

Background and Composition:

Following the Thrive Laramie work plan, a diverse collection of stakeholders from the Laramie outdoor recreation retail, service, and tourism industries began meeting in December 2020 to establish the Laramie Tourism Coalition. Coalition conveners Scott Larson (Albany County Tourism Board), Brian Harrington (Laramie City Council) and Todd Feezer (City of Laramie) welcomed the initial list of invitees to solicit additional members to further expand and diversify representation in the coalition. In all, 70 individuals or groups were invited to participate. On average, 27 people attended each meeting. Meetings were facilitated by a neutral facilitator, Carrie Bennett, with process support (note taking, etc.) from students and staff from the University of Wyoming's Ruckelshaus Institute.

Following the initial meeting on December 2, 2020, the group continued to convene monthly via Zoom. In addition, coalition members contributed ideas and feedback via a series of between-meeting surveys. This group's purpose included the following:

1. Identify and recognize the diverse assets that draw visitors to Laramie.
2. Explore ways to better coordinate and leverage those resources to attract more visitors and capture more visitor spending.
3. Embed sustainable practices to maximize the economic, social, and environmental benefits of visitors while minimizing negative impacts.
4. Develop working relationships and partnerships to maintain these efforts over time.

Key Findings:

- Laramie and Albany County offer a wealth of opportunities for visitors. Tourist attractions include opportunities for outdoor recreation, arts and culture, history and western, and UW-related events and attractions.
- Visitors to the area are often passing through on their way to somewhere else OR coming for one-specific attraction with little awareness of other opportunities. For example, visitors coming to recreate in the Snowies or near Pole Mountain often exit the interstate and keep going; they rarely make it into the downtown area. Similarly, people coming to the area for a UW athletic event, and even those spending the night, might not be aware of historical or culinary events and attractions that they might also enjoy. Broadly, visitors are not well aware of ALL the amenities that the area has to offer.
- Awareness of some resources depends heavily on word of mouth and/or local knowledge. This is true for everything from outdoor recreation (e.g., trails, climbing spots, etc.) as well as food and dining. While other nearby communities have an abundance of rich information online, the "best" knowledge about Laramie and its surrounding areas often still depends on word of mouth.
- Work remains to ensure that Laramie authentically welcomes ALL visitors. The current social environment and reputation of Laramie should be considered when inviting visitors into our community.

- Area locals treasure the small town feel and open spaces in and around Laramie. While locals are enthusiastic about welcoming visitors and sharing the best of what Laramie has to offer, they are also concerned about overcrowding, parking, etc.

Recommendations:

- **Beautify Laramie's entryways.** Laramie does not make a strong first impression on people entering town via any of the interstate exits or on highway 287. These nondescript entryways do not hint at the vibrant and charming community that lies beyond. Entryway beautification can help encourage those just passing through to stop, look around, and enjoy more of the amenities that Laramie has to offer.
- **Educate visitors.** Visitor education serves multiple functions, from promoting responsible outdoor recreation to providing information about opportunities for dining, arts, and culture downtown.
 - Add durable signage at trailheads and parking areas. Promote responsible outdoor recreation AND other visitor information (suggestions for where to eat, drink, etc.) via web-links, QR Codes, etc.. Over time, consider other locations for visitor education (rest areas, public restrooms, etc.)
 - Develop a tourism ambassador program by which local volunteers are trained to help visitors find their way and get the most out of their visit.
 - Convene and train current outdoor recreationists (across user groups) to encourage other users to recreate responsibly with a promoted ethic of "leave it better than you found it" ..
- **Support existing and future events with tools for cross-promotion and package deals.**
 - Events are an impactful way to bring visitors to the area. With the support of well developed "tool-kits" event organizers can help spread the word about additional opportunities that are available to event attendees.
 - Coordinated packages and promotions can help capture more visitor spending and encourage return visits. Develop tools to facilitate relationships between event planners/destinations and local businesses that support win-wins, matching offerings and needs.
- **Improve access to downtown.** For visitors who come in RVs or towing trailers, the downtown area and its limited parking may be inaccessible. Developing a shuttle service from key points outside of town (e.g., RV-focused campgrounds, the Territorial Prison, etc.) may help more people experience downtown than would otherwise. Shuttle drop-off points could also serve as visitor-education points with printed tourist information, kiosks, or guided walking tours leaving from those locations.

- **Enhance resources and develop tourist assets:** Ultimately, further investments in Laramie's tourist infrastructure will be required. Develop financial resources and sustainable revenue streams to continue to pay for amenities that help attract and support both visitors and locals. Examples of desirable amenities worth investing in include signage and tools for wayfinding, increased parking, and bike path connectivity.
- **Maintain partnerships and communication:** Continue with quarterly (or at least twice-yearly) meetings of the Laramie Tourism Coalition. Use meeting times to share updates, news and information, collect feedback on efforts, and look for new opportunities for win-wins. Professional and social connections will help support ongoing collaboration and communication across tourist assets, asset managers, and user groups. Intentionally structure and manage the Coalition to help boost outcomes and sustain the effort long-term.

Coalition Composition: The following individuals participated in the Coalition's efforts through online surveys and/or regular Coalition meeting attendance.

Name	Affiliation
Laura McDermit	Public Art Coalition
Cynthia Dywan	City of Laramie/Laramie Bikenet
Garrett Genereaux	UW Outdoor Program
Scott Larson	Albany County Tourism Board
Dan McCoy	UW - ORTM
Katie Christensen	UW Art Museum
Kaley Holyfield	UW College of Business Employee, High Plains Harriers Member
Aaron Voos	USFS: Pole Mountain and Medicine Bow Units
Mary Grace Bedwell	USFS: Pole Mountain and Medicine Bow Units
Sarah Brown Mathews	Pilot Hill
Josh Kaffer	Friend of the Laramie Skatepark
Brian Harrington	Laramie City Council
Emma Dixon	UW Student
Marcell Astle	BLM (Rogers Canyon)
Mallory Bond	Restaurant/Bar Brewery Owner
David Wright	Albany Lodge- Motor Sports
Robin Kepple	WY Game and Fish
Shannon Markle	Motor Sports
Rachel Watson	UW Recreation- Nordic
Rebekah Smith	At Large
Deborah Cease	Wyoming Territorial Prison
Jodi Guerin	City of Laramie Recreation Manager and Business Owner
Judy Knight	Albany County Museum Coalition and Laramie Plains Museum
Tara Wertz	US Fish and Wildlife
Todd Feezer	City of Laramie
Kit Freedman	UW-Ruckelshaus Institute
Dewey Gallegos	Pedal House/Paddle House
Laura Vietti	UW Geology Museum
Heather Tupper	Snowy Range Snowmobile Club
Patricia Leatherwood	SE Wyoming OHV Alliance
Patrick Harrington	Curt Gowdy State Park

Kelly Steiner	Medicine Bow Nordic Association
Jessica Flock	Outdoor Equipment, Sales, Maintenance Shop, Albany County Historical Society
Rebecca Walsh	Outdoor Equipment, Sales, Maintenance Shop
Rene Williams	4th Street Studios
Harmony Siegel	Centennial Valley- Trading Post
Becky Maddox, Ellie Southerland	Snowy Range Ski Area
Cameron Chimenti	3C Guiding
Ammon Medina	Rendezvous Wyoming
Ken Cramer	Nordic
Zach Lentsch	Climbing/Outfitting