

WEDA

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE | JANUARY 2020

2019: A YEAR IN REVIEW

Innovation and economic
growth in Wyoming

BUSINESS READY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Bringing growth and
diversification to
Wyoming

STORIES FROM ACROSS THE STATE

WEDA members are
impacting their
communities

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ECONOMIC BUILDING BLOCKS

Tools for growth

WEDA PROVIDES A VOICE!

2019 was a big year for economic development in Wyoming and WEDA was the voice of local economic development. WEDA makes a large impact by bringing together the thoughts, ideas and concerns of local communities and ensuring they are heard at the state level. Our successes have allowed us to support the growth happening in our communities.

WEDA builds strong relationships with our Wyoming legislature, monitoring the discussions and legislation that impact the resources our communities use to grow and thrive. Our WEDA Lobbyist, Chris Brown, and the WEDA Legislative Committee lobbied for legislation and funding to support the activities that local economic developers identified as necessary to the economic success and survival of their community. This included the continued funding of the “Business Ready Community Grant” program and the creation of the “Wyoming Works Program”. Our collective voice and ability to connect across the state allows us to have a larger impact than any one community can have on its own.

WEDA has strengthened relationships with partners. This includes serving on the strategic planning committee and the CEO search committee for the Wyoming Business Council (WBC). We provide a local voice in the conversations that helps increase the partnerships at the local and state level.

In 2019, WEDA further examined how entrepreneurs are being supported in Wyoming. New services and supports have been added for entrepreneurs by ENDOW and other agencies. The changes have also caused confusion. WEDA pulled together stakeholders to discuss what services are provided and to discuss how services can work together as efficiently and effectively as possible. We look forward to working with the Business Resource Network, the University of Wyoming and other partners on this issue in 2020.

WEDA has provided high quality education to our members and others in the community who are working to make an impact. This education provides knowledge and skills that help bring investment, connect services, build plans, grow partnerships, and measure outcomes to make a true impact. We strive to educate people on what a quality program looks like and how it can truly make a difference. “Economic development” and “diversification” mean different things to different people, making it challenging to see the broad impacts these efforts make. WEDA’s work provides clarity and brings focus to that work.

The material in this year’s WEDA Success Stories focuses on how our local communities are leveraging tools and resources to make an impact. The stories in this brochure are specifically focused on the successes that communities have had in leveraging Business Ready Community grants; however, there are other tools and resources that are making an impact and we will be sending these stories out electronically. We encourage you to explore these projects and to think about how we can further leverage the support of various tools and resources to continue to support the success of our Wyoming Communities.

WEDA'S IMPACT

Lobbying and Advocating

- Supporting economic development
- Tools for local communities
- Working with partners to provide resources to diversify the workforce and increase high demand skills
- Advocating for legislation that diversifies our economy

Representing the Economic Development Community

- Bringing local economic development voice to the Wyoming Business Council Strategic Planning and CEO Search
- Pulling together partners to improve how entrepreneurs are supported
- Building stronger connections with partners to better support outcomes and provide a unified voice

Providing High Quality Education and Information

- Driving a conversation about what economic development and diversification mean
- Providing knowledge and skills to local economic developers to make a bigger impact locally
- Connecting efforts across the state to better leverage resources and outcomes

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**- ROBERT BRIGGS,
WEDA -FORMER CHAIR**

BUSINESS READY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM BRINGS GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION TO WYOMING

Written by Baylie Evans, Wyoming Business Council

Wyoming state leaders and lawmakers have long recognized the need to create and nurture a welcoming and supportive business environment across Wyoming, and to level the playing field in its smaller communities.

In 2003, the Wyoming Legislature created the Business Ready Community (BRC) grant and loan program in response to industry feedback that Wyoming lacked the infrastructure necessary for business recruitment and existing business expansion. The program was originally designed to help build infrastructure communities lacked – roads, sewer, water, business parks, airport enhancement, etc. – to entice companies to stay in or relocate to Wyoming. And it did its job. Since then, projects have included more than 116 miles of roads, 150 miles of water and sewer lines and 1.7 million square feet of business-ready buildings.

The program has also funded quality-of-life projects like downtown plazas and arts centers that make it easier to attract and retain a workforce in Wyoming.

Since it was started in 2003, 5,020 jobs have been created by businesses that benefited from the BRC program, with another 572 projected by current projects. Every \$1 of public BRC funds invested returns \$3.53 of private capital investment to Wyoming communities. In total, more than \$1.45 billion of private capital investments have been or are anticipated to be made.

“The State of Wyoming can credit the BRC program with much of its economic growth and diversification over the last 20 years,” said Julie Kozlowski, the community development director at the Wyoming Business Council, who oversees the program. “The program has made it possible for both small companies in small towns and big companies in bigger towns to relocate or continue to thrive here.”

The program’s rules require funding to be awarded to towns, cities, counties, joint powers boards and the two Native American tribes, which can then partner with private businesses to lease buildings or complete projects. The rules also require a five-year reporting period.

BUSINESS READY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM IN ACTION

The **High-Tech Business Park** in Sheridan received a \$2.85 million grant and a \$1.5 million loan to build a 34,000 to 40,000 square-foot manufacturing facility. The project will triple or quadruple the space in which Kennon Products operates and increase its staff by about 39. The grant also means Kennon's future product lines will likely be manufactured in Sheridan, rather than out of state.

The **CAM-PLEX Heritage & Energy Hall** Renovation and Remodel project received a \$1.5 million grant and a \$2 million loan to make improvements to the multi-use events center that brings in more than 50,000 people – with an estimated increase to 250,000 – from across the region every year.

"The ability to host the high school national finals rodeo here in Gillette, Wyoming, is a tremendous honor that we don't take lightly," said Kevin Couch, the Campbell County Public Land Board chairman. "The volume of people that come to those type of events is a tremendous opportunity for our community."

The **Sundance Central Park Development** project received \$484,000 to develop a central park adjacent to the historic Old Stoney Building in downtown Sundance.

The **Midwest Avenue Reconstruction** project received \$1.52 million for the reconstruction of an area of Midwest Avenue in Casper including sewer, roadway, sidewalks, curb and gutter.

The **Guernsey Rail Spur Expansion** project received \$717,792 to construct about 2,000 additional feet of single-rail to connect rail service to two lots in the Guernsey Industrial Park.

"This project will triple the capacity for unloading pipe coming into the area," said Kate Farmer, the Guernsey Clerk/Treasurer. "We're also looking at expanding into the wind farm, bringing in the new towers. It will also help our military department here in Guernsey."



EVERY \$1 OF PUBLIC BRC FUNDS INVESTED RETURNS \$3.53 OF PRIVATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT TO WYOMING COMMUNITIES.

The **Pinedale Events & Recreation Infrastructure Project** received \$179,062 to construct a dump and water filling station for recreational vehicles, tour buses and tank trucks adjacent to the Rocky Mountain Car Wash in Pinedale.

“The town of Pinedale has been working very hard to increase visitors coming through the community,” said Mayor Matt Murdock. “By having an RV dump and fill station, it will give them an opportunity stop, maybe spend some more money in our town ... hopefully encourage them to stay an extra night.”

The **Sweetwater County Industrial Development Plan** project received \$50,000 to develop a targeted industry study to design an expansive industrial development zone.

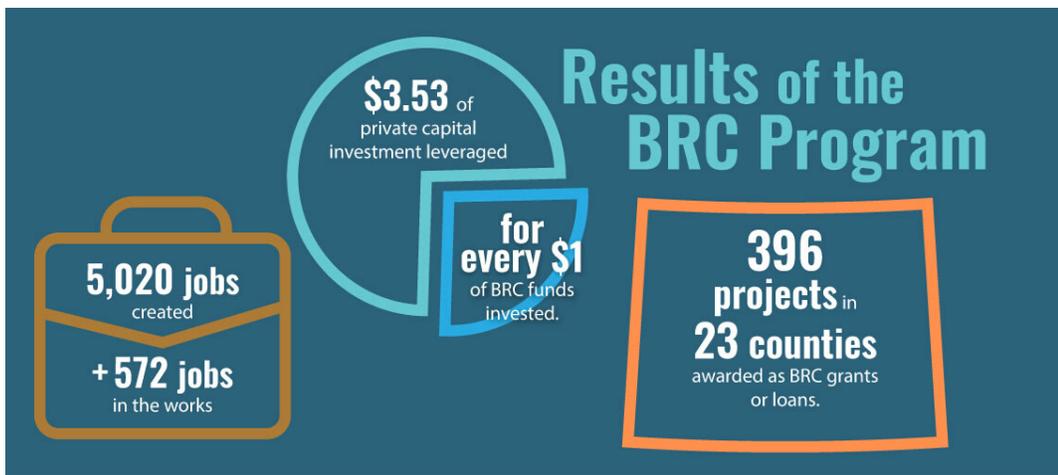
The **Alpine Pretreatment and Sludge Handling Facility** project received \$2.3 million grant for a modular wastewater pretreatment system and sludge handling facility at the town's wastewater treatment plant.

“This facility is very important for the town so they can grow,” said Bob Ablondi, the town engineer for Alpine. “We see a lot of things happening in our town as a result of this facility.”

Sublette County received \$1.03 million to purchase an 8,500-square-foot building for Enviremedial Services, Inc. The project is expected to add 21 jobs.

“Our manufacturing facility will be able to keep people who have skills in the energy industry here,” said Geoff Keough, the president of Enviremedial Services, Inc. “We’ll be able to retain people who are from Pinedale and bring a lot of new business to Pinedale.”

Other notable projects include the **Cheyenne Regional Airport’s new terminal**, which received a \$3 million BRC grant in 2015. That project was recently awarded Engineering News-Record's award for Best Airport/Transit project in the mountain states region. Projects were judged on design and construction quality, contribution to the community and the industry, and how they overcame unusual challenges through teamwork and innovation.



HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE

Business Council staff review each application, conduct site visits, or conference calls in the case of planning grants, and make presentations to a board subcommittee before making final recommendations to the full board. The board votes on each application.

On January 16th, the Board voted to approve two new applications.

The **Sheridan Economic and Educational Development Authority** requested a \$1,094,785 grant and \$275,000 loan to allow for completion of Vacutech's expansion project. The manufacturer anticipates adding 51 jobs over the next five years. SLIB approved funding as a \$1,369,785 loan.

The City of Rock Springs requested a \$2,917,701 grant to rehabilitate the First Security Bank building to return it to productive use while retaining the city's heritage.

SLIB approved funding as requested, with an understanding that the Business Council will recapture 90% of the sale of the building up to the \$2.9 million award or, if the building is leased, 50% of the net revenue from lease payments received.

ELIGIBLE BRC GRANT AND LOAN ACTIVITIES

Infrastructure such as water, sewer, streets, telecommunications, airports, rights of way, land, spec buildings, or amenities within a business park, industrial park, industrial site or business district or other appropriate physical projects in support of primary economic development. Educational development infrastructure such as workforce training facilities are eligible. Recreational facilities, landscaping and convention centers are also eligible. Managed data center utility costs.

Interested parties may apply through the Wyoming Business Council.

BUILDING BLOCKS

COMMUNITY & QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of Life makes the community worth living in and attracts both workforce and investment.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Business cannot locate in a community unless the necessary infrastructure is in place and "shovel ready" land is available.

EXISTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Why should we attract new businesses if we don't take care of the ones we already have? The majority of new jobs created will come from businesses already located within the community so it is important to make sure the needs of these existing businesses are taken care of.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A company cannot locate or expand if the necessary workforce is not available.

INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurs are among our most important sources of new products and technologies. We should design our economic system to encourage and support their growth.

NEW BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

When all the other building blocks are in place, a community is ready to recruit new business. These new businesses will add jobs and diversify or enhance the existing business base.



OUR SPONSORS

WEDA is funded by membership fees and by the generous support of our sponsors.

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**WYOMING
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION**

W E D A

