeriCorps program for underserved populations. The state also provided the new stewards some training on wilderness encounters, first aid (safety tips in the case of an unsuspected rip tide), and public engagement.

Other Benefits

Hawai'i has a high percentage of native Hawai'ians, and it is difficult to track minority populations as is done in U.S. Census data collections. For one thing, it is difficult to measure what's happening on the ground because different types of disjointed communities may be side by side. For example, there may be a gated community next to a community with a high poverty rate in the same tract. This makes it hard to tease out from the data what's actually going on once the data is averaged. Therefore, having four stewards with lineal descent automatically helps to bring an equity voice to this program.

The Trail Stewards Program does daily reporting with a Clicker app, tracking the total number of visitors a day. They also track endangered species in their areas, such as the churro monk seal, and any human interaction or incidences with those species. This wide-ranging tracking serves to enhance the information from the residents in the talking sessions and outreach meetings.

Challenges

Continuity in the future: Securing funding for the Trail Stewards Program beyond 2026 is a priority, given the crucial role of the stewards in educating visitors about the cultural and historic significance of the Pololū and Puna Trails and their success to-date. With underfunded agencies, a challenge is where to go for future funding. When the EDA TTOR funding ends in 2025, the state is potentially planning to fold the program into its EDA block grant that ends in 2026. Or the legislature may possibly fund it, depending upon continued success.

With the new addition of funding from another state agency, the state is now working to expand the Trail Stewards Program to new sites. The state announced in late 2023 that, with added agency funding, the program would be expanded by up to 24 full-time and part-time positions on Maui, Moloka'i, Oahu, and Kauai Islands, as well as additional trails on Hawai'i Island beyond the Pololū and Puna Trails. The expanded sites will include trails, hunting areas, forest reserves, community-based fishing subsistence areas, and other recreational lands overseen by DLNR's Division of Forestry & Wildlife along with the Division of Aquatic Resources.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

The four people who have been hired as trail stewards through the EDA funding – two at Pololū and two at Puna -- are happy to see the Trail Stewards Program taking place at both locations and happy to be involved. Based on state staff interaction with the trail stewards, the following are some findings learned from the program to-date.

Increased quality of visitor experience: The hiring of interpretive staff for outdoor recreational sites of special significance to Native Hawai'ian heritage has increased visitors' awareness about the cultural and historical significance of those places. This has improved the visitor experience at those sites. By focusing on qualitative more than quantitative aspects of these outdoor cultural

sites, the state is bringing down the total number of visitors, yet increasing the number of visitors interested in the stewards' special interpretation.

Applying place-based concepts: Special assets and sites with unique stories, history, culture, landscapes, and other characteristics require a place-based approach and place-based management. The plans that are unfolding in 2024 at the Pololū and Puna sites include draft proposals and recommendations related to action steps for educating trail users (building on the initial hiring of the native Hawai'ians as stewards) and stakeholder and community engagement (building upon previously-initiated outreach activities).

Model for other Hawai'ian sites: The success and effectiveness of the Trail Stewards Program at the two pilot sites has been referenced as a model for other popular visitor destination sites in Hawai'i where the presence of trail stewards could be beneficial. Moreover, having four stewards with lineal descent automatically helps to bring an equity voice to this program where it is not easy to identify minority groups within the broad group of Native Hawai'ians. The experience of being trail stewards is a very personal one for the four stewards now serving under this EDA TTOR support. They tell their own personal stories, and have their own unique knowledge and skills related to their place.

Physical trail conditions: At both sites on the Island of Hawai'i, the trail stewards are helping to protect the places from the negative effects of overcrowding such as the overall degradation of nature. At Pololū, the presence of the trail stewards has helped to organize the crowded parking experience at the trailhead, resulting in better vehicle flow. At Puna, it is anticipated that the presence of the trail stewards will contribute to better managing illegal use motorized vehicles on the trail. Furthermore, the trail stewards share up-to-date information about the physical condition of the trails so visitors can be prepared. They enhance physical safety by helping to enforce safety measures, and this helps to decrease hiking accidents resulting in a need for fewer emergency rescues. The presence of the stewards has also helped to address illegal camping and parking infractions.

Digital tools: Wide-ranging tracking serves to enhance the ethnographic-type information learned from residents in the talking sessions and outreach meetings. Clicker apps work well for efficiently counting a variety of factors such as the number of endangered species, people interactions with endangered species, visitors who are out of state or Hawai'ian residents, and other variables. Digital maps have been identified as another tool that will help support the trail stewards in their duties.

Time Factors, Any other Guidance Necessary for Replication: The Pololū planning process has been part of the [ongoing community talk story](#) and [story map](#), and has included these [activities and timelines](#):

- Assessment: Understand community values and vision, and analysis of issues and needs (November 2022 to April 2023).
- Alternatives and solutions: Identify alternatives and concepts, [draft management plan](#), and finalize plan (May 2023 to December 2023); the draft management plan was released in January 2024, and comments were accepted January 25-March 1, 2024.
- Environmental review process: Draft environmental assessment and finalize environmental assessment (January 2024 to December 2024).

4. Colorado Outdoor Recreation Office Competitive Subgrants

Project Overview

Grant: Tourism and Recreation Support

Grant recipient: Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade (OEDIT)

Type of Grant: State Tourism Grant (noncompetitive)

EDA funding: \$9,683,928

Total project funding: \$9,683,928

Current project status: Beginning in mid-2022, OREC went through four rounds of application reviews to identify the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant (COSORG) subawardees. The final round closed in 2023. Most of these projects are still being implemented.

What is unique, innovative: In preparation for receiving funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Travel Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) program authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Colorado's [Outdoor Recreation Industry Office](#) (OREC) conducted an extensive listening tour in the summer of 2022, visiting about half the counties in the state. This outreach was hailed as being quite unique. They met with community and business leaders with the goal of hearing first-hand what they were experiencing in a world changed by the pandemic. Five key takeaways are summarized as follows:

- Coloradans love where they live – And this is because of the access to nature and outdoor recreation, and they often balance outdoor recreation with resource protection and developing affordable housing for workers.
- The outdoor recreation conversation is expanding – Stewardship and managing use on public lands are long-time priorities.
- There are so many opportunities for collaboration – between towns, counties, and even on the regional and/or state level.
- The outdoor industry is creative – During the listening tour, the OREC team heard a variety of inspiring ideas about how to put the funding to use.
- OREC can be a voice for the industry – The outdoor recreation industry is made up of several subindustries such as manufacturing, tech, and retail; many of which are small businesses. The best way to get a sense for what is going on is to visit those businesses, and share that information with other OEDIT divisions, other state agencies, and the Governor's office.

By the summer of 2022, based partially on input from the listening tour, OEDIT had created two new grant programs aimed at pandemic recovery using federal TTOR funds from EDA. By the end of September 2022, the OREC team had completed 13 site visits to 26 counties, hosted 12 community listening sessions, and met or reached some 400 people.

Takeaways on What's Replicable: In November 2021, the Colorado Governor's [Office of Economic Development & International Trade](#) (OEDIT) received almost \$9.7 million in funding from the non-competitive State Tourism Grant portion of the one-time EDA/ARPA/TTOR grant program after it was made available to states.

The award is being co-managed by two OEDIT divisions: 1) the [Outdoor Recreation Industry Office](#) (OREC), and 2) the [Colorado Tourism Office](#) (CTO). OEDIT allocated about half of the funds to OREC, and almost half to the CTO. OEDIT's Outdoor Recreation Industry Office is more commonly referred to as "OREC" for "outdoor recreation economy" – which is how it is referred to in this case study.

From the beginning, both offices took advantage of the opportunity to provide competitive subgrants to entities throughout Colorado, as many parts of the outdoor recreation and tourism industries were still in recovery. Colorado is one of only a few states that we are aware of (other states included New York and Kentucky) to fully distribute its non-competitive EDA TTOR state tourism grant through a mostly competitive subaward process to a multitude of diverse projects across the state. Colorado distributed its funds across 57 subawards ranging from \$12,000 to \$500,000 (average = \$98,000).

Based on the funding received by the OREC Office, it introduced the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant, a \$3.9 million competitive grant program for outdoor recreation projects. Eligible projects included upgrades to infrastructure, technical and planning assistance, marketing and promotion of events and assets, and workforce development, all within the outdoor recreation industry. Applications were accepted on a rolling basis with quarterly review deadlines. The first deadline was June 30, 2022.

The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) allocated the CTO portion of the EDA funds both competitively and non-competitively as listed here:

- 1) CTO created the Tourism Recovery Marketing Grant, a \$1.8 million competitive matching grant program, to support the economic recovery of the travel and tourism industry in Colorado through the execution of tourism marketing and promotional campaigns. Eligible applicants included nonprofits responsible for promoting tourism on behalf of a destination; Colorado cities or other political subdivisions of the state; EDA-designated economic development districts (EDDs); and Indian tribes. Applications were accepted June 2-August 1, 2022 and work on awarded projects continues through early 2025.
- 2) CTO also allocated \$2.4 million of the EDA funds toward international marketing and promotion over a 4-year period. International travelers are Colorado's highest value tourist, staying longer and visiting more areas of the state. During the pandemic, however, the international tourism spend in the state dropped 81% -- from \$1.8 billion in 2019 to \$306 million in 2020.

This case focuses on OREC's outdoor recreation portion of the EDA TTOR funding. In early 2020, OREC was bracing for a significant economic downturn due to the pandemic which broke out March 2022, including budget cuts across state agencies. By July 2020, OREC had lost 33% of its operating budget, and as the staff were transitioning to a remote work environment, they were also postponing many programs including travel and outreach, grant making, trade shows and business support, and rural technical assistance initiatives. Therefore, given the strong emphasis on competitively allocating funds to communities, the remainder of the EDA grant funding to Colorado was focused on increasing grant administration capacity at the state level.

[Background on the Project](#)

As noted, OEDIT's outdoor recreation and tourism offices combined forces to jointly manage the \$9.7 million EDA ARPA TTOR award. Each of these OEDIT offices is described here.

Outdoor recreation: The [Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office](#), or OREC, is a relatively new state office, being established in 2015, and then being signed into statute by Governor Jared Polis in May 2021. The OREC Office provides a central point of contact, advocacy, and resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses, and communities that rely on the continued health of the outdoor recreation economy. OREC also encourages responsible outdoor recreation. More people than ever are using natural resources, and the state wants to make sure it

is done right. Now being part of state statute helps ensure that there will always be people to steward the outdoor economy and protect its finite resources.

Approximately 92% of Coloradans practice outdoor recreation at least once every few weeks and some four or more times per week, according to the [2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (SCORP) report. Also, outdoor recreation plays an important role in Colorado's economy. According to the 2022 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA) [data for Colorado](#), the following are some of the outdoor recreation economic benefits to Colorado:

- \$13.9 billion in value added, a 2.8% share of the state's gross domestic product (GDP).
- 129,773 jobs, a 4.3% share of the state's employment pool.
- \$6.9 billion in compensation, a 2.6% share of the state's employment compensation.

One of OREC's purviews is to advocate for the outdoor recreation industry. Working in tandem with other parts of OEDIT, OREC plays a role in attracting, retaining, and growing outdoor recreation businesses in the state. For example, OREC's Outdoor Industry Business Development program supports business development activity through research, partnerships, trade shows, and trade and investment missions. OREC also helps businesses with exporting internationally.

As an example, receiving the EDA TTOR funding allowed OREC to fund the [Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation](#) to support development of the "OutdoorCO Lifestyle Vertical," a statewide outdoor recreation industry business alliance to promote the industry and attract new businesses to the state. This funding supports operating and contractual expenses related to business recruitment and marketing for Colorado outdoor recreation industry partners.

Tourism: Tourism is another powerful driver of Colorado's economy. Through local tourism departments and programs, it fuels business income and tax revenues that support everything from schools to transportation and municipal services. According to [Dean Runyan Associates' 2022 report, The Economic Impact of Travel](#), Colorado travelers spent \$27.7 billion, generating \$1.7 billion in local and state revenues, reducing the tax burden for every Colorado household by \$760.

The CTO helps increase traveler spending through the promotion of Colorado as a 4-season, 4-corner, world-class travel destination. CTO's vision is to empower the tourism industry by inspiring the world to explore Colorado responsibly and respectfully. The CTO accomplishes this goal mostly through a statewide collaboration with destination marketing organizations, local communities, and private businesses. Additional CTO activities have included: "Come to Life" marketing campaigns targeting national and international travelers; management of [Colorado.com](#); 'Do Colorado Right' national and instate destination stewardship campaign; creation of CTO's Destination Stewardship Strategic Planning Initiative and operation of 10 [Colorado Welcome Centers](#) at major gateways to the state in collaboration with public and private partners.

Impact of the pandemic on Colorado travel industry: In 2020, due to the pandemic, US travel spending declined an estimated 36%. The Colorado travel industry was similarly affected, [experiencing an estimated decline of 36.3% in travel spending](#), after record spending in 2019 of \$24.2 billion. Despite a strong start in 2020, Colorado tourism -- including ski resorts, indoor dining and events -- all experienced hardship. Direct travel-generated employment experienced a loss of 31,700 jobs across the state, with the largest amount of job losses occurring within the accommodations and food services sector which lost 19,900 jobs.

EDA's TTOR opportunity - OREC portion: As of November 8, 2021, the EDA ARPA TTOR funding allowed OREC to establish its first competitive grant program -- the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant (COSORG) program. The COSORG program supports the outdoor recreation industry throughout Colorado to accelerate the recovery of communities that rely on the TTOR sectors. Six subgrant topics were identified for the competitive proposals:

- 1) Workforce training that supports the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries, to improve the skills and job opportunities for workers, including Registered Apprenticeship Programs and other work and learn models. Grant recipients and their partners are encouraged to make connections with the American Job Centers that connect individuals to workforce training.
- 2) Short-term and long-term economic development planning and coordination to respond to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the regional travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry.
- 3) Technical assistance projects to assist regional economies to recover from damage to the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries, including technical assistance to businesses, entrepreneurs, and small and rural communities to respond to changes to those industries brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.
- 4) Upgrades/retrofits to existing travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation infrastructure, such as convention centers, to increase travel/tourism activity or to make such infrastructure more functional under pandemic social distancing conditions (e.g., consistent with CDC guidelines). These activities can include general accessibility upgrades (e.g., disability access).
- 5) Infrastructure projects that lead to long-term increases in tourist activity in a region, including to communities adjacent to National Park Service units, State Parks, National Marine Sanctuaries, or other natural destinations, and nature-based infrastructure projects and projects enhancing public access to outdoor recreational opportunities.
- 6) Other uses to support the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries, as approved by EDA.

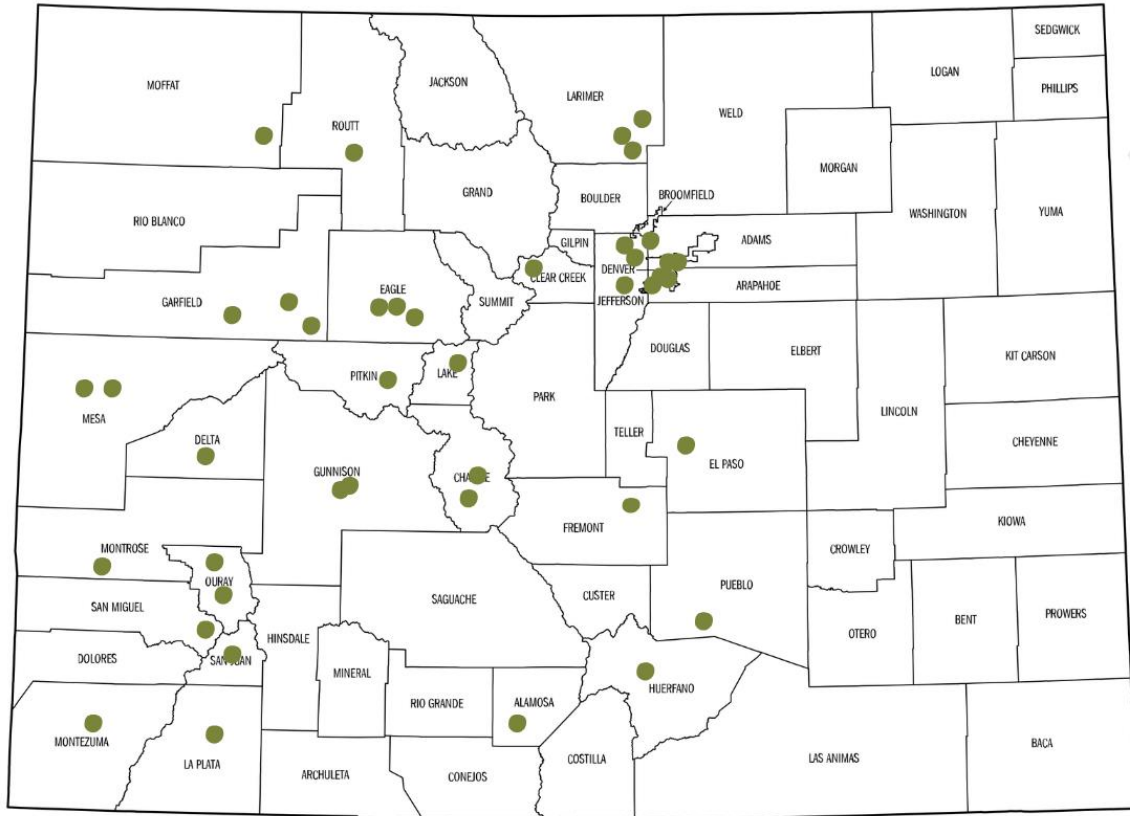
The scope of work for the subgrants covered a lot of ground and provided a great opportunity for entities of all sizes, types, locations, and goals in Colorado to engage with the state and access the EDA ARPA TTOR funding. Beginning in mid-2022, OREC went through four rounds of application reviews to identify the COSORG subawardees. The final round closed in 2023. Governor Polis, OEDIT and OREC leadership made the announcements for each new group of recipients.

Project Actors – State leaders, champions, stakeholders

Given the popularity of outdoor sports and recreation in Colorado, the state has many champions for these sectors – including Governor Polis -- while certain leaders stand out in terms of their contribution to seeking and implementing the EDA TTOR funding.

Conor Hall is OEDIT's project manager for the overall EDA/ARPA/TTOR state tourism grant. He came to OEDIT in February 2022 as the new OREC Office director. At that time, the OEDIT executive director said, "Conor brings a wealth of knowledge in the outdoor space, government relations, consensus-building, and community development, all of which will be vitally important over the next several years as OEDIT works to deploy the \$9.7 million EDA grant that OREC and the tourism office received." As program manager for the OREC Office, Matt Nunez also works closely on the state's EDA TTOR grant. In addition, the Colorado OREC Office works with a [Colorado Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council](#).

Figure 10. COSORG Grantees Shown Across Colorado Counties.



Source: Prosono.

Economic Benefits

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account data, which is provided at the state-level, reported that Colorado's economy was significantly affected by the pandemic. Outdoor recreation-related value added and employment in the state both fell by 26% in 2020. However, it takes longer for employment to recover than value added. While value added had rebounded by 2022, employment effects were still present.

Colorado's investment will serve as a model for other states interested in broadly distributing their large award across the state. This strategy enhanced the overall diversity of projects that complements the diversity of opportunities, sectors, and players in the outdoor recreation economy. Colorado's example provides great insights into planning, collaborating, and leveraging funds through community-identified needs and programs. This approach adds another example of how to strengthen economic resiliency with equity goals. These are all important actions as exemplified in the focus of other TTOR-funded projects in the country (see Figure 1).

Colorado's outdoor recreation economy was significantly affected by the pandemic ... While outdoor recreation value added had rebounded by 2022, employment effects were still present at that time.
 --Source: U.S. BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account

OREC Workforce and Education Connections: The OREC Office has worked closely with numerous educational institutions in the state to ensure the outdoor recreation industry is considered in their program offerings, now numbering more than 65 certificate or degree programs offered by Colorado institutions. OREC also focuses on workforce development and securing the talent pipeline necessary to attract and retain outdoor recreation companies. Many of the EDA TTOR grants have provided professional development for students and workers as they prepare for or further their careers in outdoor recreation. As is evident, the TTOR subgrants will create new jobs, implement new post-secondary certificate programs, develop tourism and outdoor recreation apps, and launch campaigns promoting outdoor recreation as a career pathway, among other initiatives.

OREC's collaboration with [Western Colorado University](#) (WCU) in Gunnison, Colorado, had previously helped to make an Outdoor MBA program a reality -- along with two annual OREC fellowships. Now, with the EDA TTOR grant, an OREC TTOR subaward is supporting the buildout of an outdoor industry engineering lab on the WCU campus. Funding is supporting the purchase of lab equipment and supplies for building testing equipment. This project is viewed as being a next step in making rural Colorado a hub for entrepreneurship and workforce development in the outdoor industry for years to come.

Another COSORG recipient is [La Plata Open Space Conservancy](#) (LPOSC) which is offering paid internship opportunities to students at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. LPOSC is a nonprofit charitable organization serving the southwestern part of the state by holding conservation easements on thousands of acres donated by landowners across multiple counties. The land offers resources such as open space, wildlife habitats, recreational parks, and historical and archaeological resources. The internships are providing job experience in conservation work, and the TTOR funding is supporting 14 interns, a GIS Program Coordinator, and GIS-related equipment and software. Program deliverables will include the completion of the fourteen 50-hour internships at LPOSC before March 2025.

The EDA grant is further supporting workforce development in the outdoor recreation industry by helping 75 high school students in [Clear Creek County's School District](#) to achieve certifications in wilderness first aid, avalanche safety, and swift water rescue. The goal of the program is to provide students with a well-rounded foundation from which they can enter careers in the outdoor recreation industry. Project expenses include certification course costs for 25 students each year from 2023 to 2025 in Wilderness First Aid (WFA), American Institute for Avalanche Research & Education (AIARE), and Swiftwater Rescue Technician (SWRT).

Colorado's EDA TTOR grant is also supporting youth apprenticeships. [SOS Outreach of Colorado](#) received funding to support 19 young people in its [Career Development Program](#). The program kicks off with a paid 2-week skills intensive including workplace communication, mock interviews, resume writing, guest speakers, site visits and more. Following the intensive, those ages 16+ interview for summer apprenticeships with vetted partners in the outdoor recreation and tourism industries. The young professionals will begin to practice what they've learned in the workplace with duties such as customer service, product sales, inventory, and events. Teens receive a dedicated mentor throughout the entire program with consistent check-ins and feedback for growth.

Workforce development data, impact: OREC's most important metric for workforce development is the number of jobs supported, both directly and indirectly. OEDIT has collected reports from about half of its subawardees on the EDA grant. Based on only half of the grantee

pool, OREC found more than 300 jobs were directly impacted through projects such as those described above.

This section identifies yet other benefits of the Colorado TTOR subawards using examples grouped according to these topics: equity and diversity; inclusivity and accessibility; resiliency and sustainability; community transitioning; and indirect impact of the subgrants.

Equity and diversity: In terms of diversity, 21 of OREC’s subaward projects focus on underserved communities and populations, and most within this group are focused on minority youth. Some projects help Spanish speaking populations, and others leverage the outdoors to help people who have recovered from cancer. One of the grantees has led the charge on creating actionable health benefits and is continuing to promote these kinds of efforts. In [Lake County](#) (home of “[Get Outdoors Leadville](#)”), the funding is supporting a summit for the Spanish-speaking population and connecting them to the outdoors.

TTOR subawardee [Colorado Mountain College](#) (CMC) in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with a student body over 25% Latino. The HSI designation creates opportunities for grant funding benefiting all students. CMC is focusing on workforce development and – through an EDA TTOR subaward – is creating a Ski Industry Trade Certifications program. The funding will support wages for curriculum creation, along with associated travel and indirect expenses.

“We are committed to making the outdoors accessible to everybody in our community and that includes well-connected and accessible trail systems.” – Xavier Crockett, Director of Mesa County Public Health

Inclusivity and accessibility: TTOR subawardee [Mesa County Public Health](#) is developing a master plan for the Gunnison Bluffs and Old Spanish Trail network south of Grand Junction, a Colorado municipality of about 70,000 people. Mesa County is the primary landowner in the trail area, with additional segments owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private landowners. The current trail system was originally created through social ridership, rather than sustainable and

inclusive trail planning and design. Mesa County Public Health is planning a trail system connection to an underserved neighborhood.

Resiliency and sustainability: Resiliency is another priority for the state TTOR grant, and this metric is being tracked in all the subawardee reports. At [Colorado State University](#) in Fort Collins, OREC is funding – through an EDA TTOR subgrant - support for the development of:

- A project for Digital Asset Mapping of Colorado’s outdoor recreation businesses and resources. Completion of this project will serve as the bedrock of outdoor recreation community economic development initiatives statewide.
- A Sustainable Outdoor Product Design certificate program. This certificate program will be the first of its kind in Colorado, and the third in the U.S.

The EDA subaward funding will support personnel wages, operating expenses, and indirect costs for both of the above sub-projects.

Diversifying local economies: The [City of Craig](#), the county seat in [Moffat County](#) in northwestern Colorado, is a coal transition community. The region’s major employers -- two coal-fired power plants and three coal mines -- all announced they would be shutting down within the decade. Craig and Moffat County are prioritizing outdoor recreation and tourism as a basis for

future economic development. In 2022, EDA provided the city \$3.3 million through an Assistance to Coal Communities grant in order to support the build-out of a regional whitewater park along the Yampa River, and a neighboring community similarly got funding for a business park. The current EDA TTOR-funded project will allow them to hire a full-time Recreation & Events Coordinator. In addition to the whitewater park, the City of Craig is working to promote off-road and mountain biking, similar to how it's being done in [Telluride](#), Colorado.

Indirect impact: An indirect benefit of the OREC TTOR subgrants is also being experienced. Several subawardees have leveraged their dollars from the state's TTOR grant to access even more funding. Two examples stand out in this regard:

- A TTOR project in rural Colorado is providing funding for renovating an athletic field, and this project has since attracted an additional \$2.2 million. The project is supporting the installation of a 77,000-square-foot synthetic turf athletic field at Greenhorn Valley Community Park in Colorado City. The project was left unfinished in 2007 which has led to safety concerns as well as cancellation of community programs due to inadequate facilities. A community organization based in rural Colorado, called Valley First, is raising funds for much needed improvements in the region. Once completed, it is expected that the project will drive significant economic impact for an underserved part of southern Colorado.
- In the [San Luis Valley](#) region in south-central Colorado, the state's EDA TTOR grant funds the planning of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to advance recreation and active transportation initiatives. These plans occur within and between communities. The San Luis Valley communities are about 15 miles from one another, and since the 1970s, there have been community dreams of a cross-valley trail resembling a bicycle highway; this trail vision is called the Heart of the Valley Trail. An action plan for safer and more accessible pedestrian infrastructure will be the grant's final deliverable. The project is a collaborative effort between San Luis Valley Great Outdoor (SLV GO), private landowners, community partners, and local governments. Much of the \$100,000 from EDA TTOR will support personnel costs, with the remaining funding going towards a preliminary environmental review, trail assessments, and administrative expenses. After receipt of the subaward from the state's EDA TTOR grant, projects in the San Luis Valley region have received further state and foundation dollars and have been able to hire more staff in a domino effect.

Special Considerations

Various factors that have arisen in implementing the Colorado COSORG grant program have related to the statewide need to become more familiar with a new federal agency and the challenges of standing up a new state grant program; these special considerations are summarized in this section.

Lack of local experience working with EDA: Many of the subaward applicants did not have experience working with this particular federal agency, EDA, before receiving this funding through the state, and they have faced a learning curve in terms of understanding the processes and requirements for receiving EDA awards. For example, the OREC subawards included some construction projects that presented new compliance requirements for which the subawardees needed to be updated on to manage their grants for those types of projects.

Capacity development for implementing a new grant program at the state level: Given that this was OREC's first grant program, one of the biggest issues has been putting into place the processes and people necessary to support the program. OEDIT has two people working on this

EDA grant as a portion of Colorado's TTOR funding supports a program manager along with a grants compliance manager whose expertise has been called "super helpful."

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

By the summer of 2022, the umbrella agency OEDIT had designed and was offering two new grant programs aimed at pandemic recovery using the federal ARPA TTOR funds through EDA. Some of the findings and lessons for OREC have been the following, with some additional confirmation from the related CTO TTOR subgrants:

Use of a competitive process: The one-time EDA ARPA TTOR funding offered OREC the opportunity to offer the state's first competitive grants in outdoor recreation. Creation of a competitive program provided the opportunity to help some local governments, nonprofits, and universities in Colorado who were newer to planning efforts for outdoor recreation.

Outreach and awareness building: As a result of the listening tour, OREC had a new appreciation for the ways the Office could help catalyze projects across the state through the new EDA funding. Part of the reason for the listening tour was to raise awareness about the new federal funding. The tour did lead to an uptick in applications, especially in the communities that were visited.

Working with communities: Directing funds to Colorado communities was a priority in allocating funding from both the OREC COSORG program and the CTO Tourism Marketing Recovery Grant. Providing CTO's grant directly to communities that were still recovering was considered a particularly important strategy to help the state recover.

Gaining experience about federal procedures: Through both the OREC and the CTO grants, it quickly became apparent that many subawardees, particularly in more rural areas, lacked experience with federal grant requirements and compliance. As a result, OREC and CTO are still at this time working to provide significant technical assistance to subawardees on both federal and state grant compliance requirements.

Opportunities for nonprofits: As designed, the Colorado competitive subawards also provided a unique opportunity for nonprofits. The design of the program "left room" for some potentially larger subawards. Although the infrastructure grants were capped between \$100,000 and \$250,000, this was still a significant amount of funding for some nonprofits.

Partners: OREC is putting its collaborations and partnerships with universities to good use with the EDA TTOR funding. As a remarkable example with a benefit for small businesses, OREC is providing funds for the build-out of a major new engineering lab at the [University of Colorado-Denver](#) which will serve as a testing space for outdoor equipment for private manufacturers. Specifically, [funding will allow for the purchase of major equipment pieces to be installed in an existing engineering space on campus](#). The university's [College of Engineering](#) has partnered with [Outside Interactive Inc.](#) to build a gear testing lab which will be accessible on a variable price scale to small outdoor recreation manufacturers who otherwise may not have access to equipment that can be tested for durability and weather resistance. The small businesses can pay a small fee to test their outdoor recreation equipment at the lab.

In summary, Colorado serves as a good example where the outdoor recreation industry and communities are mature. Supporting smaller value-added projects enhances the state's overall

comparative advantage. The state's choice to take this approach with its EDA TTOR funding creates an exemplar for other states in similar situations.

Time Factors, Any other Guidance Necessary for Replication: There were many activities in Colorado leading up to the EDA TTOR award. In addition to the important listening tour, there were earlier EDA grants to Colorado:

- In January 2021, EDA awarded \$2.4 million in CARES Act Recovery Assistance to CTO, paired with a \$600,000 CTO match which supported direct assistance for 38 Colorado destinations and up to 21 tourism-related industry associations.
- In March 2021, [EDA granted \\$2.3 million to OEDIT, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs](#) (DOLA), and the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE), along with the nonprofit Community Builders, for rural community planning and technical assistance (TA) support.

As a result of those EDA awards to Colorado, the state [created and announced two new programs](#) in March 2021. First, the CARES Act funding supported development of a Colorado Tourism Roadmap to Recovery, a new 5-year strategic statewide plan for the Colorado tourism industry to be implemented by CTO. Technical assistance was provided to support the tourism industry in adopting the statewide plans recommendations and focused on customized recovery work for regional collections of communities within tourism destinations that shared a common geography and visitor appeal.

Second, the EDA funding for rural community planning was called the Rural Resiliency & Recovery Roadmaps Program. Based on submitted applications, DOLA's Resiliency Office in partnership with OEDIT's Rural Office selected 16 rural jurisdictions to participate. The EDA grant was matched with almost \$9 million from the state to provide TA. Through regular connections between the three state agencies' rural representatives (DOLA, OEDIT, and CDLE), the project resulted in a Recovery & Resiliency Roadmap that considered all of the economic and community development opportunities available to each community -- including TTOR.

5. The "IN Indiana" Campaign

Project Overview

Grant: Indiana Destination Marketing Campaign

Grant recipient: Indiana Lt. Governor's Office for Indiana Destination Development Corporation

Type of grant: State Tourism Grant

EDA funding: \$5,582,552

Total project funding: \$5,582,552

Current project status: Completed

What is unique, innovative: [Indiana Destination Development Corporation](#) (IDDC) developed an extensive "IN Indiana" toolkit of resources available free of charge to businesses, small towns, big cities, and other state destinations. The IN Indiana campaign allows any stakeholder, no matter what their budget, to benefit from the tools.

The unique product is part of the IDDC's open-source marketing campaign (available online at no cost to those who sign a license agreement) with no taglines. IN Indiana is the identifier. The entity creates their own unique "headline" to complement their existing marketing. The state

provides the toolkits to help users find the fonts and colors necessary to kick-start a new brochure or website. Specially targeted [IN Indiana design kits](#) include: logos and brand guides, [digital ad templates](#), print collateral templates, tradeshow collateral, social media templates, promotional items, and more.

Figure 11. Photography Available to Users of IN Indiana-Branded Collateral.



Each resource is customizable for Indiana stakeholders, allowing them to personalize their marketing efforts while at the same time presenting a unified front and consistent template. The idea is to help Indiana function as a state united in its approach to spreading the word about the state's assets and attractions. As an example, an Indiana organization that distributes a newsletter to its outreach list can use IDDC's newsletter template with the IN Indiana masthead or headline and add their own subheads and stories as needed.

Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

Another underlying concept is to help develop grassroots pride and ownership that, in turn, generates use of the tools -- and a user can use any or all the available tools in the kit. At the launch event, the Governor pointed out that the campaign is meant to be flexible in a way that can be magnified far beyond just the state government's efforts. The state is open to partnerships with other public agencies and private organizations based on the campaign's brand.

Figure 12. IN Indiana Highway Signage Welcoming Visitors to the State.

Governor Holcomb partnered with IDDC and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to create new IN Indiana interstate signage welcoming visitors to Indiana, or welcoming Hoosiers home. INDOT interstate entry signs reading "More to Discover IN Indiana" are located on 19 interstate routes and 57 non-interstate routes (Figure 12).

The new approach of providing culled photos, videos, and templates is being used to create a large body of knowledge about the state. The more it is used and shared, the bigger the megaphone becomes. This innovative and unique marketing effort is a comprehensive and compelling way to tell "the authentic Hoosier story" and a model for other states to replicate in telling their "authentic story."



Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

The ultimate target audience for the marketing campaign in terms of workforce and talent attraction is both visitors and college students. For this purpose, IDDC [produced a photo and video library, as well as donut videos](#) about the quality of life in the state. A donut video is a pair of short professionally produced video file that can be added to the beginning and end of any video or audio to brand it through repeated use. A video/audio donut is analogous to a print template, for instance. Using the templates, municipalities can fill in the middle section and send out messages as recruiting videos regarding what their city or town has to offer.

Takeaways on What’s Replicable: The unifying sort of messaging of IN Indiana -- which can be adapted by anyone using the IN Indiana toolkit -- is unique to Indiana, but the model is replicable in other states and locations. Being provided at no-cost to anyone who chooses to use them, the tools save time, effort, and especially money.

The EDA funded project prompted the use of state general funds to provide local grants supporting the IN Indiana messaging. In order to make the IN Indiana messaging more sustainable in connecting local communities with the rest of the state, IDDC began funding [IN Indiana Placemaking Activation](#) grants in March 2024. These are matching grants of up to \$25,000 to fund signage that showcases local communities using the IN Indiana identifier. The first group of IN Indiana grants that were awarded include a variety of locations from urban to rural settings, in both large and small communities, and in different regions of the state -- Fort Wayne, the city of Madison, the towns of Danville and Lagro, the counties of DeKalb and Spencer, and others. These grants also represent state-local partnerships for fostering sustainable development. There is a shared-cost aspect in that the state is matching a municipality’s investment of say \$25,000 with another \$25,000 which helps make a project more do-able at the local level.

Figure 13. IN Indiana Placemaking Activation Grants Fund Signage for Communities.



Additionally, EDA funds were used to purchase branded collateral and continue to build IN Indiana signs (Figure 13), which are physical assets that have been deployed around the state to be used in public areas such as special events, tourism destinations, airports, and conventions centers, acting as a photo opportunity or selfie station. These pieces will be periodically relocated and have been deployed as activations with the intention of displaying state pride, driving campaign awareness, and shifting state perception of Indiana.

Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

Background on the Project

The Indiana Destination Development Corporation (IDDC) was formed by the Indiana Legislature in 2019 to promote Indiana as a great place for living, visiting, learning, and earning. The IDDC became incorporated on July 1, 2020. The previous Indiana Office of Tourism Development (IOTD) evolved into the new organization, creating a seamless experience for stakeholders and tourism partners. IDDC is dedicated to promoting, branding, and telling Indiana's story to attract and retain talent, students, and visitors.

This TTOR state tourism grant from EDA was used to develop a cache of photos and videos and a marketing campaign to increase tourism to help Indiana recover economically from the pandemic. This is the first marketing/tourism campaign for the state. In the past, the state had not done much self-promotion; did not have a tourism/marketing campaign with good data and results; and never received much of a budget from the state for these types of marketing/tourism efforts. Since they had not had a large marketing presence, their expectations for the possibilities were low.

Background: IN Indiana campaign, launched June 8, 2022

The IN Indiana Campaign provided partners with FREE tools and customizable collateral to help tell the Hoosier State's story.

- The campaign's resources are available free of charge to every Indiana stakeholder.
- Spanning graphic design elements, photography, branding tools and brand pillars, the IN Indiana campaign functions as an open-source messaging platform where voices from all over the state can come together and tell a bigger story than has ever been told.
- The IN Indiana design kit includes logos, brand guides, social media templates, print collateral templates, tradeshow collateral, promotional items, digital ad templates, and more.
- Each resource is fully customizable for all Indiana stakeholders, allowing them to personalize their marketing efforts while at the same time presenting a unified front to potential visitors, future residents and companies looking to do business in Indiana.

IDDC's immediate goal for the EDA project was to create a brand for the state of Indiana and test it, and then to share that with the state legislature. They needed a unifying message for the state, and the goals for that were to:

- 1) Attract more visitors to the state.
- 2) Attract talent for existing businesses.
- 3) Retain college graduates from the state's schools.

Visitors help local and regional economies through their daily and weekly spending in restaurants, hotels, and entertainment spots. Talent attraction, particularly in identified sectors, contributes to existing business vitality. And retaining graduates contributes to the talent pipelines, resulting in expansion and innovation.

The question was, what could be done to provide a taste of what it would be like to live and work in Indiana? It would need to be an initiative that would help strengthen state connections with businesses in the state.

Indiana isn't well-known by those outside of the state who may not have a clue about what Indiana has to offer. For example, the multinational pharma corporation Eli Lilly, Notre Dame University, and Purdue University are recognizable, but many outside Indiana's borders do not realize that these great institutions are located in Indiana. Indiana is using its new IN Indiana campaign to educate and build a body of knowledge regarding the assets it has to offer to residents and visitors.

The state paid an outside marketing agency, which was already [under contract](#) with existing state budget dollars, to help develop campaign products including a cache of available photos of state attractions. IDDC spent an initial \$3.5 million of the EDA funding and then spent the remainder to apply the new branding and unified messaging.

IDDC has also been meeting with partners in all sectors of the state to adopt and use the IN Indiana campaign to further their marketing efforts and increase the campaign's reach. They have met with organizations like the Studebaker Museum and the Mascot Hall of Fame to use the brand as well as the Indiana State Police Alliance and South Bend Cubs. They've also met with private companies such as Old 55 Distillery and the South Bend Chocolate Company.

The driving ethos behind IN Indiana is also deeply rooted in empowerment. Their aim is to equip every stakeholder, irrespective of their scale or budget, with the requisite tools to narrate Indiana's rich and authentic message. By providing an extensive array of complementary resources and collateral, they are ensuring that every town, city, and destination within our state has a platform to share their unique narrative.

Figure 14. IN Indiana Physical Assets for Special Events and Convention Centers.



Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

Organizations also have the opportunity to [partner with IDDC to share the costs](#) of IN Indiana tourism and quality of life campaign. Options include:

- Traditional and digital paid marketing, where IDDC provides a 1:1 match (i.e. when the IN Indiana logo is featured), and monthly newsletters such as Festivals & Events and Things to Do.
- Quarterly and annual digital VisitIndiana.com advertising and email blasts.

Project Actors – State and Local leaders, champions, stakeholders

State leaders:

This project has both the Governor and Lt. Governor as project champions. IDDC operates as a joint public-private agency, governed by a [7-member board appointed](#)

[by Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb](#). [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#) serves as the chair of IDDC’s board.

“In keeping with our great state’s spirit of innovation, this campaign gives tools and a voice to everyone, making Indiana stronger together. From Indiana’s shoreline to the hills in southern Indiana, there is something for everyone here IN Indiana.”

– Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb

“From the smallest towns to the largest cities, the adaptable messaging of IN Indiana will instill pride...”

– Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch

On June 8, 2022, Governor Holcomb and Lt. Governor Crouch [held a press conference](#) (see quotes above) along with Elaine Bedel, Secretary & CEO of IDDC, to [roll out](#) the new IN Indiana marketing campaign to Indiana businesses and associations.

Economic Benefits

The BEA’s Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account data, which is provided at the state-level, reported that outdoor recreation related value added in the state was relatively flat from before and during the pandemic. By 2021, value added exceeded the pre-pandemic levels realizing an annual growth rate of 27%. In 2022, value added continued to increase by 10%, which coincides with the beginning of the IN Indiana campaign’s effects were being realized. During the pandemic, outdoor recreation related employment fell by 13% and didn’t fully recover in total employment until 2022.

Indiana’s IN Indiana investment will serve as a model for other states interested in initiating a statewide innovative program to market the state and communities within the state to visitors, prospective employees, and prospective students, among others.

Economic impacts from the first year, during the pandemic: Once the first IN Indiana marketing campaign had been in force for six months in the spring and summer of 2022, [IDDC had the impact measured based on data](#) from the market research firm [Longwoods International](#) which has been conducting the longest ongoing study of domestic travelers in the U.S.

Longwoods reported out on Indiana in late 2022 and early 2023. In short:

- The IDDC 2022 campaign motivated 864,000 additional trips by out-of-staters to Indiana that otherwise would not have materialized in the absence of advertising. (Incremental travel is typically made up of numerous individual trips, without a commitment to a specific end destination.)
- Using Indiana’s Travel USA® estimates of average visitor expenditures, it was estimated that the additional out-of-state visitors spent \$102 million while in Indiana (\$118 per person).
- This generated \$11.22 million in additional tax revenue in Indiana from out of staters, and an out-of-state tax return on investment (ROI) of \$6 for each ad dollar spent.
- Every \$1 invested in the 2022 IDDC summer advertising campaign generated \$50 in direct visitor spending and \$6 in new taxes for the state.

IDDC is continuing to measure visitor spending month to month, which has continued to increase since before the campaign and data collection. In late 2022/early 2023, Indiana was second highest in the Midwest region on the month-over-month data point. The nationwide trend, at that time, was that people were still travelling less and spending less than they did before the pandemic.

Second year economic impacts: The spring/summer of 2023 marked the second year of IDDC's IN Indiana advertising campaign. It was also the second year the marketing campaign had been measured by premier market research firms and travel and tourism industry leaders. In January 2024, Lt. Gov. Crouch and IDDC released the [resulting study](#) which shows the Indiana tourism industry's growing momentum and continued positive economic impact including these [highlights](#):

- Total Indiana visitor volume grew 4.5% in 2023 (compared to 2022) to 80.8 million person-trips.
- Visitor spending grew by 16% to \$15.1 billion.
- Spending per visitor rose to \$188.
- Tourism generated \$2.8 billion in federal, state and local taxes.
- Indiana tourism supported 200,000 full-time and part-time jobs.

Continued research on ROI, image, and the halo effect: In February 2024, Lt. Gov. Crouch and IDDC [released further analytics](#) from the second (2023) IN Indiana summer advertising campaign revealing that Indiana had earned an ROI of \$10 in new taxes for the state for every \$1 spent by IDDC for its 2023 summer campaign; looking at the 2022 and 2023 campaigns combined, the 2-year ROI average was \$7 of new tax revenue for the state. The IDDC Annual Report for 2023 noted a milestone that had been reached by the IN Indiana campaign: More than 650 individuals and organizations had joined the campaign and adopted the identifier to help promote the state.

In addition to measuring the campaign's ROI, the study also examined the halo effect of the campaign and its impact on the state's image. The IN Indiana campaign continued to positively impact travelers' overall perceptions of the state. Some 51% of people who saw the 2023 promotion and visited Indiana "strongly agreed" that Indiana is a good place to live, compared to 27% who did not see the promotion and did not visit.

Other Benefits

Research on image, perception: The first campaign also [changed the perception of what it is like to live in Indiana](#). Around 25% of a consumer awareness group had previously strongly agreed that Indiana is a good place to live. Among a group who saw the new marketing messages, 40% strongly agreed that Indiana would be a great place to live or start a business.

With the increased focus on Indiana as a destination, an outcome of the EDA TTOR funding has been the creation of a program using state dollars to award [Indiana Destination Development \(IDD\)](#) project grants, as IDDC began awarding grants for IDD projects based on the IN Indiana slogan. These are matching grants between \$50,000 and \$250,000 to fund public high-impact projects that will enhance existing attractions to help boost Indiana's capacity for attracting visitors and providing tourism experiences. As examples, the [Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science](#) and the [Indiana Military Museum](#) were recipients.

IN Indiana public murals and artwork: In working to tell Indiana's story, IDDC has also partnered with nonprofits, especially in the arts. In late 2023, IDDC [announced the recipients](#) of

IN Indiana Public Arts grants which showcase Indiana's diversity, charm, character, and rich history. These are non-matching grant projects of up to \$10,000. The public murals created in partnership with local artists included the IN Indiana campaign logo somewhere on the artwork (see Figure 15).

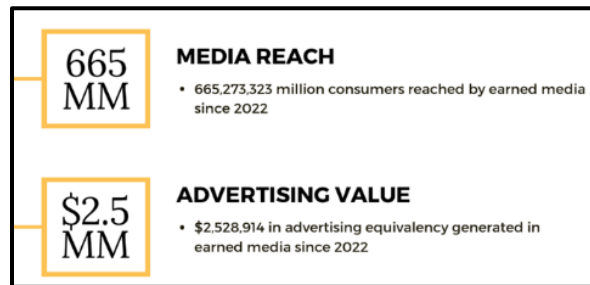
Figure 15. Public Mural Featuring the IN Indiana Logo on Public Artwork.



Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

The IN Indiana campaign, in its journey of success, has been spotlighted at various significant press events. IDDC was able to host two national media trips with Geiger PR. One in the northern part of the state, and one in the southern part of the state. IDDC also enlisted the help of Turner PR to actively pitch Indiana stories to maximize the perception of the state (Figure 16).

Figure 16. IN Indiana Media Reach, Advertising Value.



Source: Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

IDDC also built on the publicity of the 2024 Solar Eclipse, where a large portion of the state was in the path of totality for the eclipse, to provide solar glasses to the public in key markets. These glasses were handed out for free at public events and made available in public rest stops along major highways. Additionally, IDDC ran a campaign to promote the total eclipse in Indiana, driving traffic to the webpage InIndiana.com/Eclipse2024, which contains helpful information and resources for visitors.

IDDC is now doing a study to examine all the potential destination attractions and assets throughout the state. They are also doing a gap analysis to determine what's missing. In the future, more incentive dollars may be offered to purposely build out certain identified assets and attractions.

Partnerships for diverse employment and student retention: Indiana has a relatively low unemployment rate. Some of the new IDDC programs have already helped to attract needed talent to the state. IDDC is targeting talent and student retention through intern experiences; collaboration with colleges and universities; and videos available to businesses and municipalities to promote their jobs and quality of life.

IDDC is working with the seven public and the 29 private colleges/universities in the state to retain graduates and to promote a future for a diverse employment population. This also includes collaborating with the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Asian American Alliance, and other cultural and business groups. Being conscious of DEI principles in trying to reach a more diverse audience, they are presenting more diversity in their marketing visuals showcasing the state.

The state's IDDC recently partnered with leaders in the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana, to invite interns working at area businesses to participate in networking and social events; 200 interns signed up for the program. The resulting outcome for the interns was creating their own social network and learning about the community. Based on before-and-after surveys asking whether the interns would consider working in Fort Wayne, they received very positive feedback. The sessions averaged 50 attendees with a high turnout of 100 attendees. Next year, the city plans to do the same type of event on its own. In terms of the feedback: One intern from out-of-state on his second internship, who was offered a job that he plans to accept, responded that having had this experience made him decide to stay in Indiana.

Indiana Legislature Outcome: An ultimate benefit was IDDC's ability to leverage the EDA TTOR funds to gain an increased budget of \$20 million (a 5-fold budget increase relative to what IDDC inherited when it was formed in 2020). Legislators found the ROI of the IN Indiana campaign and the positive change in perception for those who visited Indiana to be compelling evidence regarding the value of the new IN Indiana messaging. As noted earlier, in mid-2020, the new IDDC had inherited a small budget of \$4 million from the earlier Indiana Office of Tourism Development. Based on the successful results of the EDA-funded project that began in late 2021, IDDC had almost \$5.6 million in funds coming in from EDA. If IDDC had not received this EDA grant, they would not have been able to show the positive results to the state legislators to get an increased allocation of \$20 million for their state annual budget. Significantly, the EDA grant allowed IDDC to show what it could do to attract and retain talent, graduates and visitors. The new \$20 million may now help accomplish even more toward helping Indiana local governments with visitor attraction such as through expanded Indiana Destination Development projects.

Challenges

A challenge of the moment is how to encourage more widespread adoption of the toolkits. By developing the toolkits and resources and providing them free-of-charge to encourage their adoption, there remains the challenge of implementation. Everyone who becomes knowledgeable of the IN Indiana open-source marketing campaign is positive and open to its use, but it's often difficult to give the implementation the immediate attention that it needs.

To help control for retaining a consistent brand for the state while marketing unique characteristics of places within the state, IDDC requires users to sign a licensing agreement when they download the marketing campaign's templates and other resources. As examples, IDDC has online Terms of Service Agreements for the use of [photos](#), [videos](#), [donut videos](#), [sizzle reels](#), Hoosier by Choice videos, [Home Again videos](#), and the Top 5 videos.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

The state's findings: IN Indiana is an identifier for the state. Any entity can create its own headline to go with the identifier by using the toolkit. The state has found that there are a variety of creative ways the new marketing templates are being used. Users are pairing the templates with their own slogans to help promote Indiana attractions. For example:

- Cities and towns are using it to market upcoming festivals and cultural events, and to attract visitors to special locations. One example: Visit Madison IN Indiana.
- Businesses are adding their own headlines such as one created for a utility company within the State: Your Energy. Your Future. IN Indiana.
- Individual users are both creating their own headlines, and using the templates more and more to discover all the different headlines and sub-headlines that are already available online.

International, National & State Awards for IN Indiana: Since the new IN Indiana messaging was first introduced on June 8, 2022, it has been recognized with nine awards: Gold Addy Award and Addy's Judge's Choice Award from the [American Advertising Federation](#) recognizing the creative spirit of excellence in advertising; two Platinum MarCom Awards and a Gold MarCom Award for video campaign – with [MarCom awards](#) honoring excellence in marketing and communication; two Platinum [Hermes Awards](#) which are awards for creativity (categories: Integrated Marketing Materials, Advertising Campaign); [Public Relations Society of America](#) (PRSA) Hoosier Chapter Pinnacle Award; and a Mercury Award finalist in the [U.S. Travel Association's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations](#) (ESTO), recognizing excellence in destination marketing on the state level.

Lessons Learned: Promoting the state of Indiana produced very positive returns, both a positive financial benefit as well as a positive perception impact. IDDC knows that the more broadly you can tell your story, the more consumers learn about the state, the more visitors are attracted. Funding is the key. It is important to demonstrate the value of promoting the state on a small scale to gain the opportunity to expand into new markets.

Producing a messaging campaign (IN Indiana) that is universally applicable and accepted is key to leveraging the marketing efforts of the entire state. The IN Indiana campaign has resulted in approximately 1,700 downloads of the IN Indiana campaign toolkits and more than 1,200 activations. Examples include product packaging, outdoor art, and municipal signage.

In highlighting the state's regional market focus, IDDC's Bedel acknowledged that a campaign can only have so much impact, depending on the funding behind it. "We're going to continue to measure the return of our marketing campaigns. With that information in hand, we will work with the legislators to increase our budget to allow our messaging to reach a larger portion of the population. Our goal is to expand beyond our geographic region to attract visitors from around the nation and the world."

Time Factors, Any other Guidance Necessary for Replication: The first "IN Indiana" marketing campaign took place in the spring and summer of 2022, running for about 6 months through to the end of August 2022. At that point, the market research firm measured the 2022 results which were released in early 2023. The return on investment (ROI) was \$6 in new taxes created for each \$1 spent. Based on those results, the 2023 legislative session provided a larger annual budget of \$20 million for FY24 and FY25. To validate the 2022 findings, IDDC elected to spend approximately the same budget in the same markets for the 2023 spring/summer campaign. The ROI was \$10 of new taxes created for every \$1 spent. With the increased FY24 budget,

IDDC plans to spend \$9 million in the spring and summer campaign of 2024. The ROI will be measured and available in late 2024.

6. West Virginia’s “Tourism Works” Program

Project Overview

Grant: Tourism Workforce Development and Training

Grant recipient: West Virginia Department of Tourism, in collaboration with the West Virginia Department of Economic Development; Department of Education; and Council for Community & Technical College Education.

Type of grant: Statewide Tourism Grant

EDA funding: \$5,148,017

Current Project Status: Some elements have been completed, but some are still in progress such as some of the online coursework/tourism workforce initiatives.

What is unique, innovative: West Virginia devoted its entire statewide tourism grant toward a tourism workforce development campaign, “[Tourism Works](#).” The overall program represents a robust diversity in strategies that have integrated tourism, outdoor recreation, workforce development, economic development, and educational opportunities. These investments and activities have been initiated to diversify the state’s economy and amplify the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation contributions to a resilient overall economy. The state’s program has included, in short, these elements and activities:

- Subawards to colleges and universities to enhance and develop new tourism-related degree and certificate programs.
- Creation of online workforce development resources.
- Workforce recruitment as early as middle and high school levels.
- Related workforce development investments with subgrants awarded to:
 - West Virginia Department of Education: For revamping the tourism curriculum; coordinating with the Community & Technical College System and the state’s K-12 system; funds to schools to support field trips and student-led tourism-related projects; and guidance counselor outreach and training.
 - West Virginia Department of Economic Development: To provide customized funding for professional development for tourism and outdoor recreation businesses, and for providing metrics on this data.

Takeaways on What’s Replicable: Benefits and some anticipated outcomes of the Tourism Works program are:

- Through a revamped K-12 curricula that now includes tourism, school-age children in the state are being educated about exciting new opportunities in the tourism industry.
- Students can earn college credits for tourism training they receive while in high school, contributing to the development of a tourism talent pipeline for the state.
- State-sponsored tourism-based student projects in high schools have been documented as being “life-changing” for some of the students.
- The combination of a long-standing state workforce program (the “[Governor’s Guaranteed Workforce program](#)”) with the newer Tourism Works program is benefitting both employees and employers in the tourism sector. The Train Your Team program, which is supported by the EDA grant, provides funding for customized training based on

requests from tourism businesses. The employers are encouraged to request training that will allow them to expand the capacity of their businesses and serve more visitors.

- There is a clear community development aspect of the Tourism Works program as residents can learn about tourism and hospitality career opportunities and benefits through an online course while receiving a free 1-hour college credit.

Background on the Project

Under West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, tourism has been one of the Governor's top priorities, and tourism has experienced a huge turnaround during his tenure. The Governor came into office 6 years ago in 2017. Since then, the Governor elevated the state's Tourism Office to a cabinet level position as the [Department of Tourism](#). He also tripled the state's tourism budget, and invested more than \$250 million into West Virginia State Parks.

[Thanks to Governor Justice's leadership](#), West Virginia began experiencing explosive growth in tourism around 2019. Total visitor spending reached \$6.3 billion in 2023, [according to the 2023 tourism economic impact report](#), which is 23% higher than in 2019 compared to 9% growth nationally.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account data, which is provided at the state-level, reported a 22% reduction in outdoor recreation related value added and 26.6% in outdoor recreation related employment between 2019 and 2020. By 2022, outdoor recreation related value added surpassed its 2019 level in the state, while employment effects are still being felt. This is a reason that WV's strategy will help strengthen the resilience of the state's economy.

As a result of all this, there has been an incredible amount of excitement generated around tourism from top to bottom. At the county and city levels of government, and even at the national level now, people are excited about tourism in West Virginia. For example, the Summerville Convention and Visitors Bureau holds a student contest each year to recognize students who submit tourism-related artworks, essays, and advertisements about the benefits of working in the industry. Local tourism businesses have also worked directly with students to help provide hands-on experiences building out the state's tourism infrastructure. The Departments of Education and Tourism began accepting applications from schools for Tourism-based Economic Projects Impacting Communities (EPIC) grants that award funding for students to create tourism infrastructure projects on public lands in their regions.

The Case/Challenge: A consequence of the state's rapid tourism growth was the strain it placed on the existing workforce, and the pandemic only made it much worse. The state needed to enhance workforce development in this area if it was to retain the significant growth and diversity realized in these sectors. When the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) opportunity was announced in 2021, other states across the country examined the types of TTOR strategies they could pursue – and this included everything from infrastructure construction to emergency advertising during the COVID-19 pandemic.

West Virginia, on the other hand, went in a different direction. Concerned about the workforce challenges on the horizon, the state conducted a [Tourism & Hospitality Workforce Survey](#) in early 2022 using the EDA TTOR funding. A total of 438 surveys were started, and some 290 respondents met the eligibility criteria and went on to complete the entire questionnaire in the April-May time frame that year. The survey found, among many other findings:

- Nearly all businesses surveyed expected to see growth in employment over the next 5 years.
- Nearly 40% indicated they did not have money allocated in their budgets for employee training, and that they faced significant issues related to hiring.
- Challenges ranged from finding enough available workers within regions and being able to provide competitive wages to finding candidates with the specific skill sets required.

To address the identified workforce issues, West Virginia designed “[Tourism Works](#)” — a statewide tourism grant program with all of its \$5.1 million EDA award dedicated to it. The goal is for everyone a visitor encounters in West Virginia to be an ambassador for tourism. In [presenting the Tourism Works program](#) in 2023, Gov. Justice said, “We’ve got tourism jumpstarted like you can’t even imagine. We might go from 21,000 to 210,000 job openings in the blink of an eye” (Figure 17). The [Governor’s announcement](#) was made at the Nicholas County Career and Technical Center.

Figure 17. Gov. Justice Celebrates Hospitality and Tourism Education Program’s Launch.



Source: [Office of the Governor](#).

Project Actors - State leaders, champions, stakeholders

The Tourism Works program is comprised of three initiatives, creating a comprehensive approach with three distinct areas of focus: 1) Shape our Future; 2) Train Your Team; and 3) Educate our Communities.

Shape our Future: As a first step, the Department of Tourism’s Tourism Works program focused on Tourism Talent Pipeline Development for the state by getting K-12 school-age children interested in tourism early-on by inserting it into school curricula based on collaborating with the state’s [Department of Education](#). When Tourism Works began, kids were saying they wanted to be an astronaut, for example, but they weren’t saying that they wanted to work in tourism which was perceived as having low-paying jobs.

However, new findings have shown that West Virginia projects 21,000 annual tourism openings through 2030. Each year, 10,000 of these openings are projected to be for management-level positions, with salaries approaching \$60,000, according to data from West Virginia’s [Higher Education Policy Commission](#). The median household income in West Virginia in 2024 is \$54,329, [according to the U.S. Census Bureau](#). Through the revamped K-12 curricula that includes tourism, kids are now being educated about new opportunities in the tourism industry.

All 55 of the state’s counties were engaged in the process of updating the tourism and hospitality curriculum to make it more relevant to today’s tourism opportunities. For example, a new specialization in tourism marketing will be available to schools who signed on for this new part of the tourism curriculum.

Tourism Works is also creating new Tourism Pathways programs to make the connection between high school and college. High school students can now start earning college credits for the tourism training they receive during high school which further contributes to developing a tourism talent pipeline as part of the [Discover Your Future](#) program.

As an example of a partnership between the West Virginia Department of Tourism and career and technical centers, a group of students designed and constructed one-of-a-kind [“Almost Heaven” swings](#) in their welding, woodworking, and marketing classes and installed them on iconic scenic grounds around the state. This hands-on project experience has been life-changing for some of the students. One said he can’t wait to bring his kids and grandkids to see the swings in the future.

At the college level, Tourism Works is sub-granting to regional educational programs around the state for specialized tourism programs. The online training provided at the college-level has been modeled after a successful Proctor & Gamble (P&G) program when the company opened a new location in West Virginia 4 to 5 years ago. P&G successfully teamed up with post-secondary educational institutions to create a custom curriculum for specifically needed workers in certain areas of the state.

Train Your Team: The pre-existing [Governor’s Guaranteed Workforce program](#) offers eligible companies training grants of up to \$2,000 per employee – up to a certain amount per year – for employers to provide training to upskill their employees. The Department of Economic Development assists with employee recruitment and other services. It is now being combined with the Tourism Works program which is bringing in targeted training to help address the training needs of TTOR industries from whitewater rafting businesses to hotels in the hospitality sector, and everything in between. This combination of programs benefits both employees and employers, as the state pays for specialized training that helps employees gain new skills and helps employers expand their businesses. The model is based on the training originally developed for a [Toyota manufacturing plant](#) in the town of Buffalo, West Virginia, where Toyota has now become the largest employer in Putnam County where Buffalo is located.

Educate our Communities: In terms of community development, there is a need to educate those in communities around the state to have a hospitality mindset. This will allow them to be able to talk to vendors and give directions to visitors. For this, Tourism Works teamed up with a West Virginia [Community & Technical College System](#) member institution to develop a widely accessible online course with education modules that are user friendly and relevant for today’s tourism industry. This resource is being planned for the [Fall of 2024](#) and designed for everyone from ski instructors and raft guides to service station clerks and tourism entrepreneurs. Learners can take the program on their own time and receive a free 1-hour college credit.

Figure 18. The Tourism Works Program “at work” in Timberline Mountain, West Virginia.



Source: West Virginia Department of Tourism.

Economic Benefits

West Virginia’s Tourism Works investment will serve as a model for other states interested in initiating an innovative statewide program to diversify their workforce and economic base. In addition to the focus on workforce development, West Virginia provides examples for marketing, outreach, and networking, as well as advancements in equity goals. These are all important actions exemplified by the focus of other TTOR-funded projects around the country.

West Virginia is currently in the design and implementation phases of its project and has empirical data demonstrating early indicators of success. West Virginia Tourism has a process in place that enables the collection of data when people are signing up and registering for the online course, enrolling in the programs of study either at the high school or college level, or enrolling in the Governor’s Guaranteed Workforce program at the professional development level. Having that data up front, the state can circle back with those participants to gather outcome data at the end, after the training has been completed, as well as measure the overall impacts of the workforce development programs.

Other Benefits

The innovative initiatives that make up the comprehensive West Virginia TTOR program called Tourism Works show why both residents and tourists are now so excited about tourism in the state. Taken as a whole, all of the Tourism Works initiatives will contribute to creating a hospitable state. A strong and well-educated workforce is a major step in attracting more visitors – who visit more often, stay longer on each visit, and spend more money while in the state. The program is exemplary in its diversification of the workforce, the economy, and the visitor base, ultimately making the economy more resilient to shocks.

In terms of outreach to disadvantaged populations, almost all of West Virginia’s 55 counties are in the [Appalachian Regional Commission’s map of distressed counties](#). Therefore, most of the work being done through these initiatives will automatically be serving disadvantaged populations -- at least in terms of the economic mobility factor. As the initiatives progress, the state plans to monitor the data on an ongoing basis to make sure it is receiving applications for the training programs from all of its counties, and that none are being left out. The state is casting a wide net to target not only distressed communities, but also minority populations using a

combination of different approaches such as online platforms, social media, and other sources of jobs and career opportunities -- including attending community center events in person to reach certain audiences and offer training.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

There are certain stereotypes about tourism jobs and working in the tourism industry. West Virginia's Tourism Works tried to address that by doing outreach to school guidance counselors (beyond just teachers). In the process of implementing the Tourism Works program, West Virginia Tourism has learned more about how the educational system is set up: That is, the guidance counselors and school administrators are often the ones making the decisions about implementing programs and steering students into newly created pathway programs. School guidance counselors comprise an audience that West Virginia Tourism didn't realize it needed to focus on until starting this work. Several meetings about the EDA-funded TTOR project have involved guidance counselors at the table, and the Tourism Works program would like to reach more guidance counselors from across the state. For this purpose, the Department of Tourism has participated in annual meetings attended by these counselors and administrators to spread the word about tourism careers directly with this stakeholder group.

West Virginia Tourism is "building the airplane as it takes off," in that the Tourism Works program is continuing to be built as it takes off.

Outdoor recreation is one of the main drivers of West Virginia's tourism industry. The state's Department of Tourism often highlights outdoor recreation to attract visitors to the state. The Department constructed the new workforce program to be broad enough so that hotels, restaurants, and other parts of the tourism and hospitality industry can access the program. Outdoor recreation providers are turning out to be one of the key "partner groups" accessing the new West Virginia Tourism Works program. For example:

- The Train Your Team initiatives are attracting interest from outdoor recreation providers, such as whitewater rafting and ski industry businesses, who are accessing the customized opportunities available through the initiative for their staff.
- One of the focus areas for the new high school tourism curriculum is called "Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Tourism" and that part of the revamped tourism curricula is already being well-received by the students at both the middle and high school levels.
- Certain of the pathway initiatives being developed into new certificate and degree programs at the state's higher education institutions are outdoor recreation focused, although change at this level takes a longer amount of time to implement.

Time Factors, Any other Guidance Necessary for Replication: In terms of funding support, a sub-goal of the Tourism Department is for all the initiatives to continue after the EDA funding has run out through a proof-of-concept model for each of the initiatives being implemented. As the initiatives get off the ground and the state is able to collect metrics that show how the investments are paying off, it is hoped that either the state or other funding sources will enable their continuation based on seeing the value of investing in building out the tourism workforce. For example, under the grant's timeline, the state of West Virginia only has a certain amount of funding and time to make the online tourism and hospitality program free for learners. However, there is hope to continue it under another funding source before the current funding expires.

B. Research Methodology

Survey and Data Collection Guidance for Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Projects

UPDATES

We have released two versions of the TTOR data survey on January 8, 2024 as noted below, and we have completed our second information calls with recipients on January 17, 2024. We have also updated the survey FAQs document found on NGA's [website](#).

IMPORTANT NOTE regarding the **State Tourism/Non-competitive survey** for all statewide awards and subawards. The statewide/non-competitive survey includes questions about subawards made by each state, including subaward project title, contact information (name, email, phone), and amount of funding allocated to each subaward. Given we asked recipients of statewide non-competitive awards to share the link unique to their state or territory with all subawardees, we had to allow the survey tool to allow and record multiple responses per survey URL. Unfortunately, this also means that you are not able to return to your answers to the survey should you stop and re-start it—each time you enter the survey you are treated as a new response. If you would like to return to your survey with prior data pre-loaded for viewing and editing, then please contact Dr. Randy Rosenberger (R.Rosenberger@oregonstate.edu) and request a retake link be provided to you.

This is not an issue with the Competitive Awards, given the URL links are unique to each project and do not permit multiple responses.

ORIGINAL MESSAGE

The National Governor's Association (NGA) and Oregon State University's Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy (CORE) are [researching](#) the Economic Development Administration's Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (TTOR) projects. **On January 8, 2024, we sent TTOR grant recipients a survey** to collect baseline data on the outputs and outcomes of your project to-date. **This survey is mandatory and complements your existing reporting requirements under your EDA award.** However, we do not expect grantees to be collecting all the data requested; please complete the survey to the best of your ability. **The survey is due on February 29, 2024.** NGA and CORE will be hosting several calls to provide guidance and answer any questions grantees have about the survey (please see the schedule below).

NGA and CORE will consolidate our findings into a research report for EDA highlighting the data we collect and best practices resulting from their \$750 million investment from the American Rescue Plan to help the TTOR sector recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

This document provides information about the survey, the types of data that will be requested, and how to answer the survey questions. We will also be hosting four informational calls to answer your questions. After the calls we will update this guidance based on the questions we receive. Please register for the calls using the links below.

Calls for All Grantees – Competitive Awards and State Tourism Awards

- Tuesday, April 18, 2023 - 3:00-4:00 pm EST. [Register here](#)

- Wednesday, January 17, 2024 - 2:00-3:00 pm EST. [Register here](#)
- Tuesday, January 30, 2024 - 2:00-3:00 pm EST. [Register here](#)

Call for State Tourism Awards

- Thursday, January 25, 2024 - 2:00-3:00 pm EST. [Register here](#)

For clarification on the two types of awards, please visit EDA's Travel Tourism and Outdoor Recreation page.

Survey Overview

- NGA/CORE will be using an online survey mode to gather data from all TTOR funded projects to help analyze their short-term impacts.
- The survey is to be completed one time, it was **distributed on January 8, 2024, with a due date of February 29, 2024**. This survey **DOES NOT** replace EDA's traditional Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reporting (EDA forms ED-916, ED-917 and ED-918). While you may see some similarities between this survey and EDA forms, they are not the same but do complement each other.
- Project leads will receive a copy of this survey and access to four informational calls to help with data collection and survey completion.
- The unit of analysis for the survey is at the project-level and focuses on direct outputs / outcomes of your project. Accessing secondary data may be helpful but is not required in completing this survey.
- The survey is hosted through Qualtrics and utilizes skip logic, meaning some sections may not apply to your project and can be skipped entirely. Data collection includes both quantitative data (i.e., number of ...) and open-text qualitative data.
- You will be able to scroll forward and backward in the survey, automatically saving any data provided so that you may return to your survey at any point in time. Once completed, there is a 'submit survey' button you will select to submit your data.
- Please carefully read through each part of the survey and feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns in how to report your activities or the functionality of the online survey.

Data Collection Guidance

This survey will collect baseline data from your project that will be aggregated with data from other projects to evaluate EDA's investments in travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation. It will not be used to evaluate your specific project or scope of work. We recognize that not all projects will need to report on all project activities or metrics included in the survey. Therefore, the survey will include skip questions so that you may focus on only those categories of questions that pertain to your project. We understand that you may receive our survey at a specific point in time in your project's development and implementation, so we expect you to report based on where you are currently with your project and actual outcomes that you have or are able to measure.

The NGA/CORE survey questions will fall into two categories: project activities, and specific metrics. The survey will ask specific questions about your program activities and specific success metrics such as (but not limited to) the ones listed below.

METRICS COLLECTION	
Program Activities	Metrics
Planning and Assessment Activities	Number of feasibility and economic impact studies, and type of tools used. Number of new private businesses and retention of existing private businesses per-year by owners' race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation Number of new private sector jobs created or retained per year.
Expanding the Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Economy	- average annual wage of new jobs - number of new employees by race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation Increase in annual visitors. - by race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation - by local vs. from 50 miles or more away from site
Increasing Quality of Visitation	Improvements in interpretation, physical spaces, access and transportation, diversified/increased staff
Stakeholder Outreach	Number and types, participation counts, partnerships
Developing New Products	Product description and sales Financial investment
Marketing	Increase in annual visitors. - by race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation - by local vs. from 50 miles or more away from site
Workforce Training, Skills Training and Certifications	Number of programs held, and certifications earned, types of skills learned, increase in wages and job creation, cost to sustain programs Increase in funding and training for diverse marketing, diverse workforce training, indigenous interpretation of attractions, investment in disadvantaged communities, and data on
Equity Focused Activities	businesses, jobs and visitors disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identification

Links to the data surveys can be accessed as follows:

- Competitive Data Survey [PDF copy](#)
- Non-Competitive/Statewide Data Survey [PDF copy](#)

C. Description of Data Sources (for baseline/secondary data)

Bureau of Economic Analysis

Travel and Tourism Satellite Account for 2018-22 Data
<https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/travel-and-tourism>

Outdoor Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2022
<https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

D. Other Federal Requirements

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) OMB review & approval process

EDA Federal Register Notice, June 15, 2023:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/06/15/2023-12768/agency-information-collection-activities-submission-to-the-office-of-management-and-budget-omb-for>

E. Glossary of Terms & Definitions

**Project Evaluation: Economic Development Administration’s Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Awards
National Governors Association and Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy, Oregon State University**

Glossary of Terms

This glossary defines key terms in the National Governors Association (NGA) and Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy at Oregon State University (CORE) data survey of TTOR projects funded under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and are clustered around the primary themes of the survey. NGA/CORE uses key Economic Development Administration (EDA) definitions when available. These definitions are identified with an asterisk (*) and may be accessed at [EDA’s Key Definitions Page](#).

Terms:

Project Identification

Competitive Grant – A grant that was awarded via a competitive selection process. Applicants applied for funds from EDA for the purpose of helping communities that have been hardest hit by challenges facing the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors. Grantees invest in infrastructure, workforce, or other projects to support the recovery of the industry and to build the economic resilience of the community in the future.

State/Non-Competitive Grant – A grant that was awarded directly to states and territories to engage in activities that best support their travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors. These awards sought to help states quickly invest in marketing, infrastructure, workforce and other travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation projects.

Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Project Identification

Travel – The act of moving from one location to another; may include traveling long or short distances, domestic or international travel, and travel for pleasure, recreation, business, family, education, healthcare, shopping, or various other purposes.

Travel and Tourism Economy – Travel-related expenditures by U.S. residents and nonresidents traveling within the United States. Travel-related expenditures by

nonresidents on international transportation purchased from U.S. providers. It comprises travel by resident households, business-related and government employees, and by nonresidents for study or for medical treatments in the U.S.

Outdoor Recreation Economy – Outdoor recreation activities are activities that are undertaken for pleasure or health and that occur outdoors. They generally fall into three categories: conventional activities (such as bicycling, boating, hiking, and hunting), other activities (such as gardening and outdoor concerts), and supporting activities (such as construction, travel and tourism, local trips, and government expenditures).

Planning and Assessment Activities

Planning and Assessment – Any formal or informal application of planning or evaluative frameworks to determine the development, implementation, or impacts of the project. These may include planning frameworks, feasibility studies, economic impact analyses, or other frameworks.

Land-use or Environmental Impact Assessments – Looks at site characteristics such as land, water, climate, and geography to help project leads and/or infrastructure developers make sound decisions about land use, and how projects will impact air, land, and water quality.

Data Tools – The use of tools or modes of data collection that directly support or are used in planning and assessment. These may include public surveys, opinion polls, habitat assessments, or other data collection tools and methods used by the project.

Expanding the Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Economy

Travel and Tourism Industry – Comprised of economic sectors including transportation, accommodation, food & beverages, recreation, entertainment, and shopping, as well as connected industries such as financial services, tour operators, travel agents, and tourism and education organizations. Tourism outputs include direct outputs comprised of all domestically produced goods and services purchased by tourists/visitors and indirect outputs comprised of resources, goods and services required to support the production of direct tourism outputs. Tourism employment includes direct employment where workers are engaged in direct tourism output and indirect employment where workers are engaged in the production of indirect tourism outputs (derived from [BEA Travel and Tourism Satellite Account](#)).

Outdoor Recreation Industry – Comprised of economic sectors associated with *core goods and services* purchased directly for outdoor recreation and *supporting goods and services* that provide access to outdoor recreation. Core goods and services include gear, equipment, fuel, concessions, maintenance, repair, and fees related to outdoor recreation activities. Supporting goods and services include trips and travel, construction, and government expenditures (derived from [BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account](#)).

Jobs* – Relevant jobs are those either created or retained by employers or by firms who benefit directly from services provided by the EDA-funded facility or project.

EDA grantees report on direct or directly attributable jobs, including subsequent employers that locate or expand in the project area because of the project. For some projects (e.g., roads, water, and sewer lines), direct jobs may include those created by

firms that were not originally anticipated as part of the project but required the facility or service provided by the EDA project to locate or expand in the area.

Only permanent and direct jobs are counted in EDA reporting. Temporary jobs, including those related to construction, are not included. EDA grantees are instructed to convert part-time jobs into full-time equivalents (e.g., the total part-time hours worked per week divided by the hourly work week for full-time employees, normally 35-40 hours).

Jobs Created*– Private sector jobs created by businesses and other project beneficiaries because of the EDA project.

Jobs Retained* – Private sector jobs retained because of the EDA project.

Businesses – Relevant businesses (firms, employers) are those either created or retained directly from services provided by the EDA-funded facility or project.

Businesses Created – New businesses created because of EDA-funded projects.

Businesses Retained – Businesses that would have been or recently were eliminated or closed but were retained because of EDA funded projects.

NAICS Codes – [North American Industry Classification System](#) – Standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. economy. The industry or economic clusters align with two-digit NAICS Codes or other clusters that provide direct and indirect support of the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation economy.

Workforce Training, Skills Training and Certifications

Gained / Upgraded Skills – Refers to training and formal instruction to enhance an existing skill. Both hard skills (e.g., equipment maintenance) and soft skills (e.g., teamwork) are included.

Costs for Sustaining Program – This is the amount of funding (secured or not) that would be needed to offer these programs/training on an annual basis. Costs may include accommodation, materials, instructional services, etc.

Visitors and Visitation

Visitor/Tourist – A person who travels for any main purpose (business, leisure, or other personal purpose) other than for employment for part of a day up to less than a year. A non-local visitor, sometimes called a tourist, is a person who travels more than 50-100 miles from their area of normal, everyday activities such as their residence. A local visitor is a person who visits sites, locations, or attends events within 50-100 miles of their area of normal, everyday activities such as their residence. Visitors/tourists exclude travelers who expect to be compensated at the location of their visit (such as migrant workers, persons traveling to new assignments, and diplomatic and military personnel traveling to and from their duty stations and their home countries).

Outdoor Recreation Visitor – A person (local or non-local, see above) who visits an area for recreational purposes, including education, interpretation, inspiration, and physical and mental health.

Visit – One occurrence of a visitor visiting an area for any part of a day. Visitor may visit an area multiple times on a single trip or over a period (day, week, month, or year). Therefore, number of visits and number of visitors are typically not equivalent to each other unless each visitor visits no more than once per period.

Quality of Visitation – Any change in delivery of resources, goods, or services that affects the value of a visitor’s experience. Examples may include physical improvements such as sound barriers to reduce noise; lighting and visibility to improve personal and property safety; or programmatic activities such as interpretation and access services (reservations systems, online resources).

Equity Focused Activities

Equity – As defined by [The White House](#), equity means the consistent and systematic treatment of all individuals in a fair, just, and impartial manner, including individuals who belong to communities that often have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American, Asian American, Native Hawai‘ian, and Pacific Islander persons and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; women and girls; LGBTQI+ persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; persons who live in United States Territories; persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality; and individuals who belong to multiple such communities.

Some sections will ask you to provide additional data on businesses, jobs, and visitors. The sections that ask for these additional data include *Expanding Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Economy*, and *Workforce Training, Skills Training and Certifications*. Additional data include race, ethnicity, and gender identity classifications.

Construction and Non-construction Projects

Construction Project – Any project or program that involves the act or process of building infrastructure such as facilities, utilities, and/or transportation. Examples would include fiber optic cable installation, park/playground development or renovation, trail development or renovation, etc.

Non-construction Project – Any project or program that does not involve the act or process of building infrastructure such as facilities, utilities, and/or transportation. Examples would include financial support for planning, assessment, marketing, and other non-construction activities.

Economic Resilience

Economic Resilience* – In the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity.

Often, the shocks/disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending.
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity.
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

For more information, please visit EDA's [Economic Resilience](#) page.

**Uses Economic Development Administration definition.*

F. Phone Interviews

Interviewed TTOR Awardees

EDA Project Region	Type of Award	Applicant Organization
Philadelphia	Competitive	Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
Philadelphia	Formula	Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Philadelphia	Competitive	Mylan Park Foundation, West Virginia
Chicago	Formula	State of Wisconsin
Chicago	Formula	Indiana Lieutenant Governor's Office
Chicago	Competitive	International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals (Ohio)
Chicago	Competitive	Friends of Lapham Peak Unit - Kettle Moraine State Forest, Inc. (Wisconsin)
Seattle	Competitive	State of Nevada
Austin	Formula	Louisiana Division of Administration
Philadelphia	Competitive	Retreat Farm, Limited (Vermont)
Atlanta	Competitive	McCreary County Heritage Foundation, Inc.
Chicago	Competitive	Strategy for Access Foundation NFP
Seattle	Formula	Office of Commerce, Investment, and Tourism – Republic of the Marshall Islands
Seattle	Competitive	Santa Cruz County, California, Economic Development
Philadelphia	Competitive	Town of Skowhegan, Maine
Atlanta	Competitive	Central Pines (formerly Triangle J) Council of Governments, North Carolina

Contacted TTOR Awardees (No initial phone interviews)

*NGA later interviewed Frost Fire Park in 2024 based on the data survey results, and then the Hawai'i award.

EDA Project Region	Type of Award	Applicant Organization
Philadelphia	Formula	Maine Department of Economic & Community Development
Philadelphia	Competitive	City of Havre de Grace, Maryland
Chicago	Formula	Michigan Strategic Fund, MI Economic Development Corporation
Atlanta	Formula	Northwest Mississippi
Seattle	Formula	Government of Federated States of Micronesia Department of Finance & Administration
Philadelphia	Competitive	Maritime Academy at Norwalk's Salt Marshes of Long Island Sound
Denver	Competitive	Frost Fire Park (North Dakota)
Denver	Competitive	Tataka Trail (South Dakota)
Seattle	Competitive	Meals Hill (Arkansas)

NGA PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – June 2023

These questions will be used to narrow down the number of projects selected for the final case studies that will be included in the final report. The phone interview should take 45 minutes or less, and questions may differ based on initial feedback.

PRIORITY QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND

1. What are the goals of your project and who are its champions, stakeholders, and target audience?
2. What is innovative about this project? Does it incorporate new methods and/or ideas, and if so, how?

ECONOMIC GROWTH

1. Based on any project results or findings to-date, did your local or state government adopt supportive policies and programs such as tax incentives, workforce training or marketing programs? If so, which ones?
2. What state policies or regulations make it easier or harder to implement the project and increase economic benefits?
3. What are the key strategies you are employing to increase employment and wages?
4. What type of support has your project provided to create new businesses?

RESILIENCY

1. How does your project address resilience to economic and climate change shocks?
2. What aspects of this project addressing resiliency are replicable in or scalable to other regions?

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

1. Does your project seek to create equitable opportunities for underserved populations?
 1. Does your project intend to increase economic diversity in travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation? If so, how?
 2. Does your project intend to increase wages in the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry for underserved populations? If so, how?
2. Did you partner on this project with any non-profits/organizations or educational institutions such as Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) that focus on diversity in travel, tourism and outdoor recreation? If so:
 1. Which ones?
 2. What work did the MSI perform under your project's scope of work?

FOSTERING HIGHER SKILLS AND WAGES

1. Does this project provide skill development opportunities for employees, potential employees, or business owners? If so:
 1. Please provide supporting information on the type of skill development programs, including funding levels and sources.
 2. If applicable, did higher skills translate into higher wages for employees and potential employees or profits for business owners? Can you describe in terms of numbers of employees or businesses (i.e., some, many) or financial increases (i.e., wages increased some or a great deal)?

DATA AND MEASURING SUCCESS

1. What data are you collecting to measure the success of your project?
2. What incentives and/or assistance would help you with project data collection?
3. Is there another source of data for your project or baseline data that you are using? (i.e., state travel & tourism agency, outdoor recreation office, or federal agency such as the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), U.S. Census Bureau, etc.)?

Other Potential Questions: These may be used based on time remaining/responses to the questions above:

1. How are you defining success in this project? Are there any other metrics or data that would be helpful in measuring that success?
2. What other factors influence your project's expected outcomes (i.e., economic recovery of the sector more broadly; regional initiatives/resources to support the work; etc.?)
3. What partners are involved in the project? Please name the partners and their type of organization (i.e., companies, foundations, universities, volunteer organizations, etc.). What are their roles in the project?
4. Is the project expected to sustain newly created and higher wage jobs over the long-term (next decade or longer?) How so?
5. Please describe any indirect benefits resulting from this project (such as other new business opportunities/development; improved health benefits, etc.)?
6. What other assistance have you identified that may be contributing to the development and marketing of local tourism and outdoor recreation (i.e., funding, training, or technical assistance, etc. provided by a federal, state or local organization or some other source). Please identify the organization(s) and types of contribution(s).