



The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Solutions) has created a new Outdoor Recreation Learning Network in partnership with state outdoor recreation directors. This network will help governors and their staffs explore strategies to leverage their unique natural, cultural and historical resources and help promote economic, social and environmental benefits. The effort was launched at the NGA 2019 Summer Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in July 2019. See www.nga.org/outdoors for more information.

Governors Care about the Outdoors

The U.S. outdoor recreation economy is significant. In 2017, nearly half of all Americans participated in outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, mountain biking, sailing, skiing, camping, fishing and hunting. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that the industry employed more than 4.5 million people in 2016, and generated in excess of \$730 billion in economic impact, accounting for 2.2 percent of U.S. GDP. As a portion of GDP, this is larger than the utility, mining, agriculture and legal services industries. Beyond the manufacture and sale of outdoor products, outdoor recreation is an important economic multiplier. Outdoor recreation helps develop economies, increase rural prosperity, improve health outcomes, and promote environmental stewardship and responsible resource development. Governors across the country recognize the importance of this industry and are uniquely positioned to support its growth through state policies, programs and incentives.

In 2013, Governor Gary Herbert of Utah launched the first U.S. state outdoor recreation office to support and promote outdoor recreation and implement an outdoor recreation strategic plan. At least 12 more states have launched similar efforts and other states are considering them. These initiatives are led by a mix of governor's advisors, state offices, commissions and councils and are located in various state agencies. While they may be housed in a department that oversees economic development, tourism or natural resource management, the initiatives cut across these and other topics. Over the past two years, state outdoor recreation directors have created an ad-hoc group to support the sharing of best practices. As momentum built and there was a need to institutionalize their strategies, they approached NGA to serve as a convener and assist in thought leadership.

About the Outdoor Recreation Learning Network

Through the Outdoor Recreation Learning Network and in partnership with existing state outdoor recreation directors, NGA Solutions will convene leaders of these efforts from across the country. Participants will include governors' office staffs and other state officials from departments such as commerce, environment, natural resources, economic development, education and public health. The network will highlight how states can best advance outdoor recreation. It will focus on key issue areas, including conservation, stewardship, education, workforce training, economic development, infrastructure, public health, equity and wellness. It also will provide insights into federal developments and related impacts, opportunities and resources for states. The effort will build upon and leverage successful NGA Solutions learning networks already in place supporting topics such as energy, water, transportation, workforce and health. It harkens back to the founding of the organization when, in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt hosted the first meeting of the nation's governors at the White House to discuss conserving America's natural resources. Following that inaugural meeting, governors decided to form an association through which they could come together to discuss mutual concerns and act collectively.



Activities

Building upon efforts already underway, activities will include hosting quarterly conference calls, convening biannual gatherings of outdoor recreation officials, and maintaining a repository of data and supporting documents. The repository will help share best practices and showcase state initiatives.

Outdoor Recreation Webinars (Starting in Summer 2019)

NGA Solutions will coordinate with state directors to host regular webinars. These sessions will provide updates on emerging outdoor recreation policies to help states prepare for their legislative sessions and develop new strategies.

Outdoor Recreation Summits (Biannually, Starting in Fall 2019)

NGA Solutions, in collaboration with the state outdoor recreation directors, will convene two one-day summits each year. Leaders on outdoor recreation from the public and private sectors will gather to discuss state policy principles and identify opportunities for collaboration to advance outdoor recreation.

Repository of Outdoor Recreation Information (Ongoing)

Building on the state outdoor recreation directors' leadership, NGA Solutions will develop and maintain a repository of outdoor recreation information and state best practices. The repository will include governors' executive orders, governors' task force reports, sample legislation, the Outdoor Recreation Industry Confluence Accords, research papers and other documents.

Sponsors and Support

The founding sponsors of the Learning Network include: REI Inc., the Outdoor Industry Association and the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable. In addition to providing thought leadership, the sponsors will help support NGA staff time and travel and meeting expenses for state officials.

About NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices

NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices (NGA Solutions) works with governors and their staffs to identify innovative solutions to today's most pressing public policy challenges. It is the only research and development organization that directly serves the nation's governors. The Center has five divisions. The Energy, Infrastructure and Environment division (EIE) will lead the Outdoor Recreation Learning Network. EIE will engage other elements of NGA as appropriate. The Outdoor Recreation Learning Network is modeled after learning networks that EIE oversees to convene governors' advisors on topics surrounding energy, water and transportation. For more information, please email: outdoors@nga.org

www.nga.org/outdoors