

SHIFT'S SECOND ANNUAL

STATE OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION WORKSHOP

SUMMARY

The information in this document was developed during the State Offices of Outdoor Recreation Workshop at The 2017 SHIF'T Festival in Jackson, WY. Special thanks to the panelists, Meryl Harrell for workshop documentation, Gerben Scherpier for coordination, and Igor Crnatovic for design.



In 2017, the **Outdoor Industry Association** released its third report on the outdoor recreation economy, estimating that the outdoor sector generates \$887 billion in annual consumer spending. In February 2018, the **Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis** released prototype statistics estimating that outdoor recreation contributed \$374 billion to the national GDP in 2016. **Both reports underscore the importance of the outdoor sector as a driver of economic growth.**

BY JUNE 2018, NINE STATES HAD CREATED OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TO DEDICATE LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCES TO GROWING THIS SEGMENT OF THEIR ECONOMIES.

Over the past few years, **states have begun to recognize the importance of outdoor recreation** to quality of life and the economic health of communities. In response, a number of them have established leadership positions within their governmental structures to develop outdoor recreational opportunities and to support related policy and economic development. **By June 2018, nine states had created offices of outdoor recreation** to dedicate leadership and resources to growing this segment of their economies.

The first three states to establish offices of outdoor recreation—Utah (2013), Colorado (2015) and Washington (2015)—have been joined over the past two years by Montana, North Carolina, Wyoming, Oregon, Vermont and Michigan, which have also established offices or leadership positions within their governments. Other states are exploring similar options.

The establishment of such offices has received bipartisan support from both local and state political leaders who recognize that constituents want to work, live, and play in places with access to outdoor recreation, and that outdoor activities are directly related to economic health.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

CONTRIBUTED

\$374 billion

TO THE NATIONAL GDP IN 2016





**ON NOVEMBER 1,
2017, SHIFT HELD ITS
SECOND ANNUAL
STATE OFFICES OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION
WORKSHOP
IN JACKSON, WY, AS
PART OF THE 2017
SHIFT FESTIVAL**

2017 WORKSHOP PRESENTERS: >

This workshop, **designed to create a toolkit for the creation of state offices of outdoor recreation**, was developed on top of 2016's program, which participants from North Carolina credited with taking "a year and a half" off the process of launching their office. Rather than focusing on existing state offices in Colorado, Utah and Washington, as workshop organizers had the previous two years (in 2015, the country's first three state office directors convened to discuss their respective positions), **the workshop featured representatives from state offices that were in the process of being created.**

Principals behind the drive for offices in Oregon, North Carolina, Vermont and Wyoming, as well as the country's most recent Director of a state office of outdoor recreation, Montana's Rachel VandeVoort, **shared lessons learned from their efforts to create offices** in a panel discussion format, with assistance from Brad Petersen, America's first Director, and Janette Heung, Colorado's Deputy Director (the first such deputy director in the country). **The panel discussion was followed by a "Campaign Workshop"** in which participants worked in teams to develop actionable plans for office creation in their respective regions.

The following distillation offers an overview of **ideas, tools, and lessons learned** during the 2017 workshop.

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BRAD PETERSEN

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MICHAEL SNYDER

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HOW ARE STATE OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION FORMED?

There a variety of ways for states to establish offices of outdoor recreation, including through legislative action or executive action. In some cases, multi-sector task forces or advisory committees were established to recommend the best path forward.

Panelists suggested that for the creation of new offices, state executives, legislators and stakeholders focus first on the goals and outcomes for the position, and then decide how and where to house it—for example, within the state government such that it will be durable—as well as a pathway to establishing it.



No matter the pathway, panelists shared a number of tactics to support advocacy for the creation of an office. These include:

1 BE SURE TO REPRESENT THE COMPLETE RANGE OF USER GROUPS

Advocate for outdoor recreation and not against other industries.

2 LINE UP SUPPORT IN ADVANCE

Being prepared with support for creating an office from local communities, businesses, non-profits, user groups and others will help when the opportunity for action arises.

3 BRING FORWARD ECONOMIC DATA

Knowing the economic impact of the outdoor sector is a great way to generate buy-in for an office to support that economic activity. Be prepared to discuss jobs and job cre-

ation, as well as contributions to GDP and the tax base. Also be prepared to make the case for how outdoor assets attract and support residents and small businesses. County-specific data is especially persuasive to state representatives. Make the case that the state can't afford not to create an office of outdoor recreation.

4 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Different legislators from different geographic areas within each state will have their own focus areas and interests. Try to identify what their interests are and focus on how outdoor recreation relates to those interests.

5 RECOGNIZE THAT EACH STATE IS DIFFERENT

A process or structure that works for

one state might not be successful in another. Understand the politics, structure, and culture of your own state government, and work to create an office or position in the way that is most likely to succeed in your state.

6 PARTNERS CAN HELP

Non-profits and businesses can be great advocates for these offices, and have had a big role in helping existing offices bring players together to organize events, working groups, etc. Multi-party advisory committees have also played a role in office creation in multiple states. Such committees can demonstrate the breadth of support across diverse geographies and interests within a state.



**HOW ARE
STATE OFFICES
FUNDED AND
HOW DO THEY
LEVERAGE
RESOURCES?**

State offices are funded in a number of ways, including from general funds at the state level, through offices of economic development and trade, state trust fund dollars, and state taxes, including a lodging tax in two states. Most offices have between 1 and 3 staff members. With limited resources and staffing available to most offices, **panelists highlighted the need for engaging partners and collaboration.** Strategic advice from panelists included:

1

LOOK TO LEVERAGE RESOURCES WITH OTHER OFFICES WITHIN YOUR STATE

Work to find common objectives and advocate for outdoor recreation to have a seat at the table for decisions that impact funding and priorities.

2

PARTNERSHIPS ARE CRITICAL

Partners can help with financial resources, staff resources, volunteer and stewardship work, small business incubation, policy development, and advocacy.

3

SPREAD THE WORD

Take every opportunity to speak with or in front of legislators and government officials to make the case for your office.

4

BUILD FLEXIBILITY INTO YOUR FUNDING PLAN

The creation of a position via legislation helps ensure its existence regardless of a change in governors. Regardless of how the position is created, find partners that help stretch your dollars. Search for creative “long-term” ways to get funding for staff, for example with matching funds. Legislators like matching funds, especially with grants.





**WHAT ARE SOME
LESSONS EARLY
LEADERS HAVE
LEARNED ABOUT
PRIORITIZATION
AND HOW TO BE
EFFECTIVE?**

SH/FT
WHERE CONSERVATION MEETS ADVENTURE



1

LINK STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WITH ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Have data ready to make the case, at the county level where possible.

2

HIGHLIGHT QUALITY OF LIFE BENEFITS

In addition to economic opportunity, focus on how outdoor assets and access improve the quality of life for residents and attract new residents and employers to your state. Create an office mission that is inclusive of both economic and quality of life benefits.

3

BE INCLUSIVE OF ALL TYPES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

There is a broad spectrum of outdoor activity and interests, including hunting, fishing, motorized and human powered outdoor pursuits. Be sure to find common ground among stakeholders and represent the interests of the sector as a whole.

4

BE FOR RECREATION AND NOT AGAINST OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE STATE

Be a voice for the importance and value of outdoor recreation as a sector that is growing

and one that can help create jobs and buffer the highs and lows in other industries.

5

BE VISIBLE

Get out across the state, visit communities and constituencies so that people see you and understand how this position can help them. By visiting community and stakeholder events and meetings, leaders can quickly engage the public and learn about their needs and interests. Creating or working with existing advisory groups or business alliances can also help. Take every opportunity to be in front of the legislature.

6

BE PROACTIVE IN ADDING YOUR VOICE ON KEY ISSUES

Make sure that you are at the table and that outdoor recreation interests are represented when decisions are made, including with regard to state budgets, leasing plans, and land management planning. You won't automatically be invited to participate in every meeting or issue that may affect outdoor recreation, but when you ask to participate, others will usually welcome your input.

7

FIND OR CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICY ALLIANCES

Outdoor recreation overlaps heavily with public health, transportation, natural resources, commerce, environmental policy, etc. Such overlaps present opportunities for collaborative approaches that in turn increase the chances of success.

8

OPENLY RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGES TO INCREASED OUTDOOR RECREATION

Increased visitation or use of outdoor assets can create costs, for example, for local search and rescue or for resource protection, and can be detrimental to the natural environment. Build those needs into the conversation proactively and search for ways to address them.

9

DEVELOP COMPELLING MARKETING AND MESSAGING MATERIALS

A professionally produced video such as [this one](#), backed up by OIA statistics, was critical in getting people excited about creating an office in North Carolina. Proactively shaping the narrative can assist in developing support and momentum.



A mountain biker wearing a pink and black jersey with 'Hoback' written on the back, a white helmet, and sunglasses is riding a black mountain bike on a rocky trail. The background shows a scenic view of a mountain landscape with evergreen trees and a cloudy sky. A large yellow arrow graphic points to the left, framing the title text.

WHAT ARE THE STATE OFFICES WORKING ON?

One common use of the position is to host public forums and convene multi-sector conversations on topics including:

- ✓ **starting a business in the outdoor recreation sector**
- ✓ **growing participation across demographics**
- ✓ **strengthening environmental assets, and**
- ✓ **strengthening the capacity to steward those assets.**

help communities make outdoor education and training available to new users and new residents in order to help avoid impacts to resources and increased costs to communities.

directly help or find help for communities to understand and map their outdoor assets, build those assets into their community economic development plans, and market those opportunities.

STATE OFFICES CAN

help create business or regional alliances to meet needs, such as aging infrastructure, with opportunities, like youth corps programs and job training programs.

help to create and disseminate information about the impact of the sector to the state by supporting or commissioning, for example, county-level economic analyses, by sharing existing data, or by helping to create information sheets or video narratives.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“State Leadership Roles for Outdoor Recreation White Paper,”

O'Brien-Feeney, Outdoor Industry Association

“Collaborative State and Federal Partnerships in Outdoor Recreation: A Nationwide Comparison of State Outdoor Recreation Initiatives,”

Sausser, Smith, Ratcliffe

“13 Huge Wins for Outdoor Recreation,”

Sanford, Outdoor Industry Association



On October 16, at The 2018 SHIFT Festival, the third annual State Offices workshop will showcase the ways states are connecting the health benefits of time outside with the development of outdoor recreation. **For more information, visit www.shiftjh.org.**

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WHERE CONSERVATION MEETS ADVENTURE

