

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

EVIDENCE BASED Approach



PEPINC.ORG



NOTE FROM PEP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rebekah Burns



Simon Sinek said, "the best leaders I've met have courage." He goes on to say, "the quality of our relationships give us courage...to build courage we need to invest in our relationships."

Economic Development's role in the community is to support business and industry and be a catalyst for change. Change is hard, to execute change takes courage. We don't do it alone; we are insistent that ideas for change come from our relationships. The ideas come from you!

As an economic development practitioner, my staff and I are consistently asking businesses "What would you like to see in Powell or Park County that doesn't exist?" Additionally, "What does your business need to be better?"

When PEP hears a need often enough, we add it to a program and get to work. First, we research the solution. Second, we rely on outside economic development industry sources and federal, state, and local government agencies to be good partners and share resources. Third, we utilize the experience of the PEP Team. The fourth step is to set our sights on implementing the best way forward.

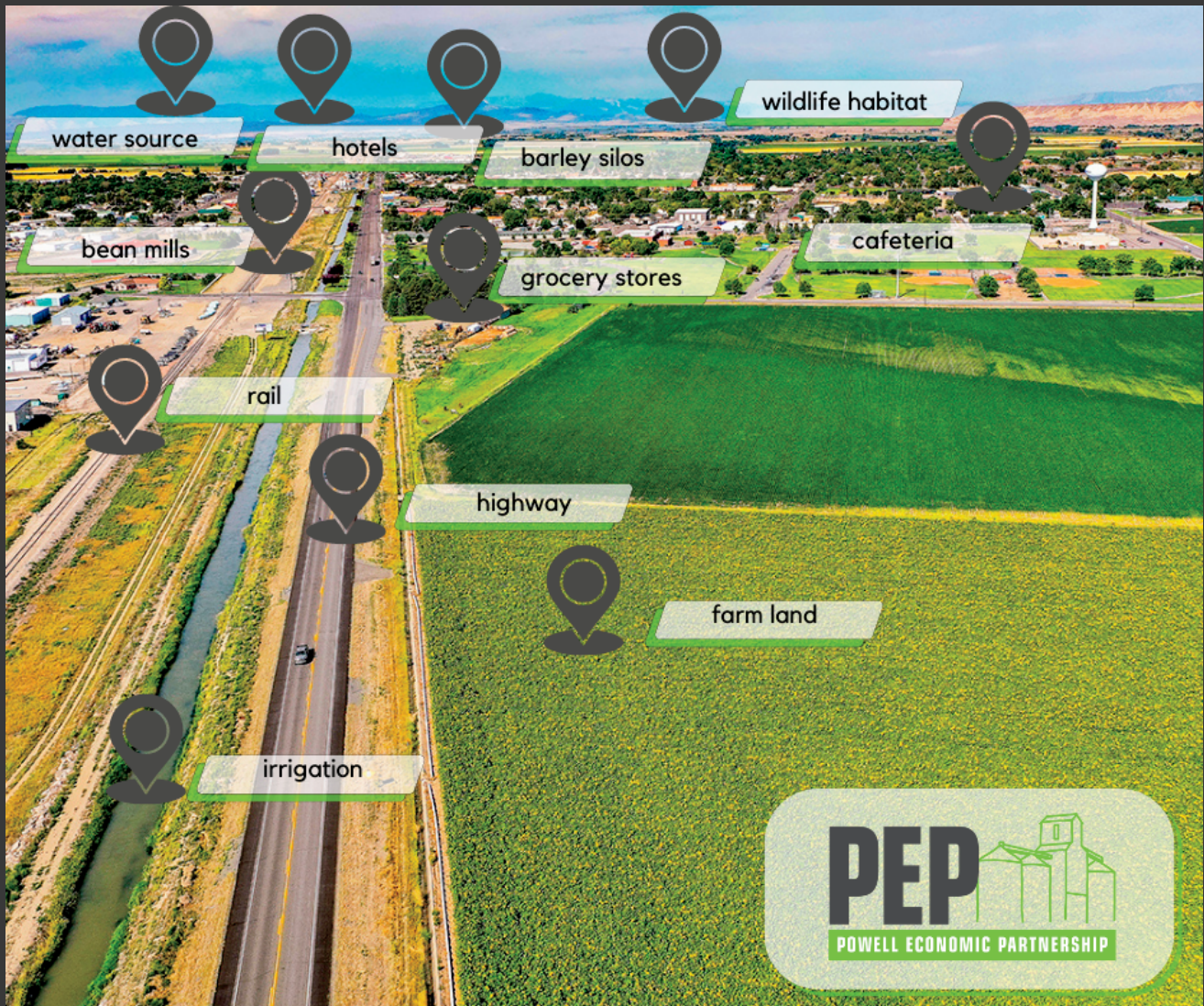
This step is where change can get tricky. At first it presents itself to us as "*wouldn't* it be nice", or "I *need* this to succeed in my business". But then when we are faced with the solution, we realize that to usher change in to improve our community, we too might need to change. We might need to grow as individuals, but change can be scary for a community. Again, as an economic development practitioner, it is my job to be a catalyst for change. So, then I instill courage in my team by using one of our staff mottos, "It is a "No" until it is a "Yes". We move forward and projects are planned and implemented with the communities' needs at heart.

The fifth step comes once a project is implemented, when we ask ourselves a series of questions, including, "is it working?" "What do we need to make it better?" Then, we ask you again, "What would you like to see in Powell or Park County that doesn't exist?" and "What does your business need to succeed?"

PEP implemented a process in 2020 when an international pandemic threatened the success of our community. We call it the PEP Project Roadmap which, in practice, is an expanded version of the Evidence-Based Approach, first used in medical fields and since been adopted by mental health professionals, the aerospace training industry, and police departments. These high stakes professions recognize that information and relationships can save lives. At PEP, we're looking to change lives and preserve ways of life. This requires interfacing with different groups, competing perspectives, and a range of values, motivations, and financial infrastructures.

I'll leave you with a question. What would our community look like if we all decided to lead with courage and identify quality relationships to support us on our journey of change and growth?

PEP PROGRAMS



Common Ag Goals

The Agriculture Industry has been the foundation of Powell's economy since 1907. US Senator Cynthia Lummis' office and Powell Economic Partnership partnered with the University of Wyoming Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics to better understand the impact of agriculture in Wyoming. *Economic Contributions of Agriculture in Wyoming 2021* gives a comprehensive look at farm gate sales, business to business, and household to business dollars generated for Wyoming and our twenty-three counties. This information is hugely important to execute an evidence-

based approach to build our ag industry. It is a tool for policy makers and existing businesses to make informed decisions about how to grow. Additionally, it gives economic development organizations like PEP the knowledge to recruit businesses, fill gaps, and expand existing businesses. We know from the recent Park County Land Use Study that working lands are important for wide-open spaces, access to recreation, open migration routes, and our community identity. This study allows PEP to execute common goals within Park County for our community.

MEET OUR OUTDOOR REC PLANNING VISTA I & VISTA LEADER

Kiran Darai



Kiran Darai is from Somerville, MA just outside of Boston. He has a Community Health and Preventive Medicine degree from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Kiran first served as PEP Outdoor Rec Planner I and then as our VISTA Leader.

What questions did you ask the community?

The goal of my research was to understand the value recreation has for people in Park County and how to increase engagement and access to outdoor recreation opportunities. All these data collection methods were in line with the research goal but captured information differently.

What information did you acquire? How did you acquire it?

To capture this information I conducted online surveys, two focus groups, six key informant interviews, held pop-up data collection events in the community, and personally documented the user experience of various outdoor recreation locations in Park County. People overwhelmingly stated that outdoor recreation was an essential part of their lives. The focus groups agreed upon that outdoor recreation would be extremely beneficial to vulnerable populations in Park County (those who are at greater risk of long-term negative health outcomes for a variety of reasons) from a physical and mental health standpoint. However, it was stated easy access did not exist or isn't known. Some common barriers to recreational access were gas prices, lack of public transportation, lack of time and money, desire for recreation groups, few front country opportunities, and COVID-19 impacts. Moreover, I conducted six key informant interviews. A notable observation was that outdoor recreation is seen as something to pass down to future generations so it must be preserved and protected. Some common positives were that Park County supports many forms of outdoor recreation, in the past few years cooperation with land managers has increased, and outdoor-focused organizations do a great job of helping to maintain existing opportunities.

How did you come to your findings?

My approach to data collection was completely informed by my educational background in public health. Additionally, during my year of service, I recorded 15 outdoor recreation user experiences. I held five data collection events where I brought a map into the community for people to leave colored pins on that would show where they recreated.

How were the findings implemented?

The goal of my service year was to identify avenues that PEP could take to increase participation in Outdoor Recreation so that an outdoor manufacturer would eventually see the value in coming to the Big Horn Basin.

What are you most proud of in 2023 in your role?

I am most proud of designing, planning, and executing a community research campaign. This represented the practical implementation in the real world of the lessons I learned in undergrad. It feels good to know that the information I gathered is being used by PEP and informing their approach to increasing outdoor recreation access.

What was your biggest lesson?

My biggest lesson was altering my mindset and approach when it comes to being a professional. An example of this in action was when I was faced with JWP not being how I envisioned. I realized I had a choice in how I carried myself. I could either withdraw mentally, or I could give my best effort for the entirety of the event with a great attitude.

MEET OUR OUTDOOR REC PLANNING VISTA II

Natalie Schaus



Natalie Schaus graduated from the University of Richmond with a triple major in Environmental Studies, Geography, and Sociology. While attending UR she was a writing consultant at the Writing Center, studied how to write grants, and the environmental interactions between humans and nature. She applied for the AmeriCorps VISTA program because she wanted to improve people's lives through service and volunteering.

What questions did you ask the community?

PEP is spearheading a rail-with trail project which uses underutilized corridors adjacent to railroads to make flat pathways for biking and walking. While it is a lengthy endeavor, it has been my primary job to get the project started. Since this would be a huge opportunity for Powell, community needs are central at every stage. I've been actively soliciting input, asking questions like "What features would encourage trail usage?" and "What concerns do you have about the proposed trail?" to address local needs and concerns.

What information did you acquire? How did you acquire it?

I mainly received project feedback, with many expressing their interest in ADA-compliant, paved pathways for accessibility. I acquired most of the information by reading and researching legal documents, technical resources, best practices, and successful trail systems. Additionally, I conducted presentations for locals, interviews with similar communities, email outreach, and meetings with local stakeholders and community members.

How did you come to your findings?

I came to my findings through a combination of research, community partnerships, and advice from communities who have already completed similar projects. This project is still a work in progress, so we are still in the process of reaching our findings. It is important to revisit the thoughts of the community regularly to ensure that the project benefits them first and foremost.

How were the findings implemented?

While our findings have not been fully implemented, they are being assessed through planning by using a multi-phase approach, in which we have implemented a petition, technical assistance, and educational resources. We understand a clear way forward, but these projects take time, work with stakeholders, planning grants, engineered drawings, and more. As we progress, we will follow our plan for implementation.

Was the implementation measured? What was analyzed and adjusted?

As the project has not started, no analysis has occurred. We are developing an analysis system tailored to Park County, primarily through discussions with locals and stakeholders. We intend to measure traffic on the trail and reach out to local and national partners to have evaluation systems in place, even during the implementation process.

What are you most proud of in 2023 in your role?

I am most proud of my personal development. I have become much better at communication and presentations.

What was your biggest lesson?

In order to make a project successful, you have to try to understand who the people are that you are serving and what they want or need.

MEET OUR GRANTS MANAGER

Jessica Lum-Williams

Jessica naturally takes an evidence-based approach while executing Powell Economic Partnership's AmeriCorps VISTA Intermediary Grant. This approach has been proven after years of relevant experience. Williams has led this program as our Grants Manager and AmeriCorps Program Supervisor since 2019. For nine years prior to taking her current role, she worked in healthcare and social services managing grant-funded programs in Arizona and Wyoming. Williams' Masters in Applied Anthropology from Northern Arizona University allows great context for her position as our Grants Manager.

Jessica layers PEP's evidence-based approach with the AmeriCorps VISTA grant required framework. Ideally, community non-profits or government organizations, who are approved PEP sites, have three years to build capacity for their organization in challenge areas identified in the VISTA grant. At PEP, the VISTA program is a way to build our local workforce and better management practices within our community. As a result of managing the program, Jessica identified eight skill gaps in our community. The PEP team teaches workshops to build those skills to the VISTAs and their sites.

Since the Fall of 2019, PEP's VISTA Program has filled 24 full-time year long positions in Park County. Of which, eighteen college educated individuals relocated from out of state.



Jessica Leads our AmeriCorps VISTA Program with a Heart to Make Powell a Better Place.

In 2023, William's successfully recruited and onboarded five new VITSA members at the following sites: BLM, Plaza Diane, Wyo HoofBeats, and PEP. Two of these sites were new VISTA positions in Park County. Additionally, five VISTAs completed their service at Habitat for Humanity, Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, Homesteader Museum, and PEP.

Ten organizations have advanced their missions and have built capacity for our community by using the three-year project management model, as well as, an evidenced-based approach through PEP's VISTA program.

Jessica has built PEP's AmeriCorps VISTA program from the ground up, putting processes in place for long-term sustainably. Moreover, she introduces evidence-based practices to the sites for long-term success.

MEET OUR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Vicki Taylor

Vicki (Vic) provides support to the Executive Team and provides information to visitors. She managed travel agencies in NE, WY, MT and CA. Recently, she spent three summers working at Buffalo Bill State Park, which makes her a perfect fit for her role at PEP. Taylor spends quality time with visitors and loads them up with brochures for attractions, retailers, restaurants, trailheads and maps, lots of maps.

Vic is Powell's cheerleader and she adds events to the Chamber Events Calendar. Additionally, she plans the Park County Fair and Lighted Parades. Taylor is a crucial part of our event planning team, from business events like our Community Annual Meeting to town favorites like Sample the Season, Vic is in the thick of things. She's been an Ambassador since 2018 and now leads the Chamber Ambassadors. Taylor has done an amazing job recruiting a diverse group of folks who more accurately represent Powell's business community.

Taylor is a critical part of PEP/ Powell Chambers business retention and expansion efforts. She does this by providing resources, making connections, getting businesses involved in PEP's networking opportunities and events. Her extensive experience in the tire industry gives her the insights to help local businesses succeed. If you want to know about PEP/ Powell Chamber member benefits, then she is your gal.



Vicki Wants Every Visitor to Have the Best Experience Possible. She is a Huge Advocate for Powell Businesses.

Along with the PEP Board Membership Committee and Executive Director, Vicki shapes what your member benefits look like and works hard to make sure that you are improving your business by accessing your benefits.

Vicki is a big reason why we had a record 32 new businesses sign up for PEP/ Powell Chamber membership in 2023. Her attention to detail and customer service is an essential part of our community's success.

Economic Development

Membership

In 2023 PEP/ Powell Chamber had 223 active members. Thank you!
Find out more about your benefits.
powellchamber.org/chamber/member-benefits

Agriculture

The Powell Economic Partnership Executive Director Rebekah Burns and Past President Kelly Spiering spent lots of time advocating for Agriculture during Park County's Land Use Plan process. Additionally, they serve on the Park County Open Lands Advisory Council. See pg. 3 for additional program work.

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Powell Economic Partnership hold the intermediary grant for our AmeriCorps VISTA program. See pg. 4,5,6 for more in depth insights into what are VISTAs are doing for the community.

Advocacy

PEP is a non-partisan organization that advocates for business and industry by connecting businesses to the markets, products, and solutions that they need to thrive. Moreover, we advocate for business to local, state and national legislature.

Arts

PEP recognizes that the Arts are a critical way to layer our culture and provide residents and visitors a more rich experience.



Promote Powell

PEP creates and maintains the VisitPowell.net website. Additionally, we design brochures, rack cards, stickers, maps, promotional materials, and advertise our destination. We host local events and Ag Tours. PEP manages the Powell Visitor Center and exemplifies the excellent customer services that visitors and residents have come to expect.

Frontline

Promoting Powell is vital to our restaurants, retailers, attractions, and lodging. Increasing the length of stay brings more money to Powell and Park County. We provide training and promotional materials to enhance frontline customer service.

Outdoor Rec

We are working on lots of Outdoor Rec assets, destination development, and business recruitment efforts See pg. 4 & 5

Relocation & Recruitment

PEP worked on a number of recruitment projects in 2023 with in the ag industry, outdoor rec, and others.

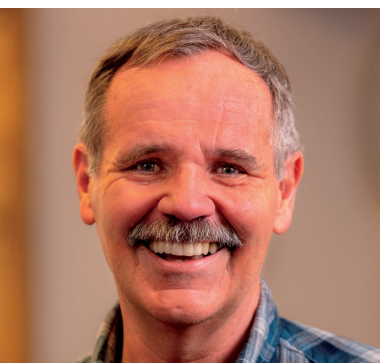
PEP's 10 Programs

Membership ▶	Agriculture ▶	Promote Powell ▶	Frontline ▶	Outdoor Rec ▶
AmeriCorps ▶	Advocacy ▶	Makerspace ▶	Arts ▶	Recruitment ▶
				Relocation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Lloyd Thiel



Ask a 2024 Board Member about PEP's Operational Management efforts to strengthen PEP.

powellchamber.org/board-of-directors



2023 Highlights

