

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION



WHY OUTDOOR RECREATION?























The outdoor recreation sector has never been more important in states across the nation, where it plays a vital and growing role in attracting and retaining talent, supporting urban and rural economies, improving public health, and ensuring a state's conservation legacy. This sector helps develop economies and create jobs, increases rural prosperity, improves public health outcomes and quality of life, and promotes environmental stewardship and conservation.

CREATING AN OFFICE

Offices of Outdoor Recreation (or Outdoor Recreation Industry Offices) can be created through a number of measures, including legislation, budget line item, executive order, or gubernatorial action. They are created with the support of conservation stakeholders, business leaders, government, and non-profit partners. The following themes characterize strategies that states have utilized to create offices of outdoor recreation and educate others on the value this investment would make for their states:

- **Leveraging Economic Power**
- **Achieving Bipartisanship**
- **Helping Coordinate Efforts**
- **Championing State's Natural Beauty**
- **Elevating the Outdoors for All**
- **Supporting Education and Workforce Development**

STATE OFFICES CREATED

- | | |
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| 1. Utah  | 12. New Hampshire  |
| 2. Colorado  | 13. New Mexico  |
| 3. Washington  | 14. Virginia  |
| 4. Wyoming  | 15. Wisconsin  |
| 5. Montana  | 16. Arkansas  |
| 6. North Carolina  | 17. Maryland  |
| 7. Oregon  | 18. Massachusetts  |
| 8. Vermont  | 19. Minnesota  |
| 9. Maine  | 20. Pennsylvania  |
| 10. Michigan  | 21. Connecticut  |
| 11. Nevada  | 22. North Dakota  |

THE VALUE OF OFFICES

While other agencies may focus exclusively on natural resource or recreation management, tourism promotion, public health, or economic development, no other state-level office is built with the mandate and expertise to partner with this fast-growing \$1.1 trillion industry and coordinate across outdoor recreation programs and partnerships to expand the benefits of outdoor recreation and enhance state competitiveness. Offices of Outdoor Recreation provide a centralized and dedicated home to coordinate efforts across agencies, identify new opportunities for economic growth, connect all communities to the benefits of time outside, and promote responsible recreation in a state's most treasured places.

FRAMING UTILIZED TO SUPPORT OFFICE CREATION



LEVERAGING ECONOMIC POWER

- From 2021 and 2022, outdoor recreation grew at 4.8%, while total economic growth was only 1.9%. [See your state's growth here](#). Offices of outdoor recreation can capitalize on this growth and grow economic vibrancy across rural, suburban, and urban communities.
- Support rural communities as they work to develop and maintain a sustainable, year-round outdoor economy. Explore the [ORR Rural Development Toolkit](#).
- Address barriers to business success and enhance growth, drive talent attraction and retention across all sectors.

ACHIEVING BIPARTISANSHIP

- Legislation regarding outdoor recreation frequently garners bipartisan support.

HELPING COORDINATE EFFORTS

- Offices help direct traffic and align efforts across various public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.
- States often develop offices after creating task forces, advisory councils, or to determine how an office will operate in existing government structures.
- Offices can help foster greater collaboration among diverse recreation groups and with adjacent rural industries like agriculture and forestry.

CHAMPIONING STATE'S NATURAL BEAUTY

- Uphold the state's conservation legacy by working with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to advocate for conservation and stewardship of land, air, water, and wildlife.
- Celebrate the natural beauty of each state including state parks, outdoor destinations, and top activities.
- Support the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation infrastructure around the state, increasing access to recreation and open space for residents and visitors.
- Balance improved outdoor recreation access with resource protection.

ELEVATING THE OUTDOORS FOR ALL

- Offices help address social determinants of health by increasing outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Increased access to green space leads to better health outcomes and access to more families.
- Parks and outdoor recreation occur in the city as much as in rural confines. Offices work to promote sustainable backcountry and close-to-home access.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support environmental and outdoor learning for all ages.
- Educate stakeholders about the importance of outdoor recreation.
- Work to address and overcome systemic barriers to recreation and create more opportunities for outdoor access in underserved communities.
- Promote workforce training programs for technical training across the spectrum of outdoor industry careers. There is a growing skills gap in the outdoor workforce and thousands of vacant jobs, which outdoor recreation offices can work to fill through partnerships with employers, higher education institutions, etc.

MESSAGING THEMES UTILIZED BY EXISTING OFFICES

UTAH OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...leverages outdoor recreation as a significant contribution to Utah's economy, highlights growing importance of the outdoors to Utah's economic prosperity and quality of life, improves access to natural spaces"

COLORADO OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

"...provides a central point of contact, delivers resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses, and communities that rely on the continued health of the outdoor recreation economy, supports higher quality of life"

WASHINGTON POLICY ADVISOR FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"...focuses on economic development in the outdoor industry, places a high value on the natural environment, coordinates efforts across agencies from the Governor's Office"

WYOMING OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...grows Wyoming's strong outdoor recreation economy, highlights natural beauty, improves recreation infrastructure in the state's second largest industry, implemented recommendations from the Outdoor Recreation Task Force"

MONTANA OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...increases the visibility and economic activity of Montana's outdoor recreation, establishes clean air, clean water and access to public lands and rivers as economic drivers, supports quality of life, helps create new jobs in the state"

NORTH CAROLINA OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

"...works to grow and support the outdoor recreation economy at the state level, bolsters economic development, supports education and workforce training programs"

OREGON OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...represents outdoor recreation in state government, serves as a resource to businesses and nonprofit organizations, advocates for the outdoors, implements recommendations from Governor's Task Force on the Outdoors"

VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC COLLABORATIVE

"...convenes public/private stakeholders to champion outdoor recreation and accomplish major efforts that promote prudent stewardship, support business and community success, and grow participation among all demographics."

MAINE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...grows the outdoor recreation economy, builds Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors, works closely with outdoor business alliance to accomplish key initiatives"

MICHIGAN OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

"...works with industry partners to identify and grow businesses, anticipate emerging trends, create effective policy and elevate outdoor recreation business opportunities and resources"

NEVADA DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...supports conservation of natural environment, grows Nevada's economy through outdoor recreation, educates the public about responsible recreation and healthy and active lives enriched by the outdoors"

NEW HAMPSHIRE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

"...highlights diverse outdoor economy, focuses on economic development, workforce and business recruitment, tourism, protecting New Hampshire's outdoor experiences"

NEW MEXICO OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

"...increases economic development, tourism and ecotourism, recruits new outdoor businesses to relocate to New Mexico, promotes education about outdoor recreation's benefits to enhance public health"

VIRGINIA OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...operates cross agency collaboration to support the outdoor industry, economic development, talent attraction and retention, improves quality of life through the lens of outdoor recreation, highlights natural beauty for tourism"

WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...serves as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor industry, draws connections among outdoor stakeholders, natural assets and abundant wildlife, raises the state's natural profile and ensures a robust outdoor economy benefits"

ARKANSAS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...grows the outdoor recreation economy, works with partners to improve health outcomes, and promotes awareness of the range of recreational experiences the state has to offer, highlights natural beauty"

MARYLAND OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...supports and enhances outdoor recreation opportunities across the state, educates stakeholders on the economic benefits, implements recommendations from the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission"

MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

"...delivers a strong commitment to Massachusetts's outdoor economy, prioritizes public health and wellness, highlights equitable access to the outdoors, increases collaboration and investments in the outdoor recreation industry"

NEXT STEPS TO SUPPORT YOUR EFFORTS

LEARN WHY OUTDOOR RECREATION MATTERS TO YOUR STATE

Understanding the value of outdoor recreation in one's state is an important first step that equips you with data and research you can point to for why your state needs an office of outdoor recreation. There is federal data and research out there that can help make the case for why your state should invest in outdoor recreation efforts. Additionally, each state has a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to understand outdoor recreation needs.

[Bureau of Economic Analysis Data](#)

[Outdoor Workforce Hub](#)

[Rural Development Toolkit](#)

[SCORP Library](#)

[Value of States Offices of Outdoor Recreation](#)

GET CONNECTED

Once you have the data and research, feel free to set up a call with one of many national organizations focused on outdoor recreation. They are outdoor recreation professionals excited to hear from you. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable and Outdoor Industry Association advocate for policies that support outdoor recreation businesses and organizations, and they work to increase public awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation.

[Outdoor Recreation Learning Network](#)

[Outdoor Industry Association](#)

[Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#)

[REI Co-op](#)

[Statewide Outdoor Business Alliance Network](#)

The NGA Outdoor Recreation Learning Network helps governors and their outdoor recreation staff explore strategies to leverage their unique outdoors. REI Co-op also has a staff member dedicated to supporting state and local efforts. They help fund outdoor business alliances and work closely with ORR and OIA to advocate for collective change. Lastly, the Statewide Outdoor Business Alliance Network is a coalition of state outdoor business alliances across the country that strive to create a thriving outdoor economy that benefits both businesses and the communities they serve.

JOIN THE CONFLUENCE OF STATES

The Confluence of States is a bipartisan network of 17 state offices of outdoor recreation guided by four pillars: conservation and stewardship; education and workforce training; economic development; and public health and wellness. Each state has signed the Confluence Accords helping set a foundation for each office of outdoor recreation.

[Confluence Accords](#)

[Guidebook on Developing Offices of Outdoor Recreation](#)

[Newsletter + Resources](#)

The Confluence offers prospective state memberships for leaders in the process of developing their offices of outdoor recreation. Prospective members are matched a sponsor state and serve as a resource for meeting the Confluence Accords.

