GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

GATEWAY AND NATURAL AMENITY REGION NETWORK

May 28, 2020 Listening Session

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OVERVIEW

The May 28th, 2020, Gateway and Natural Amenity Region (GNAR) Network listening session brought together elected officials, planners, economic development specialists, resource providers, and others working in and with GNAR communities throughout the West for a peer-to-peer learning session focused on policies and procedures for reopening GNAR communities amid COVID-19.

The interactive session was hosted by the GNAR Initiative, conducted via Zoom, and facilitated by faculty from Utah State University and University of Utah. The facilitation team used a number of exercises from the free and publicly available Liberating Structures toolkit to facilitate interactive dialogue among participants. Participants were encouraged to use these tools and exercises in their own online and in-person meetings.

This summary shares the ideas that were shared during the session. Names and contacts for participants and the facilitation team are included in Appendix A. Resources participants shared during and following the session are included in Appendix B.

ABOUT THE GNAR INITIATIVE

The GNAR Initiative leverages research, education, and capacity building to assist communities, land managers, and others in gateway and natural amenity regions throughout the West in preparing for and responding to planning, development, natural resource management, and public policy challenges, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. The Initiative is an affiliation of university faculty, government and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. It is based in the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University.

REOPENING: WHAT HAS BEEN HELPFUL AND NOT SO HELPFUL?

To kick off the listening session, participants engaged in two rounds of Impromptu Networking to share their thoughts in response to the prompts:

- Where is your community at in terms of reopening? How is that going?

- What is one thing your community has done to respond to COVID-19 that has been helpful?

- What is something your community has done to respond to COVID-19 that has NOT been helpful?

After discussing these prompts with a partner, they shared their responses with each other using the Zoom chat feature. Responses are below:

WHERE IS YOUR COMMUNITY AT IN TERMS OF REOPENING? HOW IS THAT GOING?

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** Most businesses open but with significant social distancing modifications

- **Tom Dansie (Springdale):** We are gradually re-opening and are dealing with the issues that come with starting visitation back up while still trying to social distance

- **Zacharia Levine (Moab/Grand County):** We're in "Phase 2" within Utah's "Moderate Risk" phase. Essentially, we're open with the following limits: no camping on public lands, no national parks, limited occupancy at lodging establishments with "rest periods" between visitors

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- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** Cautious reopen, wait and see the effect of visitors returning to the area - want the $ - not the covid!

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** California is under pretty tight "stay at home" order still, but Siskiyou County (Mt. Shasta) is pretty much business as usual - churches and hair salons just opened today

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** Utah is mostly open with some precautions, and is currently working on policies and messaging for a "new normal"

- **Adus Dorsey (Wayne County):** Capitol Reef National Park is open, businesses are open visitorship is over the top. 0 cases in Wayne County

- **Cherie Major (Moab RV Park owner, Travel Council):** Orange 50% open Moab. No hospitalizations in a month

- **Margaret Bowes (CO Assoc of Ski Towns):** Counties can ask for exceptions to state order. So it is more confusing than ever with very little continuity from county to county. Restaurants are starting to open as are hotels

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** AZ is at phase 1-2. Many local businesses still closed

- **Tara McKee (UT Office of Outdoor Recreation):** Utah is entering the "stabilization phase" although some places such as Salt Lake City are having more restrictions

- **Zacharia Levine (Moab/Grand County):** I'd say it's going "moderately well" to "not so well." Varying levels of respect from visitors. A TOOOON of motorized usage (not surprising these are first visitors to return)

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Partial reopening. Lodging and public lands camping at partial capacity, slower than typical than this time of year, but some visitors not following recommendations so hard to say if we're too open, or too closed

SOMETHING MY COMMUNITY/REGION HAS DONE TO RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT HAS BEEN HELPFUL IS....

- **Mary T McClelland (MT, West Glacier Community):** Phase 2, consistent CDC messaging in state, park, and county cautions. Businesses challenged with limited visitors but overall understanding the safety over speed. Glacier National Park very transparent about their plan

- **Zacharia Levine (Moab/Grand County):** Not filling occupancy limits even though we're "open." Clearly, many are still scared to travel

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** NM and Texas open with social distance requirements. Texas has more flow of people around the city than NM. NM has been more preventive and taking strict measures to social distance and prevention

- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** We are in the 2nd stage of reopening "orange"; Most businesses have reopened with modified operations. The community has a split response to Memorial Day reopening, small businesses seem eager to increase business, "local" community seem that it has harmful

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** Early shut down of California was very effective in reducing the first wave of infections

- **Margaret Bowes (CO Assoc of Ski Towns):** Rent relief programs for town-owned or deed restricted housing. Grants available to businesses to pay rent

- **Cherie Major (Moab RV Park owner, Travel Council):** SW health clear in opening rules and respond when call or emailed they are responsive

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** State and community closed all lodging and seemed to have weathered round 1 of COVID well. We'll see with reopening what the case load becomes

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** Kept most natural areas/trailheads/parks open (with exception of Yellowstone) though visitor facilities (centers) have mostly remained closed

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- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** Has coordinated with outside efforts to supply local businesses with sufficient protective equipment for reopening

- **Tara McKee (UT Office of Outdoor Recreation):** I am appreciating the planning the state has put into coming up with a strategic investment option and number one is: Outdoor recreation – Invest and develop in infrastructure such as trails, bike paths, and other amenities that make Utah's unique vistas and landscapes more accessible to and enjoyable for Utah families and out-of-state visitors

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** Creating statewide recovery guidance

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** We have tried to provide as much information as possible to the community about social distancing requirements. We have tried to set an example as an organization on how to re-open while employing social distancing protocols

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** Community is leaning on NGOs for leadership capacity, cross-sector discussion between outdoor recreation, public health, tourism, economic development

- **Mary T McClelland (MT, West Glacier Community):** A large business in our community shared their safety promise strategies for other businesses to use. Our state and national parks have been cautious rather than in a rush

- **Zacharia Levine (Moab/Grand County):** Coordinating with state and federal officials regarding local-specific public health measures, funding and economic relief needs, and opportunities. We actually met with Sen. Romney's office to raise the prominence of gateway and resort communities within the next federal stimulus bill. He liked our usage of "service population" to describe the difference between full-time population and visitor population

- **Cherie Major (Moab RV Park owner, Travel Council):** South East health helpful

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Rural locals checking on remote neighbors

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SOMETHING MY COMMUNITY/REGION HAS DONE TO RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT HAS NOT BEEN HELPFUL IS...

- The request to 2nd homeowners that they don't visit was not well received. A different and more delicate message might have been helped

- Need more lead time for changes in rules

- County is wildly interpreting "essential business", county is outpacing the rest of the state as far as re-opening goes which is drawing extraordinary numbers of people from other parts of California

- Testing / tracing unavailable to most

- In Texas, communicating to communities why their participation is important. Stricter measures for Public Health

- Lack of resources to monitor and enforce consistent implementation of safety protocols/guidelines

- Making social distancing and masks mandatory for indoor customers, and other measures required rather than suggested, would have made expectations much clearer, and reduced tension over reopening between economic activity and health

- Encourage travel to national parks from out of state tourists

- Utah has punted in some ways such as wanting the local public health depts. to stop large gatherings while not letting some places enforce stricter regulations (such as in Bluff, UT)

- Things that aren't working: No real way to address the asymptomatic carriers without testing and tracing and masking and we don't control those things

Participants were asked to reflect on one key insight from their Impromptu Networking conversations with each other and to share their insight via the chat feature. Responses are below:

WHAT IS ONE KEY INSIGHT FROM THE IMPROMPTU NETWORKING SESSION?

- **Kalen Jones, (Moab City Council):** Communication consistency, clarity, and coordination lead to better outcomes

- **Jordan Smith (Utah State University):** Gateway communities have a lot of anxiety about reinvesting in a summer tourist season when a second wave might be right around the corner

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** Early adapters of travelling to GNAR communities after sheltering do not seem enthused about wearing masks

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** There are so many unknowns about COVID19 and the impact of social distancing that it is very difficult at this point to look back and really determine what were the "right" policies to implement

- **Jake Powell (Utah State Extension):** Community representatives are stuck between community members who are fearful of reopening and businesses that are needing to reopen for their economic viability

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** GNAR communities from across the West have similar fears and questions

- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** Incorporated community strategies vs un-incorporated community strategies

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Similarity of challenges, regardless of scale

- **Cherie Major (Moab RV Park owner, Travel Council):** Small chat room - met two new people with similar issues

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** It seems like at this point in time, many gateway communities are in a similar state of reopening and cautiously moving forward

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- **Zacharia Levine (Moab/Grand County):** There is SO much uncertainty and no one really knows how to effectively govern through these unique circumstances because of it. Humans don't do well managing uncertainty with scenario planning and contingencies

- **Mary T McClelland (MT, West Glacier Community):** Communication is key and trying to understand where folks are coming from helps - agree with Jake that there is a split between taking safe and slow reopening and those businesses totally reliant on tourism - we are not prepared for a huge influx of visitors with the additional safety measures needed

LESSONS LEARNED

Participants engaged in an exercise called 1-2-4-All to share their thoughts with each other in response to the prompt:

Knowing what you now know:

- What would you tell your community/region to do the same to prepare for and respond to COVID? Why?

- What would you encourage your community/region to do differently? Why?

- If you were king/queen for the next month, what would you do in terms of policies and practices to respond to COVID-19? Why?

- Within your existing limitations, what is one key thing you can you do to help your community/region respond to COVID-19?

They were then asked to share their key takeaways for each of these questions via the chat feature. Their responses to each of these prompts are below:

KNOWING WHAT YOU NOW KNOW, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR COMMUNITY/REGION TO DO THE SAME TO PREPARE FOR AND RESPOND TO COVID?

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Respond earlier even though State, County and Federal gov't didn't. Superior, AZ was early but could have done better

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** Create a governance structure with supporting tools to allow for remote community engagement and leadership

- **Jordan Smith (Utah State University):** Think about

people first, and the regional economy second

- **Rick Wixom (Town of Springdale):** Create a local stockpile of PPE and supplies that will be needed

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** Make protocols "required" rather than "recommended" from the get-go

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** Have systems in place to share timely, accurate, and complete information across jurisdictions

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** Create/adapt assistance mechanisms for business and individuals

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Maintain deeper financial reserves for downturns, regardless of source. Coordinate communications: one person or office provides clear, complete, and current info across all channels. Make reopening social distancing measures mandatory

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** Be proactive as NM was in the sense that as soon as they heard about the possible pandemic, they shut down the city instead of waiting to see how the virus affected the community. Understanding your communities and the risk that they are exposed to

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Prepared plans executed with cautionary principles

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Have more stuff on hand for a pandemic. Have increased economic buffer for local small businesses

IF YOU WERE KING/QUEEN FOR THE NEXT MONTH, WHAT IS ONE KEY THING YOU WOULD DO IN TERMS OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO RESPOND TO COVID-19?

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9)**: Local PPE stockpiles, Mobile testing especially for rural areas—test earlier with no restrictions. Regional travel restrictions --like they are doing in Quebec Canada

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Substitute require for recommend in Utah's phased opening practices

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Have a national science-based response to the pandemic. Eliminate polarization of pandemic

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** Ensuring that ALL communities have access to proper health care and equipment

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** Encourage regional planning/decision making

- **Tara McKee (UT Office of Outdoor Recreation):** Create a program that would simultaneously invest in infrastructure and provide jobs with investing heavily in infrastructure projects for outdoor recreation and future tourism

- **Jordan Smith (Utah State University):** Develop and support scenario planning assistance for gateway communities

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** Create a local "Conservation Corp" for workforce training job creation. As well, work with city gov to create "Transformative Change Committee" to focus on secondary and tertiary economies

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Drill, practice, execute

- **Jordan Katcher (Utah Community Development Office):** Use that month as an opportunity to focus on resilience planning, strengthen communication channels, identify leadership, constantly evaluate and monitor effects from each policy/rule change

- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** I would limit to the extent of regional travel at this stage. We experienced visitors from across the nation that were all practicing different strategies. This stage of opening may have been done safer if travel was limited to regional travel

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** Goods movement strategies to ensure rural supplies

WITHIN YOUR EXISTING LIMITATIONS, WHAT IS ONE KEY THING YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY/REGION RESPOND TO COVID-19?

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Engage community in assessing what they liked about the pause vs. typical spring tourism madness, and how we can create that in the future without a pandemic

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** Share and educate on best practices for industry recovery

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** Invest in education and proper marketing to communicate best practices and guidelines

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Early planning for disaster response of any type at town level, understanding state and county may lag. PPE & economic resources on hand

- **Jordan Smith (Utah State University):** Help share responsible recreation guidelines

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Support National Parks in opening with policy to support health and safety

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LESSONS LEARNED - CONTINUED

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** Partnership with NGO / county for long term active transportation plan. Active grant writing. Partnership b/w community college and USFS on workforce training program for outdoor recreation, trails, & stewardship

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Ensure local food and health security/sovereignty

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** Be an example of appropriate social distancing protocol. Model the type of actions and behavior that we want to see implemented in the rest of the community

- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** Practice and promote through action safe strategies (wear masks and practice social distance to encourage others to do the same)

- **Jordan Katcher (Utah Community Development Office):** Share case studies on innovative practices/ lessons learned

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** Help them to proactively put into place plans for effectively dealing with these sorts of unanticipated but inevitable crises in the future

WRAP UP DISCUSSION

To wrap up the listening session, participants were asked to use the chat feature to share their thoughts about the following prompts:

- One key takeaway or insight from this listening session is...

- What topic/issue would you like us to focus the next session on?

The responses they shared via chat for each prompt are below.

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY OR INSIGHT FROM THIS LISTENING SESSION IS....

- **Cory Shurtleff (Moab City Assistant Planner):** Connection with GNAR community members

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Communication was important in successes, and is relatively easy to implement, and improve

- **Laurel (Mt. Shasta, CA):** Awesome use of chat rooms and zoom features. Good use of time. Props to Danya!

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** Learning how others have handled, experienced and responded to this pandemic

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Other towns and organizations with similar challenges have good ideas

- **Jordan Katcher (Utah Community Development Office):** We're all in this together, amid social distancing that kind of connection means so much

- **Howard B (Tucson Audubon):** Not alone. This will work!

- **Rick Wixom (Town of Springdale):** Similar challenges across many different places

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** Ditto to all of the above!

- **Flint Timmins (Utah Office of Tourism):** There are a lot of local solutions!

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** It is important to make gateway community economies more resilient. One way to do this is through tele-working. Creating the information infrastructure to allow high-paying jobs to relocate to amenity regions

- **Tara McKee (UT Office of Outdoor Recreation):** It's also great to see how many people care so much!

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** Great zoom experience – similar issues – glad we came together --

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WRAP UP DISCUSSION – CONTINUED

WHAT TOPIC/ISSUE WOULD YOU LIKE US TO FOCUS THE NEXT SESSION ON?

- **Tom Dansie (Town of Springdale):** The intersection of transportation and housing in gateway communities. If only there were a study about this...

- **Catherine Carr (Caltrans District 9):** How we weathered the next covid wave?

- **Jim Schenck (LOST):** Best practices for gateway communities based on experiences shared so far. Practical guide to share with others in my community

- **Dennis Glick (Future West):** The public land managers (NPS, USFS) perspective on these gateway issues related to the coronavirus

- **Maria Trevino (NPS RTCA):** Resiliency in planning

- **Kalen Jones (Moab City Council):** Sustainable tourism frameworks. Moab has worked on sustainability generally, but could use help with engaging specifically on the tourism/business end would like different communities' feedback

- **Tara McKee (UT Office of Outdoor Recreation):** What has the return of tourists meant for your communities and how has it impacted you?

- **Emily Friedman (Zion Regional Collaborative):** Effective collaboration between communities and organizations, while social distancing (i.e., opportunities w/ regards to technologies)

- **Rick Wixom (Town of Springdale):** Sustainable communities (broad context, not just "green")

APPENDIX A - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATION TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Email Address	City, County, or Organization Name
Adus Dorsey	adus@wayne.utah.gov	Wayne County, UT
Bianca Lyon	blyo@utah.gov	Utah Office of Tourism
Catherine Carr	Catherine.Carr@dot.ca.gov	Caltrans District 9, CA
Cherie Major	info@actcampground.com	Moab RV & Tourism Council, UT
Cory Shurtleff	cshurtleff@Moabcity.org	Moab Assistant Planner, UT
Dennis Glick	dennis@future-west.org	Future West, MT
Emily Friedman	zrcvista@gmail.com	Zion Regional Collaborative, UT
Flint Timmins	fdtimmins@utah.gov	Utah Office of Tourism
Howard Buchanan	hbuchanan@utsconaudubon.org	Tucson Audubon Hummingbird Preserve, AZ
Jim Schenck	jim@magmadorada.com	Legends of Superior Trails (LOST), AZ
Jordan Katcher	jkatcher@utah.gov	Utah Community Development Office
Kalen Jones	kjones@moabcity.org	Moab City Council & Planning Commission, UT
Kevin Walker	kevin@canyon23.net	Grand County, UT (Planning Commission)
Laurel Harkness	laurel@siskiyououtdooralliance.org	Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Shasta, CA
Maggie Wilson	info@magpiecycling.com	Magpie Cycles, Moab, UT
Margaret Bowes	mbowes@coskitowns.com	Colorado Association of Ski Towns (CAST)
Maria Trevino	Maria_trevino@partner.nps.gov	Santa Fe, NM
Mary McClelland	marytreemcclelland@gmail.com	West Glacier Gateway Visioning Project, Flathead County, MT
Pitt Grewe	pgrewe@utah.gov	Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
Rick Wixom	rwixom@springdaletown.com	Town of Springdale, UT
Stan Smith	mayor@infowest.com	Town of Springdale, UT
Suzanne Elger	selger@springdaletown.com	Springdale Town Council, UT
Tara McKee	tmckee@utah.gov	Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
Thomas Dansie	tdansie@springdaletown.com	Town of Springdale, UT
Zacharia Levine	zlevine@grandcountyutah.net	Moab, UT

FACILITATION TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Jake Powell, GNAR Initiative Lead
Utah State University
jake.powell@usu.edu

Danya Rumore
Wallace Stegner Center for Land,
Resources, and the Environment
University of Utah
danya.rumore@law.utah.edu

Jordan W. Smith
Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism
Utah State University
jordan.smith@usu.edu

Liz K. Sodja
GNAR Initiative Coordinator
Utah State University
Liz.Sodja@gmail.com

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APPENDIX B — RELEVANT RESOURCES

- The Local Leader's Toolkit – Strongtowns.org

- Teton County's Phased Guidelines for Businesses and Organizations to Maximize Public Health and Economic Reactivation

- Camping after COVID – the 2020 North American Camper Survey – Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation

- North American Camping Report

- Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education - Aggregated Information

- EPA & CDC: Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes

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APPENDIX C - PRE/POST SURVEY RESULTS

PRE-SURVEY RESPONSES

WHAT TYPES OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR REOPENING HAVE THE GATEWAY AND NATURAL AMENITY REGIONS YOU WORK IN IMPLEMENTED?

- State of Oregon and Washington strategies for reopening; facilitated 'all-lands' discussions via Travel Oregon with recreation providers in Oregon; USFS regional recreation response to pandemic

- Masks in public, social distancing, guest rentals cleaning protocols

- The Discover Moab website has over three million people who access our website each year. The www.discovermoab.com website adds critical information from the land agencies to inform visitors, educate visitors, Leave No Trace, Preserve and Protect as well as sustainability and accessibility content. We also have a very robust Facebook page with over 70,000 FB friends posting updated information to inform the public about Moab, Grand County. During Covid-19 implementation of the Southeast Health Department Order was posted on our Discover Moab page which attracted thousands of visits. Our hope is to educate visitors in any way we can before they arrive to Moab, Grand County

- Posted COVID-19 information

- Conforming with State of California guidelines

- National park and public lands camping delayed opening, considering reduced peak capacity; bulk mask acquisition for public; phased opening of visitor businesses

- Lodging, camping, and dining restrictions, National Park closures

- Varying actions around mask mandates/communications. Considering turning streets into pedestrian areas to allow businesses to add more seating and allow for social distancing of shoppers. Seeking change in liquor law restrictions. Entertainment districts. VMS signs to promote local ordinances. Bulk PPE purchase for local businesses

- Community discussion of need for short term rental reminders as a community courtesy; large businesses making detailed safety plans and promises as main focus to visitors (also made available to other businesses); some small businesses grouping together to pressure Park to open but without any coordinated effort on how they will collectively keep their customers safe. County and State have specific guidelines but no way to enforce it. The public is at the mercy of those who choose to ignore the best safety practices

- We are supporting the entire state to try and be unified in messaging and support for responsible recreation

- Social distancing measures such as reduced capacity dining rooms. Summer concerts cancelled

- Following the Governor's and local health department directives

- Social distancing, hand sanitizer stations, mask wearing in public buildings

- Estes Park has worked closely with ROMO and Larimer County Dept of Health to coordinate messaging and compliance

- Occupancy limits on lodging establishments; prohibition of camping on public lands; phased reopening of national parks

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WHAT TYPES OF RESOURCES RELATED TO REOPENING CAN THE GNAR INITIATIVE TEAM COMPILE AND SHARE WITH THE GNAR NETWORK?

- Links to above mentioned could be provided, but are also fairly easy to find through web-search (all be the latter probably)

- Again, I'm interested in hearing what actual gateway community members have to say. My organization has worked in gateway communities in the past on other issues, but not on this issue specifically

- How have openings at Zions, and Bryce National Parks been impacted during their recent openings? Are these communities seeing increases in their sales taxes, and lodging taxes?

- Other examples of small town gateway communities. Marketing during COVID

- Lessons from peer resorts

- Best practices for increasing safe practices of visitors and residents in relation to C-19

- More small business emergency grant funding opportunities, please

- A safety checklist of recommendations for businesses to provide to their customers and how other towns have accommodated making the extra precautions possible (are their COVID grants for portable hand washing stations, additional garbage receptacles for example

- Responsible recreation campaigns by Utah DNR and REI

- Social distancing guidelines for visitors

- Supply networks

- Data collection on how people are responding to park reopenings/phased closures etc.

- How best to communicate with both residents and visitors

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH US?

- How to convey to the public chafing at the bit to get into the National Parks that their responsibility is more than just opening the gate - no business can just open the door without a plan - the same is true with the Parks - but how to effectively convey that is the challenge. Thank you so much for the opportunity to bring community thinking together in this platform

- We are more interested in the health of our community than we are in re-opening too early!

- Many CAST members looking to measure economic impacts of COVID

- Most interested in longer term issues about not just reopening, but orienting towards tourism which is more supportive of quality of life and environment.

- Since our rural community has a large percentage of public lands, is there any chance of having an increase of the PILT monies to cover infrastructure costs?

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POST-SURVEY RESPONSES (9 RESPONDANTS)

QUESTION 1: What do you feel would be the most helpful resource the GNAR Initiative can provide to facilitate peer-to-peer communication and problem solving? Select as many as you like.

Webinars with a content expert focused on a specific topic	31.25%	5
Virtual discussions between a panel of GNAR community leaders	31.25%	5
Additional active listening sessions	18.75%	3
Other	18.75%	3

OTHER ANSWERS:

• Online not-live (text-based) discussion forum, perhaps similar to stackexchange

• Move toward shared best practices

• Hybrid? SME + discussion?

QUESTION 2: How often do you feel the GNAR Initiative should provide the online resource you selected above?

Twice a month	37.50%	3
Monthly	37.50%	3
Every other month	25.00%	2
Weekly	0.00%	0

QUESTION 3: What types of resources would be most helpful for the GNAR Initiative to seek out, develop, and share with you? Please select as many as you like.

Case studies of what policies and procedures other communities are implementing	34.78%	8
A review of potential policy solutions and their potential impacts	30.43%	7
Examples of "Best Practices"	26.09%	6
Other	8.70%	2

OTHER ANSWERS:

• Success and failure stories

• All three sound good but in the order listed