

# Wyoming Business Council

## Mission and philosophy

The mission of the Wyoming Business Council (WBC) is to facilitate the growth of Wyoming's economy.

The Wyoming Business Council was created by the Wyoming Legislature in 1998 to strengthen and diversify the state's foundation industries and to retain our youth through the creation of better job opportunities.

To meet this legislative mandate, the strategic plan sets forth goals for the following: agribusiness; business and industry; investment ready communities; minerals, energy and transportation; telecommunications; travel and tourism; special projects; and operations. The Business Council Board of Directors and staff will continually review and adjust the action items, as necessary, to meet these goals.

The Business Council exists to create new and better job opportunities and grow Wyoming's business and industry base by retaining and strengthening existing business and industry, recruiting targeted industries and their support businesses, maximizing the efficiency of government and private entities to facilitate job growth and economic activities, helping businesses develop value-added products, building a network for economic growth at local and state levels, creating a proactive organizational structure to facilitate business and industry growth and activating statewide resources through ongoing development of strategic alliances.

## Results of outcomes

The Council concluded its fourth year of operation. The idea to combine travel and tourism with agribusiness marketing; business and industry; telecommunications; investment ready communities; and minerals, energy and transportation is having a positive impact. The board of directors and staff are continuing to work on programs to help Wyoming's economy grow. The council realizes that jobs are created on "Main Street," it takes a businessperson with an idea, willingness to take a chance, a product that will sell and finances to make it all happen. The council's role is to facilitate growth through assistance, marketing and using economic development "tools" at the federal, state and local levels.

In 1997, the Steering Committee for Business Development published a report that led to the formation of the Business Council. Here are some of the statements from the report. "The progressive changes in the national and global economy have largely bypassed the state. Wyoming's economic development efforts have been hampered by the state's lack of commitment to the future. The present fragmentation of multiple agencies with multiple missions is a basic structural problem. In addition, the state investment is insufficient to make an appreciable

### **General information**

Lynn Friesse, co-chair, board of directors  
Governor Jim Geringer, co-chair, board of directors

### **Agency contact**

Tucker Fagan, CEO  
214 West 15th Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
Tfagan1@state.wy.us

307/777-2851

### **Other locations**

Southeast Regional Office: Cheyenne  
Northeast Regional Office: Gillette  
West-Central Regional Office: Riverton  
East-Central Regional Office: Casper  
Southwest Regional Office: Rock Springs  
Northwest Regional Office: Powell

### **Year established**

1998

### **Statutory references**

W.S. 9-12-105 through 9-12-401

### **Number of authorized personnel**

57 full-time

### **Organization structure**

Executive, Comptroller, Support Services, Agribusiness, Business and Industry, Investment Ready Communities, Minerals, Energy and Transportation, Telecommunications, Travel and Tourism.

### **Clients served**

Businesses, industries, communities and tourists

### **Budget information**

Not available

difference in the economy. In terms of total value-added jobs in manufacturing, wholesaling, transportation and tourism Wyoming ranks last in annual employment increases from 1985-1994, and job growth has virtually disappeared in recent years. The state has dropped 10 places to 35th in per capita income from 1991 to 1996, and Wyoming is in the unenviable position of having gone from one of the best performing economies in the 1970s and early 1980s to one of the worst in the 1990s.”

The following are the latest statistics for various categories. The statewide average weekly wage for the third quarter of 2001 was \$527 (\$27,404 annually), an increase of 5.5 percent over the third quarter of 2000. Total personal income (first quarter 2002) increased 6.3 percent over the year while the Rocky Mountain region increased only 1.7 percent.

Per capita income in Wyoming increased 5.2 percent in 2001, ranking 20th in the United States and surpassing that of the Rocky Mountain Region for the first time since 1994. Total employment from August 2001 to August 2002 has grown by 1,700 jobs or 0.7 percent compared to the United States which has declined .9 percent over the same period. This growth rate ranks Wyoming sixth in the nation. Other Mountain states posted the following growth/declines: Montana, +0.88 percent; New Mexico, +0.67 percent; Arizona, -0.79 percent; Utah, -1.8 percent; and Colorado, -2.17 percent.

Wyoming's positive statistics are not the result of any one organization, industry or group, but the cumulative work of people throughout the state. Economic development takes partnership and teamwork on the state, county and city levels. The state now has a viable participant on the economic development team.

The Business Council's diverse missions include retaining and strengthening existing business and industry, marketing the state's resources to attract tourists and businesses, recruiting targeted industries and their support businesses, maximizing the efficiency of government and private entities to facilitate job growth and economic activities, helping businesses develop value-added products, building a network for economic growth at local and state levels, creating a proactive organizational structure to facilitate business, industry and tourism growth and activating statewide resources through ongoing development of strategic alliance contracts.

To accomplish these missions, the staff has contracts with and partially funds the Mid-America Manufacturing and Technology Center; the Small Business Development Centers; Government Resources and Opportunity for Business; University of Wyoming Research Products Center; the Wyoming Small Business Innovation Research Initiative; and Wyoming Women's Business Center to help existing businesses. Each of these partners publishes reports and summaries of how they assist businesses and entrepreneurs in the state.

The Council also markets the state in national publications; radio and television media; and participates in national conventions and association forums to promote Wyoming as a place to visit, a place to do business and a place to raise a family.

Board members and staff work in communities to reach out and provide many types of support, from value-added agriculture assistance to joint programs with convention and visitor bureaus, chambers, and economic developers.

The Council researched and targeted prospective clients, developing their interest in Wyoming, putting the “client lead” on the Wyoming Economic Development Association website for any community to see and potentially respond.

The WBC partnered with the Wyoming Rural Development Council to perform community assessments. The assessments are strategic plans for the individual community, identifying positive and negative attributes defined by the community and developed their plan to focus attention and resources. Over 28 communities have completed assessments and seven are currently scheduled. See [www.wyomingcommunitynetwork.com](http://www.wyomingcommunitynetwork.com) for information about this important program to help cities and towns prepare themselves to become “investment ready.”

The Council works with the Community College Commission, the seven community colleges, the Departments of Workforce Services Department and the Department of Employment to expand the Certified Specialist Training Program (Quick Start) to upgrade workforce skills and thus earnings potential.

**The Agribusiness Division** is comprised of programs intended to stimulate agribusiness industry and economic growth, as well as create opportunities to market Wyoming commodities, value-added goods, and consumer-ready products. The value of the agricultural sector output in Wyoming annually exceeds one billion dollars. Following are Agribusiness's objectives:

**First objective:** to develop a continuous action plan for livestock, crop, and timber in Wyoming. (At the 2000 WBC “Town Meeting,” the timber industry requested that the marketing and promotion of timber-based products be removed from the Agribusiness portion of the strategic plan.)

Based on input by the agricultural sector and other state agencies, a series of steps were established to continually meet the needs and demands of the livestock and crop sectors of Wyoming's economy: 1) To substantiate the economic impact livestock and crops represents to the Wyoming economy. The impact was validated by statistics derived by the United States Department of Agriculture. 2) To continue to develop avenues of merchandising and industry diversification, through the conception and promotion of “value-added” products. Wyoming's Value-Added Program mission is to encourage and promote the development of

value-added agribusiness opportunities and markets for Wyoming agricultural products by providing market entry information, database publication, and trade event subsidization. The result is to expose companies to local, national and international marketing opportunities. Through the use of seminars and individual counseling, the Agribusiness Division strives to educate businesses on the various programs and regulations of government and third party organizations 3) To continue to collect input and feedback from those that the Agribusiness Division provides services to, in order to measure the success of their efforts.

**Second objective:** to identify a statistical measurement to determine the economic health of the agricultural industry by using information provided by the Wyoming Agricultural Statistic Service, a consistent statistical measurement of Value-Added to the U.S. Economy by the agricultural Sector (Wyoming Agricultural Statistics 2002) has been determined to be the most effective standard of measurement for the economic health of the Wyoming Agricultural Industry.

**Third objective:** to provide staffing for all identified segments of the agribusiness industry.

1) The 2002 Legislature approved funding and expansion of the Agribusiness program with the following positions: 1) Livestock and Forage Program Specialist and 2) Agribusiness Marketing Specialist, Natural and Organics Program using federal loan and state bond programs.

2) **International Trade and Development** will establish a function to link Wyoming firms with new markets overseas, promote foreign investment, provide protocol, education and export promotion assistance by using the Export-Import Bank of the United States. As an independent agency of the federal government since 1934, the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. is designed to help the private sector create and maintain American jobs by financing exports. It supports short-, medium-, and long-term financing to creditworthy international customers and working capital guarantees to U.S. exporters. The WBC Agribusiness Division, along with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center and Mid-America Manufacturing and Technology Center, has been actively promoting international marketing program through numerous local seminars designed to help Wyoming businesses better understand requirements for exporting and importing so they can ultimately expand their markets.

**The Business and Industry Division** developed a statewide team to help existing Wyoming businesses expand and to generate new jobs through the recruitment of new business, especially those engaged in manufacturing and technology. The following are the Business and Industry objectives:

**First objective:** analyze and report per capita personal income and job growth statistics. Per capita personal income growth for Wyoming for 2001 over 2000 was 5.2 percent. For the Rocky Mountain

Region, growth was 2.5 percent and for the United States personal income growth was 2.7 percent.

Wyoming: 2001, \$28,807  
2000, \$27,372  
 \$1,435 1,435 / 27,372 = 5.2%

Rocky Mt Region: 2001, \$28,499  
2000, \$27,797  
 \$702 702 / 27,797 = 2.5%

United States: 2001 \$30,271  
2000 \$29,469  
 \$802 802 / 29,469 = 2.7%

Source. U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis:

[www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/spi/](http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/spi/)

Source. U.S. Department of Commerce, Statistics for 2000 and 2001, and the Wyoming Department of Employment

Job growth for Wyoming for calendar year 2001 over 2000 was 2.6 percent

Wyoming: 2001 245,600  
 2000 239,400  
 6,200  
 6,200 / 239,400 = 2.6%

Source: State of Wyoming Department of Employment, Research and Planning, CES  
[www.lmi.state.wy.us/ces/anav9001.htm](http://www.lmi.state.wy.us/ces/anav9001.htm)

**Second Objective:** the Council will identify statistical measurements for business and industry sectors and exceed the average of the last three years for transportation, communication, public utilities (TCPU); manufacturing; wholesale and new economy.

#### **Covered Employment by Industry**

1999, 2000, 2001

Agriculture: 3,410; 3,527; 3,701

Mining: 15,939; 17,136; 19,495

Construction: 17,294, 17,838, 18,155

Manufacturing: 11,039; 11,403; 11,128

TCPU: 11,374; 11,283; 11,212

Wholesale Trade: 7,640; 7,740; 8,018

Retail Trade: 45,747; 46,846; 47,087

FIRE; 8,037; 8,054; 8,329

Services: 50,849; 52,163; 53,818

Total Government: 53,616; 54,864; 56,720

#### **Average**

TCPU: 11,290

Manufacturing: 11,190

Wholesale Trade: 7,799

The council found that the average for TCPU was exceeded only in 1999, the average for Manufacturing was exceeded only in 2000 and the average for Wholesale Trade was exceeded only in 2001.

#### **The Investment Ready Communities**

**Division** works with communities to enhance their capabilities to meet community and economic development needs through programs such as Community Development Block Grants and Community Assessments. The underlying principle is helping communities help themselves become

ready for new business development.

**First objective:** to complete six community assessments that identify strengths, weaknesses, and community projects. In partnership with the Wyoming Rural Development Council, the Wyoming Business Council conducts community assessments throughout the state. Community assessments assist rural communities with locally conceived and driven development strategies. The Community Assessment Resource Teams hold a mirror up to rural communities so that they can get a good look at themselves. This is accomplished through the listening sessions. The listening sessions are designed to give individuals an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, praise, and goals for their community. The standard three questions a community must answer are: What are your community's major problems and challenges? What are your community's major strengths and assets? What are the projects that you will like to see accomplished in two, five, ten and twenty years?

Each resource team's written report includes a message from the sponsoring organization, the responses from the listening session and the resource team member's recommendations. The resource team leader provides follow-up support and assistance in the initial planning process and in the follow-up priority setting town meeting.

Assessments completed during FY 02 were: Rawlins and Medicine Bow, September 2001; Bear River and Ten Sleep, October 2001; Riverton and Ranchester, November 2001; Lusk, Diamondville and Kemmerer, January 2002; Chugwater, February 2002; Lyman, March 2002; and Hanna and LaBarge in April 2002.

**Second objective:** The division also administers the Community Development Block Grant programs.

1) Planning-Only Grants are available to local governments and to non-profits. It is used for feasibility studies to increase economic development and job creation. It has a maximum grant award of \$25,000 and a 25 percent hard dollar match is required.

2) Technical Assistance Grants are available to for-profit companies that are sponsored by a local government. They are used for expansion of existing markets, to expand into new markets, create web sites, etc., that will ultimately create jobs. There is a maximum grant award of \$7,500 with a 25 percent hard dollar match requirement.

3) Infrastructure Grants are available to local governments to assist a business in creating jobs with 51 percent of the jobs created for to low to moderate-income families. The government must maintain ownership of the improvement. The typical use for the grant money is for water/sewer lines with the maximum grant award being \$300,000.

4) Downtown Development Grants are also available to local governments for projects in the downtown area. Typically this includes handicapped accessibility projects; historic preservation; land purchases and demolition; and rehabilitation of

commercial buildings. Job creation gathers extra points on grading with the maximum grant award at \$300,000.

5) Job Training Grants are available to for-profit companies that are sponsored by a local government. Mostly, they are used for specialized training of new or existing employees with primary jobs garnering more points. A cash match from the company is helpful, and the maximum grant award is \$100,000.

6) A Convertible Loan converts from a loan to a grant as jobs are created and has a maximum of \$500 per job created. The program is available to for-profit companies that are sponsored by a local government and may be used as working capital.

7) Float Loans are used for short term bridge financing of no more than 30 months to create jobs. The loan is from \$350,000 to \$1.5 million and must be guaranteed with an irrevocable letter of credit.

8) Section 108 Loans are used for long-term financing of no more than 20 years to create jobs. The loans are from \$350,000 to \$1.5 million and are determined by a ratio of \$35,000/job. The Wyoming Business Council pledges future Community Development Block Grant allocations as a guarantee for the loan. HUD also generates a bond issue to fund the loan.

**The Minerals, Energy and Transportation Division (MET)** serves as a catalyst for the minerals, energy and transportation industries by identifying opportunities, building coalitions, working through obstacles and providing public education. Following are the MET objectives:

**First objective:** to identify a job measurement tool in each industry segment (e.g., coal, trona, oil, gas, bentonite, granite, etc.). Other appropriate sources for development and dissemination of this information were identified.

**Second objective:** to develop, organize and operate the Wyoming Energy Commission (WEC) in accordance with legislation setting up the Commission. The legislation is very specific about tasks for the WEC. The Commission has focused on developing a comprehensive energy policy for Wyoming, which has consumed Commission and staff resources for the last year.

**Third objective:** to continue to foster economic development in aviation and identify intrastate air travel opportunities and a statistical measurement. To that end, the Council is participating in a commercial air service study conducted by the Wyoming Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Commission and the University of Wyoming.

**Fourth objective:** to identify freight and passenger rail service needs and a statistical measurement. The division did not perform tasks to reach this goal due to allocation of resources to accomplish Energy Commission demands.

**Fifth objective:** to identify over-the-road transportation needs and a statistical measurement.

The division did not perform tasks to reach this goal due to allocation of resources to accomplish Energy Commission demands.

**The Telecommunications Division** guiding strategy is to “coordinate and facilitate development of Wyoming’s telecommunications infrastructure to foster economic development.” With the goal of achieving high-speed broadband connectivity throughout the state, this division works to inventory current telecommunications infrastructure, determine needs to accommodate economic growth, and enhance educational opportunities. Following are the Telecommunications objectives:

**First objective:** to develop a central point of contact and consultation services program for new and existing businesses needing assistance to develop or expand operations within Wyoming. As a result, the contact and consultation services offered through the division have evolved over time. These contacts have proven to be very useful for council clients requiring assistance. Often when a new or expanding business attempts to evaluate telecommunications needs it has a difficult time reaching company personnel via “800” numbers. The division’s contacts are able to avoid the inconvenience and provide technology recommendations that help companies establish networks to provide service needed to support operations within Wyoming.

**Second objective:** to provide advice and counsel to the Council and other state and local government personnel on issues relating to telecommunications and technology, and over the last year, the division has given its advice and assistance to many state, local and even federal government entities. Some examples of this are helping the Wyoming Department of Transportation develop a framework for right-of-way infrastructure; helping the Wyoming Telecommunications Council provide information and advice on a wide variety of telecommunications issues; assisting congressional delegation staff members; provide information and advice on an ongoing basis; helping the Sheridan County and Albany County Commissioners with PCS and cellular tower placement issues; and assisting the Shoshone Tribal Council by providing advice and information on existing infrastructure and discussions to construct a local telecommunications network.

**Third objective:** review and recommend changes to existing law that will lead to technology-based improvements in Wyoming. Division personnel recommended 1) changes to the Wyoming Department of Transportation - right-of-way issues, 2) Wyoming Business Council in discussions on sales tax relief for the deployment of broadband equipment, and 3) has held industry discussions about the modifications to the Wyoming Telecommunications Act of 1995.

**The Travel and Tourism Division** builds Wyoming’s image in national and international markets, providing a statewide umbrella-marketing program to lead the industry. The division fulfills

tourism inquiries generated through advertising, publications and fulfillments. The division is also responsible for public relations; international and domestic travel development; visitor centers; and film, arts and entertainment. Following are Travel and Tourism objectives:

**First objective:** to establish a fully operational and current Web site. Over the last year ongoing changes and updates have occurred continuously to enhance the site and to keep the database of Wyoming tourism products current. A crisis communication page has been added. The primary function has been dissemination of fire information for travelers, but it has also been used to post highway closure information such as the Kaycee flood in September 2002. Additional pages about road construction and recently published travel articles about Wyoming were added. The presence of daily updated information on critical travel issues has alleviated undue concern about the potential impact of wildfires and/or road construction on Wyoming’s highways.

A new Web site feature, “Another Wyoming Weekend,” has been added to the Web site. A link from the front page takes visitors to events that are happening the upcoming weekend across Wyoming, complete with hyperlinks to local Chambers of Commerce web sites. The need for this was in response to front desk queries about what events were happening for the traveler to participate in or visit. This site complements radio and newspaper campaigns, which have received good reviews by Chambers of Commerce and visitors. A recent additional companion to this site is the feature articles page containing links to recently printed articles about Wyoming and Wyoming events.

Another new Web site feature, a survey of the convention and meeting facilities, restaurants and accommodations was completed for the online tour planner. The meetings and conventions is a new section to the tour planner. The planner is a comprehensive listing of lodging, restaurants, major events, cities and attractions, tours, convention facilities and general information available to tour operators and convention planners on Wyoming.

**Second objective:** to continue the tourism industry benchmark research studies and to evaluate research and distribute the results to industry. To fulfill this objective, Longwoods International was contracted to do a Benchmark Study Research Report and Dean Runyan & Associates was contracted to do Economic Impact Reports that included tourism statistics by county. The purpose of the research was 1) To determine Wyoming’s image as a travel destination, and that of its key competitors and 2) To evaluate the impact of Wyoming’s tourism advertising on: short-of sales impacts (awareness, image, intentions to visit) and bottom-line impacts (visits to Wyoming, visitor spending, taxes). These reports have been distributed and are available online.

**Third objective:** Travel and Tourism has

maintained brand, identity and image throughout the last three years of the advertising campaign.

**Fourth objective:** to help with increasing the economic and institutional infrastructure and connectivity between arts and cultural organizations in the state, the Wyoming Cultural Guide is a promotional tool for tourists seeking to experience Wyoming's cultural amenities. Through marketing cultural resources, Travel and Tourism increases the economic impact from these institutions and grow Wyoming's cultural infrastructure. The Wyoming Cultural Guide also acts as an in-state resource guide to connect and network those involved with the arts throughout the state. The addition of the online Wyoming Cultural Guide this past year has allowed this resource to be accessed via the Internet.

**Special Projects:** The following lists **capital formations programs** the WBC uses to enable expansion, retention, and recruitment of businesses.

1) **Challenge Loan Program:** The Challenge Loan was created under the following guidelines. The applicant is a local economic development organization, state can match the local funds, the loan must be secured with a maximum state portion of \$250,000 and the maximum term is 10-years

For a "Bridge" Loan, one must include participation with a local lender and include a minimum of 15 percent owner's equity. The state can purchase a participation up to 35 percent of the project, have a shared collateral position with a maximum State portion of \$250,000 and a maximum term of 10-years.

For an Economic Disaster Loan, combined businesses must show an economic actual dollar loss of at least \$4,000,000, the loan must be directed to each business for the amount of their loss with a maximum loan per business of \$250,000.00 with a maximum 10 year term.

2) **Federal Loan and State Bonds Program:** The Small Business Assistance Act (SBAA), helps purchase a guaranteed portion of Federal Guaranteed loans with a maximum amount \$750,000; must create additional permanent jobs and has an interest rate set by State Treasurer of no less than the 5-year treasury bond rate.

Many business types qualify for State Treasurer Investments, Industrial Development Bond programs. They must have a 25 percent equity requirement; the rate is adjusted annually and a guarantee of payment – letter of credit – may be required.

Industrial Development Revenue Bonds uses the state's IRS allocation, is tax-free to the bond purchaser; is for manufacturing/energy development, has a \$10,000,000 per company cap and the business must provide a "Letter of Credit" to guarantee the bonds

**The Workforce Development** program established and implemented a process to provide training and allocate money and resources to meet the workforce and human resources needs of

employers. To this end, the staff continued to market the Department of Workforce Service and Workforce Development Funds program to businesses in the state.

The Council has also partnered with Wyoming Community Colleges to bring workforce training programs to the state including the certified specialist programs (Quick Start) licensed from the State of Georgia for use in Wyoming. Those training programs include Customer Service Specialist, Manufacturing Specialist and Warehouse and Distribution Specialist and employers offering this training to their current or prospective employees can be eligible for Workforce Development Funds. In the first year of this partnership, the community colleges have had 280 students complete the certified training programs.

## Strategic plan changes

At the Wyoming Business Council Annual Meeting on May 10 in Casper, a town meeting was held to discuss the Strategic Plan. The 2002 Strategic Plan reflects the direction of residents and industry and is different in content and format from the 2001 Strategic Plan. This revised plan is currently available on our Web site at, [http://www.wyomingbusiness.org/home/about/strat\\_plan.cfm](http://www.wyomingbusiness.org/home/about/strat_plan.cfm). The 2003 Strategic Plan will be developed based on direct input from residents and industry at the Wyoming Business Council Annual Meeting in the spring of 2003. In brief, the major changes can be seen in the following areas: action items more directly relate to one-year goals and follow-on goals replace 3- and 5-year goals.

# Wyoming Business Council organization chart

