

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

PEER LEARNING TOOLKIT & GUIDE

A resource guide to help community members be active participants in solving workforce issues.

The WeCAN Solutions Roundtables grew out of Peer Learning Network discussions in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Participants recognized they share common issues related to housing, workforce, and a range of other topics. Solutions shared during these roundtable are carefully selected to be examples of projects that most any rural community can replicate.

Workforce Solutions Roundtable recordings are available at communityreview.org/peer-learning-network.

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WECAN KEY PARTNERS

University of Idaho | Harbinger Consultancy | Idaho Housing & Finance Association | University of Wyoming | Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) | Greybull (WY) Economic Development | Waller Hall Research | Big Horn County (WY) Citizens for Economic Development

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Solutions Stories

These are the real-life rural community workforce solution stories shared by presenters during the Workforce Solutions Roundtable. Recordings are online at communityreview.org/peer-learning-network.

Community initiated school-based career technical education, Paige Olsen

[Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation](#), Idaho

Silver Valley's VTEC program is being built by a grassroots effort to create additional avenues for high school students to build skills and certifications that allow them to stay and work in the area's communities (Mullen, Wallace, Kellogg). Key steps involved collaboration with multiple entities for a wide foundation of support, a grassroots effort that recognized the need and started talking, reached out to both sides of the equation (students and industries), asked questions and listened to possibilities. The program uses existing school programs combined with Career & Technical Education funding, along with other grants and expanded staff training. Overall community benefit ranges from educational opportunities, to retaining workforce, to increasing quality of life in the community.

Paige shared lessons learned to help other communities begin a grassroots project: make sure you involve all the partners early on; have a defined vision and outcome to keep on task and narrow the needs; talk with partners to line up resources and timelines; be realistic and keep in mind that you can't do it all to avoid burn out. Most importantly, don't give up!

Cooperatives create local solutions, Davey Madison

[Montana Cooperative Development Center](#)

Davey's solutions story on cooperatives highlighted seven critical principles for success. These include 1) open membership to all, 2) active participation in policies and decisions, 3) equitable and democratic control of capital, 4) autonomous control by members, 5) public awareness of benefits, 6) supporting the cooperative movement from local to international structures, and 7) serving members for sustainable community development.

Cooperatives can be used to create community-led workforce solutions, such as childcare and housing, and these solutions are being implemented in rural Montana communities. Local or state cooperative development centers can help get one started. Reach out and ask!



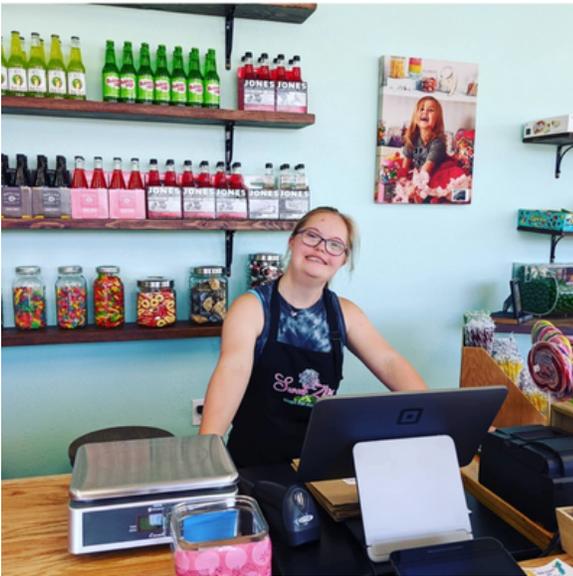
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Employing people with disabilities

Cyndy Radovich, [Sweet Zola's Candy](#) | Boise, ID

Sweet Zola's in Boise believes that "the only disability in life is a bad attitude." With that in mind, Cyndy shared her inspiring success running a non-profit candy business in Boise. Sweet Zola's measure of success rests on the fact that in the 3 ½ years being open for business, this candy shop has employed over 30 people with developmental disabilities, meaning days filled with great attitudes.



Cyndy saw an opportunity when a shop space opened up near her home and she jumped on it. Lessons learned are to build a team before you begin, reach out to your community, find volunteers, apply for grants, and do grassroots fundraising such as yard sales, art shows, and selling local artists work on consignment in the store. The overwhelming benefits are seen through providing meaningful employment, creating a community and a safe space, making friendships and providing social connections.

[Powerline Technology Program](#)

Amy Murphy, Dean, Outreach and Workforce Development | Western Wyoming Community College



Amy shared the new Powerline Technology program recently added at WWCC. This workforce training opportunity is a collaboration between the community college and industry. A need for employees/linepersons in this field was identified, key personnel were lined up, and a curriculum was developed to meet these needs.

The program's mission is "to ensure the demand for skilled linepersons is met, and at the same time, the required essential skills have been embedded." This partnership helps fund the program, covering tuition for students, who create a stream of employees for partner companies. Keys to success are to know your community, identify partners (and keep your stakeholders informed), listen to the employers' needs, communicate and don't assume, implement a plan, obtain feedback, and maintain continuous quality improvement. The program also provides a flexible path through the option of a one- or two-year degree program, so it fits for students with other obligations that affect their available time.

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[Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership](#)

Sean Claffey, The Nature Conservancy

“Conservation success is most sustainable when it is the result of systemic change within a socio-ecological system.” A shortage of workers in areas of natural resources and conservation, when viewed through the lens of “what do we need and what would it take?” led Sean and his partners to the design of a Youth Employment Program. YEP is a means to build workforce, connect conservation to communities, and preserve sagebrush grasslands. In developing YEP, Sean reached out to comparable programs, engaged local contractors, sought both federal and private funding, and kept recruitment and interest going.



The heart of this commitment is that “natural resource conservation is good for everybody.” Society plus nature leads to enrichment and fulfillment in the realm of conservation. YEP is a means to recruit, train, and employ youth—15 years and older—in a learning experience in the field of natural resource conservation. The partnership has also helped foster new local businesses and employ local contractors to support its conservation goals.

[Family Medicine Residency Program](#)

Pullman, WA | Washington State University

Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine

Jade Stellmon, Rural Healthcare Program Administrator

This program is a “finishing school” for physicians to learn selected specialties by training for a full three-year residency in rural communities. Jade calls it a blueprint for future rural training. Residents graduate confident in their ability to manage a patient’s full spectrum of healthcare needs in rural, underserved communities with scarce resources and limited access to specialists. Rural communities benefit because residents supplement the existing physician workforce. The program improves access to care as well as quality of care and health outcomes.

Program collaborators include insurance companies, WSU, and philanthropists. Funding comes from private grants and other rural health care funding sources. Needed resources include training sites, physicians to provide leadership and faculty, and start-up costs to cover space, curriculum and ongoing expenses.

Jade noted that both medical students and doctors want to train and teach in small communities. Among the lessons learned: tap collaborative networks for guidance and innovative solutions. Other interested communities can start something like this by finding a physician champion, lobbying for the Rural Physician Workforce Production Act, and staying connected with the WSU program as a model.

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The Sunrise Wyoming Project skilled trades summer camp

Troy Reichert, Guernsey, WY

The Sunrise Wyoming Project is tackling the big job of refurbishing the old Sunrise YMCA building with labor from high school students from across the country who participate in the summer Skilled Trades Camp.

Troy is a high school shop instructor and coach, and pretty good at pulling together the community and finding funding for projects. He started by reaching out to community members for “a burger and a beer.” This began the journey for key partners to join forces and bootstrap the project while looking for grants, involving state legislators, and expanding the circle of other entities supporting this hands-on workforce skills development camp. Troy noted it is also key to keep such a project fun, “where renovation, education and fun collide.”

He encourages others to “dream big and take chances.” Steps to keep in mind are to have your infrastructure in place first, stay organized and engage dependable help, always have a backup plan, and be prepared to spend some of your own money to get the ball rolling. The benefits include student engagement, instate retention of teens as well as bringing students and possible future skilled employees in from out of state, and improved cross-generational relationships and appreciation. Most of all, “keep it fun for kids!” And [find them on Facebook](#) for an application.



Before



After



Idaho Resources

Apprenticeships & Youth Employment

[Youth Apprenticeships](#) Idaho Workforce Development Council

Business Ownership

Idaho's Rural Business Center

UI Extension Entrepreneurship online classroom fosters new and creative opportunities for revitalizing rural communities and improving rural residents' quality of life. Their work seeks to enhance entrepreneurs' and small businesses' economic opportunities and well-being in rural communities through research and learning opportunities. Coming soon is a new remote worker training program in partnership with Utah State University. idahobiz.org

Childcare

United Way of North Idaho

Early Childcare and Education (ECE) Task Force can help with a variety of options are available to employers who recognize the many benefits of investing in child care for their workforce, while simultaneously strengthening the infrastructure of highly qualified providers already established in the local community. Open to Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties | [United Way ECE](#)

Family Friendly Business Toolkit

The Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children and the Committee for Economic Development (CED) have partnered on a business toolkit for childcare to highlight ways in which the business community can: expand the availability of childcare, promote ways to make child care more affordable, and promote child-friendly workplace policies to help families better balance the stress between work and family. [Idaho AEYC](#)

Disability Workforce Training & Employment

Disability Action Center Northwest

Removing barriers for people with disabilities. Boise, ID | dacnw.org

State Independent Living Council (SILC)

A range of resources for people with disabilities. Boise, ID | silc.idaho.gov

Living Independence Network Corporation

Resources and programs for people with disabilities. Boise, ID | lincidaho.org

Life, Inc

Empowering people with disabilities so they may achieve independent living. Boise, ID | idlife.org

Healthcare

CHAS Medical Assistant Apprenticeship

Program provides 2000 hours of the job training and covers the program cost for those who wish to become Certified Medical Assistants (CMA). The training program takes one full year to complete and apprentices receive college credit. Following successful completion of the program, the employee would be required to pass the CCMA exam and would then work for a minimum of two years at CHAS as a CMA. This training program will prepare you to take the test to become a Certified Medical Assistant (MA-C). It is approved by the State of Washington as an equivalent to an MA-C program at a community or technical college. [CHAS - Various Locations](#)

Idaho Resources

CHAS Pharmacy Technician on the Job

Training Program provides a one-year hands-on experience working in our pharmacies learning the daily tasks of a pharmacy technician. This educational experience also includes preceptor mentorship, educational classes, learning modules, and skills checks. After completion of the program, the apprentice is eligible to take the PTCB exam. Upon passing, the apprentice will receive their Pharmacy Technician License and will then be transitioned into a Pharmacy Technician Full-Time position and be placed at one of our CHAS clinics. [CHAS - Various Locations](#)

Human Services

Jannus

Jannus is a not-for-profit health and human services organization that successfully helps individuals, families and communities in transition – from infancy to healthy childhood, from illness to health, from refugee to working citizens, and from isolation to community. Jannus changes lives with mission-driven, highly-skilled professional staff, caring and committed volunteers and a portfolio of more than 20 diverse programs and services that promote community health, advance public policy and create economic opportunity. Treasure Valley & Greater Idaho | [Jannus](#)

Manufacturing

Idaho Manufacturing Alliance

A membership organization focused on nurturing an environment of knowledge sharing, innovation, and sustainable growth for manufacturing in Idaho.

idmfg.org

Remote Work

Coming Soon University of Idaho partnership with Utah State University Rural Online Initiative Remote Worker Certification Course Est. October 2023. [Utah State Universities Remote Training Program](#)

Workforce Development

Idaho Workforce Development Council & Training Fund

Provides timely assistance to multiple types of awardees on a rolling monthly basis. Industry sector grants for new training solutions, innovation grants to provide novel workforce development needs, employer grants to increase their workforce, outreach grants to expand the public reach of public information related to workforce development.

[Idaho WDCT](#)

[Childcare Expansion Grants Grant Opportunities](#)

[Next Steps Idaho](#)

[Talent Pipeline Management](#)

[Connecting Industry Pros & Students](#)

[Youth Apprenticeships](#)

Employment & Training Database

IdahoWorks is a web-based job-matching and labor market information system. IdahoWorks provides job seekers, employers, and training providers with easy-to-use tools that support a wide range of activities. As a service of the public workforce system, IdahoWorks is completely free for to use.

[Idaho Works](#)

Accessibility

Idaho Access Project

IAP works to expand access, safety, and representation for people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Boise, ID | idahoaccessproject.org

Ramp Up Idaho

Reminding businesses that a barrier to any customer is a barrier to commerce. Find tax incentives and strategies to make everyone welcome.

Boise, ID | rampupidaho.org

Montana Resources

Apprenticeships

Montana Registered Apprenticeship Program

Apprenticeship training programs are designed to be structured, yet flexible, and meet state, federal, and industry standards.

We collaborate with employer sponsors to create programs that meet their real life work situations and skill requirements.

Apprenticeship Programs are sponsored by employers, employer associations, or labor/management groups (JATC's) that can hire and train in a real-world working situations.

apprenticeship.mt.gov/

Business Ownership

Montana Small Business Development Center

Serves individuals looking to start a new business or expand their existing business. The SBDC network supports ten regional centers across the state, focusing on free one-on-one counseling and low cost training in areas such as financial analysis, business planning, strategic planning, loan packaging, financial projections and market research to help small businesses achieve their goals of growth, innovation and success.

sbdc.mt.gov/

Native American Development Corporation.

A hub for American Indian businesses, NADC provides technical assistance, financial lending opportunities, and champions small businesses and tribes in order to empower Indian communities toward economic and social stability.

Billings, MT | nadc-nabn.org/

Childcare

Zero to Five Montana Community and Employer Child Care Innovations Pilot

The goal of this pilot is to support community and employer partners in developing a child care infrastructure strategy that meets the needs of employers and families in your community. Cohort was selected for 2021/22, but planning materials, resources and webinars are available on this page.

zerotofive.org/innovations-pilot

Childcare Cooperatives in Montana: A brief introduction to childcare cooperatives, how they work, when to use them, and why.

Montana Cooperative Development Center and Zero to Five Montana. **Childcare Co-op Guide**

Disability Workforce Training & Employment

Disability Employment and Transitions

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Offers several programs to support employees with disabilities.

dphhs.mt.gov/detd/

Montana Disability & Health Program

Webpage includes a long list of resources for persons with disabilities, including employment resources.

mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/blog/?page_id=737

Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities

The Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities partners with advocates and communities to serve, train, research, develop and evaluate services that improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Missoula, MT | umt.edu/rural-institute/

Montana Resources

Healthcare

Montana Public Health Training Center

Provides public health professionals with resources, tools, and services to recruit, integrate and retain Montana's public health workforce to deliver essential public health services. health.umt.edu/mphtc/workforce-program/resources.php

Workforce Housing

Big Sky Community Housing Trust Nonprofit addressing the housing shortage caused by dramatic growth in this Montana resort community. Working together to create a balanced community where employees can live and contribute in the community where they work. Big Sky, MT | bigskyhousingtrust.com/

Workforce Development

Accelerate Montana Serves Montana businesses, employees, and residents looking for career opportunities or training in high-demand industries. acceleratemt.com/

Montana State Workforce Innovation Board

SWIB advises the Governor on statewide workforce development strategies that maximize the state's education, training, and employment resources. swib.mt.gov/

Montana Workforce Services Division WSD provides services to all Montana businesses and citizens via a network of 17 offices across the state serving employers, employees, and all kinds of community partners. wsd.dli.mt.gov/

Montana Works Resources for job seekers and employers. montanaworks.gov/

Manufacturing

Montana Manufacturing Extension Center

Montana State University. MMEC serves Montana manufacturers with assistance to assess and improve their manufacturing operations, trainings and workforce development, and research and technological developments to keep manufacturing competitive in the state. Bozeman, MT | sbir.gov/node/868093

Remote Work

Remote Workforce Toolkit & Remote Work Certificate Program Montana Department of Labor and Industry toolkit page includes information about the MDL&I partnership with Montana State University Extension to offer a Remote Work Certificate Program, which helps people learn skills needed for remote employment, freelance work, and ecommerce, and get help finding a remote job and connection to a professional remote network. wsd.dli.mt.gov/employers/remote-workforce-toolkit

Youth Employment

Montana Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Youth Program Provides services to in-school youth ages 14-21 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24. The main thrust of the Youth Program is to increase the focus on career pathways, longer-term academic, and occupational learning opportunities and provide long-term comprehensive service strategies. wsd.dli.mt.gov/youth-program

Wyoming Resources

Apprenticeships

Build Our Wyoming list of construction-related and other apprenticeship programs.

buildourwyoming.org/apprenticeship/

Laramie Community College Apprenticeships and Workforce Development Programs for trades and technical careers.

Laramie, WY |

lcc.wy.edu/apprenticeships/index.aspx

Wyoming Apprenticeship Grants for Wyoming-based sponsors with registered apprenticeship programs.

dws.wyo.gov/dws-division/business-training-support-unit/workforce-development-training-fund/apprenticeship-grants/

Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeships Pilot program in three school districts in 2022 will inform a statewide rollout.

edu.wyoming.gov/blog/2022/07/11/pilot-districts-selected-for-teacher-apprenticeship/

Business Ownership

Wyoming Women's Business Center WWBC empowers entrepreneurs, especially women, through counseling, training, and micro-finance programs to start, expand, and sustain small businesses. wyomingwomen.org

Wyoming Small Business Development Center Expert small business advisors located throughout the state offer no-cost, confidential assistance. wyomingsbdc.org/

Childcare

Head Start Federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of three and four year olds and their families.

wysocialresources.info/social_resources/head-start-locations/

Wyoming Afterschool Alliance Supports education-based out of school time programs. WYAA connects afterschool providers to resources, technical assistance and training opportunities. wyafterschoolalliance.org/

Disability Workforce Training & Employment

Cultivate Ability Fosters inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities via educational programs and business partnerships. Jackson, WY | cultivateability.org/

Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation Program Helps people with disabilities reach vocational goals to become productive working citizens. dws.wyo.gov/dws-division/vocational-rehabilitation/

Wyoming Institute for Disabilities Assists individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, professionals, and University of Wyoming students through education, training, community services, and early intervention. uwyo.edu/wind/

Healthcare

Wyoming Office of Rural Health Enhances access to healthcare, supports development of the healthcare workforce, and promotes collaboration to expand community-based healthcare in rural Wyoming. health.wyo.gov/publichealth/rural/officeofruralhealth/

Laramie County Community College Telehealth Coordinator Training 16-week course prepares students to implement telehealth services. Laramie, WY | lccc-workforce-development.coursetorm.com/category/healthcare?page=2

Wyoming Resources

Manufacturing & Construction

Southwest Wyoming Manufacturing Partnership

Working to improve workforce development across Southwest Wyoming by bringing together public and private sector leaders to support growing industries, build business, and connect people with better jobs. Sweetwater, Uinta, Carbon, Lincoln and Sublette counties, WY | swmpartnership.org/

University of Wyoming Construction

Workforce Training program Open to employed trainees nominate by their companies and to unemployed Wyoming residents seeking to enter the construction workforce.

uwyo.edu/civil/construction-training/

Remote Work

Telework Toolkit for State Agencies Provides virtual training for state agency supervisors and employees in remote work. ai.wyo.gov/for-state-employees/telework-wyoming/telework-toolkit

Workforce Development

Wyoming Workforce Development Training Fund connects employers with professional development opportunities to increase employee skill attainment.

dws.wyo.gov/dws-division/business-training-support-unit/workforce-development-training-fund/

Wyoming Arts Council Professional Development/Career Advancement Grants

Designed to help grow the capacity of organizations and individuals that work in, and support the arts. wyoarts.state.wy.us/wac-grant/professional-developmentcareer-advancement-grant-fy18/

Wyoming at Work News and announcements for work opportunities, including for employers, job seekers, special services, workforce, labor market information.

wyomingatwork.com/vosnet/Default.aspx

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services assists Wyoming's communities to adapt and thrive, providing a livable wage for families through sustaining income, fair and legal employment, enforcement of child labor laws, legal payment of wages, and a safe working environment for Wyoming workers.

doe.wyo.gov/

Youth Employment

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act youth program Provides opportunities to help youth prepare for a successful working career through a variety of programs.

dws.wyo.gov/dws-division/workforce-center-program-operations/resources/workforce-innovation-opportunity-act/

National Resources

[Center on Rural Innovation Digital Workforce Development](#) Outlines an integrated approach to developing a digital workforce, created in collaboration with the Center's [Rural Innovation Network](#).

[Rural Community Assistance Corporation](#) RCAC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides training, technical and financial resources and advocacy so rural communities can achieve their goals and visions.

[Rural Workforce Housing Innovation Coalition](#) The Rural Workforce Housing Innovation Coalition (RWHIC) is a nonprofit dedicated to increasing housing for low-income individuals in rural communities. RWHIC offers three initial programs: Business Accelerator, Plug & Play Building Standards, and Innovation District.

[USDA Workforce Innovation Network](#) is a forum for public and private partners to help increase access to workforce opportunities across rural America. This network represents governmental entities, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses that are actively working to improve workforce development in their local communities.

[Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities \(WORC\) Initiative](#) Facilitates the alignment of workforce development efforts with existing economic development strategies in rural communities hard hit by economic transition and recovering slowly. The WORC Initiative provides grant funds to enable impacted communities to develop local and regional workforce development solutions aligned with existing economic development strategies and community partnerships to promote new, sustainable job opportunities and long-term economic vitality. These grants support workforce development activities that prepare dislocated workers, new entrants to the workforce, and incumbent workers for good jobs in high-demand occupations aligned with a regional or community economic development strategy.

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