

# WYOMING RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Rural Resource Team Report

**Meeteetse, Wyoming  
Park County  
September 2000**

## **WRDC Mission**

To create partnerships that result in effective, efficient and timely efforts to enhance the viability of rural Wyoming.

## **THE WYOMING RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

The Wyoming Rural Development Council is a collaborative public/private partnership that brings together six partner groups: local/regional government, state government, federal government, tribal government, non-profit organizations and private sector individuals and organizations.

WRDC is governed by a Steering Committee representing the six partner groups. The Steering Committee as well as the Council membership have established the following goals for the WRDC:

- Assist rural communities in visioning and strategic planning
- Serve as a resource for assisting communities in finding and obtaining grants for rural projects
- Serve and be recognized as a neutral forum for identification and resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues

The Council seeks to assist rural Wyoming communities with their needs and development efforts by matching the technical and financial resources of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector with local development efforts.

If you would like more information about the Wyoming Rural Development Council and how you may benefit as a member, contact:

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September 17-19, 2000

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## **PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT**

The Wyoming Rural Development Council (WRDC) has provided a resource team to assist the City of Meeteetse, Wyoming in evaluating the community's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of Meeteetse.

The City of Meeteetse and Meeteetse Economic Development Association requested a community assessment from the Wyoming Rural Development Council. Echo Renner served as the community contact and took the lead in agenda development, logistics and publicity for the assessment. Resource team members were selected to visit, interview citizens, business and community leaders; and develop a plan of recommended action for the city. The team members were carefully selected based on their fields of expertise that Meeteetse officials indicated would be needed to respond to the problem areas identified.

The Resource Team toured the city and interviewed approximately 130 people over a three day period from September 17th-19th. The team interviewed representatives from the following segments of the Meeteetse community: Churches, Civic and Youth Organizations, High School Students, Teachers, Administration, School Board Members, Agriculture, Conservation, Oil Industry, Outfitters, City, Fire Department, Retail & Home Based Businesses, and Governmental Agencies. Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communication and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing the action plan. The three questions were:

- What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Meeteetse?
- What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Meeteetse?
- What projects would you like to see completed in two, five ten and twenty years in Meeteetse?

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met to compare notes and share comments following the three days of intense study. The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze the things said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into WRDC's final report to Meeteetse.

The oral report was presented to the people of Meeteetse on September 19, 2000 and many of the citizens of Meeteetse who participated in the interviews were in attendance.

Following the oral report, a formal written report was prepared and presented to MEDA. It was agreed that MEDA would print copies or summaries for each person interviewed.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The elements are all here for Meeteetse to have a successful future. To become a growing, vibrant community takes only a few people willing to roll up their sleeves and go to work. Once this nucleus begins to exert effort, it will begin to show some successes. Then this nucleus needs to expand to include more and more of the community until the entire community is involved. But the work is not on big jobs, it is on small ones that can be achieved quickly. The big ones come later after Meeteetse has seen the results of the smaller and sees that it can accomplish things.

There is a number of short term, accomplishable recommendations that the review team has provided. The most important thing is to get the entire community involved in trying to find ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity, which involved a large number of citizens, will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the short-term suggestions, pick out one that you know what you can do, and get started!

Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do, what kind of project you want to tackle. There are enough tasks for everyone. Each small step, every accomplishment, no matter how limited, is movement in the right direction toward achieving goals. It can be done! There is no problem facing Meeteetse that cannot be solved by the people living in the community!

On behalf of the Resource Team Members, I want to thank the community and our sponsors, MEDA and the City of Meeteetse for the warm hospitality shown to us during our stay. The meals and accommodations were outstanding. We heard over and over in the listening sessions that Meeteetse was filled with warm, caring individuals and we certainly can attest to that! Thank you very much.

We hope you will find great value in this report and remember, any team member is available for you to call to clarify information or provide more information and assistance.

The Wyoming Rural Development Council and Wyoming Community Network are willing to help you in any way that we can.

Mary E. Randolph, Executive Director, Wyoming Rural Development Council  
Jennifer Goodman, Director, Wyoming Community Network

## RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

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## **LOCAL CONTACTS/COORDINATORS**

**Chair:**

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Tourist Information & Curator of Meeteetse Museums  
Secretary of Meeteetse Economic Development Alliance  
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**Special thanks to Gary Reins, Superintendent of Meeteetse Schools & to the Secretary and Custodians at Meeteetse Schools for allowing us to meet in the Cafeteria, use a bus for the community tour, and use their bulk mail stamp for the mailings. Thanks to the Cowboy/outlaw, Broken Spoke, Elkhorn, and Lucille's for providing meals and coffee breaks. Thanks to the Oasis Motel, Broken Spoke Bed & Breakfast, and the Vision Quest Motel for offering rooms for the Resource Team Members. Thank you to the Meeteetse Recreation District for allowing us to meet in their building and for providing a driver for the community tour. Without you this would not have been possible.**

**Echo D. Renner**

# Meeteetse Community Assessment

September 17-19, 2000

## Agenda

Time	Event	Location
<b><u>Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Dinner	Wood River Lodge
<b><u>Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Lucille's Café
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon	Bus Tour of Area	
12:00 noon-1:40 p.m.	Lunch	
1:40 p.m.-2:30 p.m.	Listening Session	School Cafeteria
(Churches, Civic & Youth Organizations)		
2:40 p.m.-3:30 p.m.	Listening Session	School Cafeteria
(Meeteetse High School)		
3:30 p.m.-3:45 p.m.	Break	School Cafeteria
3:45 p.m.-4:35 p.m.	Listening Session	School Cafeteria
(Teachers, Administration, Staff, & School Board)		
4:35 p.m.-6:15 p.m.	Walking Tour	Downtown Meeteetse
6:15 p.m.- 8:00 p.m.	Dinner and Listening Session	Lion's Park
(Agriculture, Oil Industry, City, Fire Dept.)		
<b><u>Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
8:00 a.m.- 9:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Broken Spoke
9:00 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.	Listening Session	Rec. Center
(Retail & Home Based Business Group)		
10:00a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Break	Ferret Den
10:30a.m. -11:30 a.m.	Listening Session	Ferret Den
(County, Utilities, Game & Fish, Forest Service, Law Enforcement, & Medical)		
12:00 noon- 1:00 p.m.	Lunch	Outlaw Parlor
1:00 p.m.- 5:00p.m.	Team Prepares for Meeting	Rec. Center
5:00 p.m.- 6:00p.m.	Working Dinner	Rec. Center
(Catered from Elkhorn Bar)		
7:00p.m.- 8:00p.m.	Town Hall Meeting	School Cafeteria

## **Meeteetse Resource Team September 17-19, 2000**

### **WHAT WAS SAID AT THE INTERVIEWS**

The Resource Team spent two days interviewing the local residents to hear what they had to say. Those being interviewed were directed to answer three questions:

What are the major problems/challenges in the community?

What are the major strengths/assets of the community?

What projects would you like to see implemented in your community in the next two, five, ten, or twenty years?

We have listed below, without comment, what we heard from those who volunteered to be interviewed.

### **What are the major problems and challenges in your community?**

- Attitude against change.
- Expensive for businesses – utilities.
- Lack of high paying jobs.
- Not enough jobs.
- Town is aging.
- Absentee land ownership.
- Merc closed. Need a place to shop.
- Can't buy basic services or supplies.
- Not many opportunities for kids (during high school and after graduation).
- Lack of participation when there is an activity in town.
- High utilities.
- Low income jobs (both parents have to work or things are tough)
- Small core of volunteers.
- People need to travel to next town to work.
- Shopping dollars leak out of town.
- Utilities are high – EPA required new water plant.
- Deterioration of buildings. Community attractiveness is decreasing.
- Traditional industries are cutting jobs or are not as viable (ag and oil/gas).
- Federal regulations make traditional industries tough.
- Not much to do.

- No grocery store.
- Not much to do.
- Nothing to do.
- Nothing to do.
- Too small, can't keep a secret.
- Lack of job opportunities for youth.
- Lack of job opportunities.
- Nothing to do.
- Nothing to do.
- Nothing to do.
- No grocery store.
- Nothing to do.
- Need more jobs.
- Not enough people.
- Small community.
- Lack of jobs.
- Not enough to do.
- Not enough places to go.
- Too small.
- Need jobs.
- Not enough people (problem for school sports teams).
- Cops.
- Cops.
- Too small.
- Not enough to do.
- Too many old people who don't want to see change.
- Not enough people.
- Not enough recreational opportunities to draw tourists.
- Lack of job opportunities.
- Not enough people.
- Not enough people.
- Not enough to do.
- Lack of privacy.
- Lack of opportunity because of attitude.
- People don't want change.
- Need to finish the golf course.
- No Baskin & Robbins.
- Not enough people.
- More education opportunities.
- Need fiber optics.

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Land development is only for people with high income.
- School board and administration doesn't want to change.
- Maintain school in face of declining population.
- Need stable economic base.
- School and library
- Population is changing and has more diverse demographics
- Lack of activities for kids.
- Need more activities for kids (in town and rural kids).
- Need to bring business back to the community.
- Bring business back.
- Need more student activities.
- School is main concern.
- Lack of adequate housing.
- Make business viable.
- Remain a whole community (don't become fragmented).
- Lack of housing (rental and purchase)
- Affordable housing.
- If we lose the school we lose everything
- Different attitudes between rural and in-town folks fragments the community.
- More education opportunities for adults are needed.
- Bring more outside money into the community.
- Competing with Cody business (price and selection).
- Empty store fronts and for sale signs.
- Keep farmers and ranchers in business to keep the wide open spaces.
- Make town look occupied and thriving.
- Quality employment and career opportunities.
- Declining net income of commodity-based agriculture.
- Declining volunteer base.
- Need a desirable light industry.
- Lack of housing.
- Need to make the best of the communities strengths.
- Multiple use concepts must be protected and ensured.
- Lack of support of local business (leakage)
- Lack of grocery store.
- Not the sense of community in the younger residents as in the older residents (declining volunteer base).
- Lack of businesses.
- Need light industry (environmentally clean).
- Something to keep young people in town (college grads never come back).

- Lack of young energetic people with kids.
- Attitude against change
- Lack of people, especially young families.
- Commuting workers feel like they support two communities.
- Existing industries (especially ag.) work on tradition and not necessarily best practices.
- Not enough people (school, fire department, search and rescue, etc.)
- We don't have a big voice in Washington so they don't hear our concerns.
- Community has a hard time coming together as a group. Fighting each other.
- People want to experience this environment, as it is, not as a tourist town. How do you attract the people without changing the environment?
- Shut out of the public lands.
- No shopping.
- Reopen the merc.
- Small light industry.
- Small business – anything.
- Need something to hold the tourists so they'll spend some money.
- Vacant lots are expensive or not for sale.
- Houses for sale are often way too expensive.
- Lack of support from parents.
- Need a parent club to get parents more involved.
- Kids don't learn how to work for things.
- Keep advantages a secret to keep outsiders away.
- Lack of participation from community members
- Community too focused on the past...no one looks forward
- Lack of education of the people who live here
- Lack of education of the representation of the community (State Representatives)
- Lack of opportunities for youth to stay in community
- Lack of family wage jobs
- Very remote...hard to get services and utilities to rural areas
- Not enough funding to support police department
- Sheriff's department does not have a good reputation with the people
- Availability of land with city services
- Lack of technology education
- Lack of a development plan
- Need to ensure community involvement in any type of development plan

## **What are the major strengths and assets of your community?**

- Great people in the community
- Location is beautiful and inviting
- Size of community
- Background – agriculture
- Size – neighbors care and know each other
- The people are nice
- Good place for kids-Kids are safe
- Location, country, outdoor recreation
- Scenery, people
- Nice small town
- Natural resources
- School
- A+ certification class in high school
- Good restaurant economy
- Enough people to support the bars
- A lot of history here
- Safe
- People are helpful
- Beautiful location
- People like to come to fish
- People are friendly
- People are helpful
- Fishing is great
- Even if you're not good you can still play sports
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Fishing
- Mountains, fishing, hunting
- Hunting
- Outdoor recreation
- Small population – nobody cares what you do
- Don't have to put up with big-city bad attitudes
- No drive by shootings
- No burglary/vandalism
- Outdoor recreation
- Hunting/fishing

- Community supports sports
- It's a good town
- Location
- Sports
- Sports
- Location
- Sports
- Location
- People are nice and helpful
- Not crowded
- Good student/teacher interaction (small class size)
- Sports & location
- Safe
- Location
- Safe
- Safe
- Location
- Outdoor activities
- People are dedicated to the community
- Location
- Location
- Community support for the kids and school system
- Strong family groups
- People are helpful
- Small size
- School is the center of the community
- Tremendous school staff
- Teacher/student ratio
- School holds community together
- Desire to be self-reliant
- Safe
- School has competed well with grants
- Computer/student ratio is good
- Administration support of continuing education in Technology is good
- Location
- Recreation
- Safe
- Safe and everyone watches out for kids
- School with great teacher/student ratio
- Hunting and fishing

- Existing businesses are a tremendous resource
- State of the art phone service
- Friendliness
- Community and people
- Safe community
- High quality hay, beef,
- Friendliness
- Natural resources
- Wonderful, rich history
- Students and young people (unfortunately they don't return after college)
- School
- People are fabulous
- One of the few towns that is really the old west
- Agricultural base
- School
- Fire department
- Location
- 24 miles of groomed ski trails
- Telephone system
- Location
- Nice place to raise children
- Boy's and girls club
- Good place to live
- Quiet
- Camaraderie
- Good high way access to community
- School
- History of the community
- Good size of the community
- 25 million people go to Yellowstone National Park in four months some come through Meeteetse
- Great water infrastructure
- Low crime
- Rural community

## **What projects would you like to see accomplished in your community in the next two, five, ten, or twenty years?**

- Way for people to make a living here.
- Movie theater.
- Place to shop.
- Vocational, job and life skill training.
- Grocery store.
- Roller skating/rolling blade area.
- Tech center.
- Open mercantile.
- Car wash.
- Spruce up Main Street and buildings.
- High school, middle school, elementary school, jobs. 1500-1600 people in town. Lots of kids.
- Turn old Forest Service building into offices (accounting services, ISP, etc.)
- Develop recreation opportunities to provide jobs.
- Laundromat.
- Microsoft certification course or other training opportunities (would draw people).
- Manufacturing (clean)
- Union jobs
- Better transportation (highways)
- New track.
- Bigger swimming pool.
- Practice and compete with Cody.
- Events center (like Casper's)
- More job opportunities.
- More jobs so population would grow and school sports opportunities would grow.
- Golf course finished.
- Industrial growth.
- New companies
- More houses
- More recreation (golf, swimming pool, tennis courts).
- 5 Star amusement park.
- Elementary, middle and high school with enough people to fill them all.
- A mall
- Soccer fields

- Tennis court
- No change so everybody suffers.
- Stop light.
- Fix track.
- Make Meeteetse like Jackson Hole. More outdoor recreation.
- More sports in the highschool.
- 3,000 people.
- Skyscrapers and .5 million people.
- More people.
- Famous people from Meeteetse.
- Snowboarding resort
- Golf course finished
- Moto cross track
- More population and cool recreation (boxing arena)
- Golf course
- Ski resort
- Baskin & Robbins
- Grocery store
- Cheerleading squad
- Golf Course
- Baskin & Robbins
- Grocery store
- Golf course
- Better reputation for the town.
- Cheerleading, Baskin & Robbins, Golf Course
- More jobs
- Soccer
- More people than cows.
- New track
- More people
- More people less cows.
- More computers.
- Better choice of guys.
- Legalize gambling
- Skate park
- Develop reservoir
- Store where the Merc was.
- Bring in young families (economic opportunities).
- More adult education at night.
- Something to attract and keep young families (economic opportunities)

- Jobs
- Get student body numbers up.
- Form a group like “Powell technologies” to target market to businesses.
- History preserved and promoted.
- Viable jobs and careers for families.
- Cultural tourism where people can live the real west and ranching experience.
- Value-added agriculture (i.e. organic hay, beef, etc.)
- Sponsor large events that would bring 1000+ people to town.
- Reopen the merc.
- Beautify the town so people will want to stay.
- Create jobs so kids can stay.
- Merc to be a mail order center for local products.
- Staples available locally (plumbing supplies, groceries, etc.)
- Merc.
- Enhance and market recreational opportunities.
- Group tours of ranches, historical landmarks
- Promote history and western way of life without creating a “tourist trap”
- Bottled water with water from the new water system.
- Open merc.
- Take advantage of advanced telecommunication infrastructure (marketing)
- Something to draw young families and keep schools open.
- Home-grown businesses.
- Golf course
- Juvenile detention center
- School dormitory to bring in kids and keep school open.
- Market Meeteetse to “lone eagles” (people who can work anywhere).
- Recruit technology based businesses.
- Stop light
- Keep existing business, recruit more business, cottage industries.
- Install turbines at the Reservoir to increase electricity and create a few jobs.
- Take advantage of technology and recruit telecommuters.
- Open more shops.
- Reopen the merc.
- Merc would make a great dancehall. Community dances once/month.
- Encourage home based business.
- Create a grocery store coop – it doesn’t have to be in the Merc.
- Bring a small business into the Forest Service building – small call center.
- Advertising for the community to draw businesses
- More kids in the school
- New business

- Bottle the water and sell it
- Theme park
- Community that can sustain its self
- Have family wages not just minimum wages
- See Meeteetse as part of an area not in competition with each other
- Growth in order to maintain the community
- Move forward and grow
- Diversify the economy...so that when oil in \$9 a barrel people do not go broke
- Maintaining and expanding existing services
- Get the Merc. Back or something along those lines
- The next time David Letterman comes to town we need to capitalize on it.

## **WHAT WE HEARD FROM WHAT WAS SAID**

After listening to citizens of Meeteetse, the Resource Team reviewed what was said and condensed the comments down to a few basic statements. These are in no particular order.

### Economics/Jobs/Population

- No family wage jobs
- Small size
- Lack of retail shopping or grocery store
- Lack of support for local businesses
- Declining Oil and Agriculture Industries
- Aging Population

### Community Cooperation and Coordination

- Limited Support for MEDA
- Negative local attitudes
- Fear of Change
- Declining Volunteer base
- Communication problems with sheriffs department

### Infrastructure

- No Rental Housing
- High water bills
- Unrealized telecom capabilities

### Outdoor Recreation

- Need to develop resources for tourism
- Lack of access to public and private lands
- Need to develop golf course

### Youth

- Kids –vs- Cops
- Declining numbers of school kids
- Lack of job and internship opportunities
- Need 2<sup>nd</sup> Practice Gym

## Assets

- Rich history
- Location
- Climate
- Rural Community
- Small size
- Recreation Opportunities
- Good people
- School, low student to teacher ratio
- Telecom Infrastructure
- Safe community
- Irrigation system and reservoirs
- Ranching and Farming Base
- Energy and Oil industry
- Beautiful Scenery and Open Spaces

## **RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED** **BY RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS**

The Resource Team has given many suggestions, some which have been repeated by more than one of the team members. The individual recommendations are listed along with contact information for the respective team members. You are encouraged to communicate directly with any team member whose recommendation you decide to implement.

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### **Tourism/Outdoor Recreation Development**

Meeteetse has a lot to offer tourists and outdoor recreators. Visitors must be made aware of what the opportunities are and how to take advantage of them. The Meeteetse Recreation District has a wonderful brochure about the Wood River Valley Ski Touring Park. It would be very easy to put an insert into the tri-fold brochure telling where to rent skis, prices, shoe sizes, etc. The easier it is to recreate, the more people will take advantage of the opportunities.

The fishing and hunting opportunities are many but unless you are familiar with the area or have done homework before leaving home, it's hard to know what your options are. Even if a visitor has information about Meeteetse, they don't know about the popular areas to fish and what lures or flies to use.

The Wind River Visitors Council (WRVC) in Fremont County has done an excellent job of marketing their recreation opportunities. The information is clear, concise, useable, easy to mail and creates a unique image of the area. One of the WRVC's more popular items is a map with seven self-guided, full and half-day driving tours. The map also contains excellent directions to each site plus historical and useful information. The lodging businesses in Fremont County feel like this one map generates more multiple-night stays than any other brochure available.

- Contact the Wind River Visitor Council, 800-645-6233 or 307-856-7566, P.O. Box 1449, Riverton, WY 82501 to obtain copies of their driving tour map and other materials.
- Funding options include:
  - Park County Travel Council, Claudia Wade, 307-868-2603

- USDA Forest Service, Rural Community Assistance Grants, Gordon Warren, 307-527-6241

Once you have materials in place, work closely with the Wyoming Business Council's Division of Tourism and Travel to develop a marketing plan and piggy-back on their efforts. Make sure that all of your events are listed in their statewide tourism guides and on their website. I looked at the Division of Tourism's web site to see how well Meeteetse is represented. On the Event Finder I searched for "Rodeo" in September to see if Meeteetse's Labor Day Celebration was listed. It wasn't. It was listed under community events but could have also been listed under "Rodeo" so people specifically interested in rodeo would have found the event.

Define your market and develop ways to reach your market. The Wind River Visitors Council (see above) has been successful in direct marketing Wind River Country. Paula McCormick, McCormick Management (WRVC's ad agency), has identified their target market and purchased names from Uncover that meet her market specifications. Marketing materials are mailed out and responses are carefully tracked to evaluate the success of the marketing program. Paula has brought the price of a lead, including materials and postage, down to around \$1.15 (previously at \$12 with the old ad agency).

- Contact Paula McCormick, McCormick Management, 307-332-5546.
- Contact Laurie Green, Wyoming Business Council Division of Tourism, 307-777-2808, 800-225-5996.

Meeteetse means "the meeting place." With your motels, restaurants, and recreation center you have a variety of meeting spaces that could hold small to medium size regional meetings and retreats. The Wyoming Business Council's Division of Tourism and Travel prints Wyoming's "Meetings, Conferences and Conventions Directory" that lists the meetings held in Wyoming, when they are held, and the number of attendees.

According to the Division of Tourism and Travel the average meeting attendee spends between \$97 and \$132 each day. A two-day meeting with 30 attendees will pump between \$5,820 and \$7,920 into the economy.

The Lander Area Chamber of Commerce has been successful in recruiting many meetings to Lander. While Lander doesn't have a big convention center they have a community center for large banquets/conventions, a National Guard Armory, the library, hospital and several restaurants that can support conferences and meetings. An inventory of tables, chairs and other amenities shows a meeting planner, at a glance, which facility would work best for a particular meeting.

- Contact the Lander Area Chamber of Commerce, Kathy Gundersen, 307-332-3892.
- Funding options include:
  - Park County Travel Council, Claudia Wade, 307-868-2603

- USDA Forest Service, Rural Community Assistance Grants, Gordon Warren, 307-527-6241

Today's visitor may be tomorrow's new business recruit. Bill Sniffin, WCS Corporation (Lander), once said that Wyoming is an acquired taste. People who have never been to Wyoming don't know what we have to offer. Business recruitment marketing done by Lander's Economic Development Commission is geared toward people who are familiar with the area (alumni and visitors).

When you place tourism advertising use a small part of the ad to mention business benefits ("Work where you like to play"). With your limited population you will most likely appeal to lone eagles, family based businesses or small businesses where outdoor recreation is a strong appeal.

- Contact Jean Pinter, President, Lander Economic Development Commission, 307-335-6432.
- Place Economic Development information in the guest rooms of motels, bed and breakfasts, lodges and outfitters. Have information available anywhere a visitor may see it.

### **Encourage Business Start-Ups and Expansion**

One way to grow the economy and create new jobs is to encourage business start-ups and home-based business. Don't forget about the youth - teach high school students the basics of entrepreneurship and encourage them to start businesses while in high school or after graduation. Resources that can help people turn business ideas into reality are:

- The Small Business Development Center offers free counseling to potential and existing small businesses. Contact Dwane Heintz, 307-754-2139, 800-383-0371, 143 South Bent, Powell, WY 82435. If the interest exists in Meeteetse Dwane can schedule regular office hours in your community. All services are confidential.
- NxLevel Entrepreneurial Training Programs are designed to help potential and existing entrepreneurs learn the skills needed to create, develop and strengthen successful business ventures. This program provides a practical, hands-on approach to developing a small business and gives access to resources that can make a business succeed. The course is held each winter in Park County. Contact Dwane Heintz (see information above).

It is much easier to grow existing businesses than to recruit a new business. In addition to the resources listed above there are many resources available to help businesses expand:

- The Wyoming Business Council is committed to increasing the number of jobs in Wyoming. Expertise is available in all areas of business. Contact Leah Brusino, Regional Director, 307-754-5785, 143 South Bent, Suite B, Powell, WY 82435.

- GRO-Biz helps business firms market their goods and services to federal, state and local government and implement electronic commerce. GRO-Biz's government marketing specialists will help you identify opportunities and understand the process from start to finish, so you can compete for a share of this business. Contact Rudy Nesvik, GRO-Biz State Office, 307-637-5029.
- Trade Show Assistance Grants are available for Wyoming businesses to participate in U.S. and International selling events. The grant range is \$250-2,000 and requires a cash match. This is an excellent program for manufacturers of a product or outfitter/guides and other tourism based businesses. Contact Christy Pardue, Wyoming Business Council, 307-777-2833.

### **Government Relations**

Many times I picked up on feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction with government agencies. Government is referred to as "they" when in fact government is "we." I recommend building relationships with different branches of government and opening the lines of communication.

The Lander Area Chamber of Commerce has a Public Services Committee that meets quarterly to foster cooperation and communication. Committee members include representatives from the City, County (commissioner, emergency management, Sheriff's Department), Game and Fish, Forest Service, BLM, Wyoming State Training School, National Guard, School District, Chamber of Commerce, State Parks, and Fire Department.

An example of teamwork that resulted from the meeting was an agreement between the National Guard and the Wyoming State Training School. The National Guard will use their equipment and manpower to help with large, technical landscaping projects in order to provide training to the Guardsmen.

- Contact Tom Martin, Superintendent, School District Number 1 and Committee Chairperson, 307-332-6703 to find out more about this committee and a similar committee that Tom was a part of in South Dakota.
- This may be a positive way to open dialog with the Sheriff's office and encourage the deputies to become more active in the community.

Develop relationships with elected officials. Get to know your County Commissioners, Senators and Representatives (federal and state), Mayor, City Council members, etc. You elect these people. Know where they stand on issues before you vote. Invite them to meetings. Attend their meetings. Educate them about your issues. Expect their support. If they aren't working for you and responsive to you, vote and campaign for somebody who will work for you.

To find out who your elected officials are obtain copies of:

- Wyoming County Government Directory. Available from the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, P.O. Box 86, Cheyenne, WY 82003, 307-632-5409.

- Wyoming State Government Directory (includes our federal Senators and Representatives). Available from the Wyoming Secretary of State, 200 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street, State Capitol Building, Cheyenne, WY 82002, 307-777-7378.
- Wyoming Municipal Roster. Available from the Wyoming Association of Municipalities, P.O. Box 3110, Cheyenne, WY 82003, 307-632-0398.

### **Network**

Become more involved with the Wyoming Economic Development Association (WEDA) and Wyoming Chamber of Commerce Executives (WCCE). There is a lot that can be learned from visiting with other economic developers and Chamber executives from around the state. Instead of “turf guarding” these contacts can save you from recreating the wheel, share sources of funding, and help you avoid the pitfalls of various projects. In addition to the networking opportunities these groups offer affordable training several times each year. Scholarships are available to in-state and national seminars.

WCCE offers a scholarship to Chamber Institute, a four-year program sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Classes are held for one week at several different locations throughout the year. Topics covered include fund-raising, grant- writing, marketing, public relations, economic development, board relations and personal development. In addition to the coursework, the nation-wide contacts that are made are invaluable.

- To learn more about WEDA contact Paula McCormick, WEDA Coordinator, 307-332-5546.
- To learn more about WCCE contact Dawn Finnerty, WCCE Coordinator, 307-322-4021.

### **Develop the Volunteer Base**

Leadership Park County is a county-wide leadership program that is sponsored by the County Extension Office and the Cody Country Chamber of Commerce. The program is offered every other year, usually beginning in January. This program will acquaint participants with the resources and issues of Park County and develop a network to make leaders more successful. Scholarships are available.

- For more information contact Diane at the Cody Country Chamber of Commerce, 307-587-2777.

Encourage young people to volunteer through school programs and youth and church groups. Senior Citizens are often enthusiastic volunteers. Sometimes all it takes is to ask them to get involved.

It has been my experience that if you ask a person to do a specific task (finite and limited) they will be more likely to volunteer than if you ask them to join a committee (infinite and on-going). To increase attendance at meetings ask specific people to be in charge of a task: setting up chairs or refreshments, unlocking the building, bringing information or equipment, etc.

Focus on moving forward and celebrate your accomplishments. Nobody wants to

be on a sinking ship so don't spend meeting time lamenting that nothing gets done on why something can't be accomplished. Instead focus on what it would take to accomplish a goal. Break it down into as many pieces as necessary in order to get the ball rolling. Once movement starts it will keep going. Start with a small, do-able project and celebrate your success in the community.

### **Making the Merc. a Museum**

After the Community Assessment Echo Renner sent a memo to the Resource Team members asking for comments regarding consolidating the three museums into the Merc. It's possible that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money could be obtained under the Community Development program for elimination of spot blight. In order to qualify the building would have to be publicly owned and only the expenses associated with making the building habitable (bring to building up to code) would be covered.

- Contact Leah Bruscano, Wyoming Business Council, 307-754-5785.

If the Merc. is turned into a museum one way to make the space more versatile would be to create rolling displays that could be moved aside to make room for meetings, receptions, etc. Rolling displays are used at the Sinks Canyon State Park Visitors Center. The displays are moved aside to make room for education programs each week in the summer.

- For more information about these displays contact Darrel Trembly at Sinks Canyon State Park, 307-332-6333 or 307-332-3077.

Jennifer Goodman  
Executive Director  
Wyoming Community Network  
P.O. Box 3354  
University of Wyoming  
Laramie, Wyoming, 82071  
307-766-2107  
Fax 307-766-5544  
Mobil 970-222-1964  
[jgoodman@uwyo.edu](mailto:jgoodman@uwyo.edu)  
[www.WyomingCommunityNetwork.com](http://www.WyomingCommunityNetwork.com)

### *1<sup>st</sup>*

The first step to a successful community assessment is to have a follow up town hall meeting and have an outside facilitator help you work through this report. There are volumes of information involved and it can seem overwhelming. You will want to prioritize 5 to 15 Major Themes section of the report and decide as a community which two or three you want to work on first.

Decisions like:

- Who will take responsibility for these projects?
- What is our time line for completion?
- How will we measure our success?
- What happens when we fail to meet our goals?

Will need to be answered.

But in the short run you need some Quick Wins.

### **Quick Wins:**

It is vital to have some quick wins for Meeteetse. I define these as short-term projects (3-6 months). After you complete each of these projects as a community and remember to celebrate. People will want to be a part of any group that is having fun.

**Suggestion 1: Hold a Youth Summit.** Give the kids in Meeteetse this report and ask them to prepare some action plans for solving some of the solutions. Give each group of kids one of the Major Problems and Challenges and have them come up with a proposed solution. Make sure that this process includes presentations in front of City Council, County Commissioners, Local Business Leaders, Religious Leaders, and MEDA. Remember to have an outside facilitator come in and guide the youth through this process. This will allow the kids to be creative with out wondering if they are gaining teachers or parents approval. I would be very happy to help with this project.

**Suggestion 2: Make MEDA a 501 c 3 non-profit.** This would require you to draft a set of by-laws that governs MEDA and elect a board of directors. But it would allow your Economic Development Association to accept grants and monies that contributors can give as tax-free gifts to your community.

More information on this process can be found at: [http://www.irs.gov/bus\\_info/eo/eo-appl.html](http://www.irs.gov/bus_info/eo/eo-appl.html) For the Internal Revenue Service to recognize an organization's exemption, the organization must be organized as a trust, a corporation, or an association. For the IRS to recognize an organization's exemption, it must submit a completed, signed and dated application with the appropriate user fee. It will cost your community either 150.00 Dollars if you project that you will receive less than \$10,000 over the first four years of existence or it will cost 500.00 dollars if you expect to receive more than \$10,000 dollars over your first four years of existence. My view is: “dream big” and expect to receive more than \$10,000 over your first four years. I have pledged to help you come up with the required money if you decide this is a direction that WEDA needs to go. If an organization is seeking recognition of exemption under § 501(c)(3) of the Code, it must complete and file Form 1023, *Application for Recognition of Exemption*, found at: <http://ftp.fedworld.gov/pub/irs-pdf/k1023.pdf>

Resources: MEDA could use their new designation as a tax-exempt organization to apply to foundations like the Wyoming Community Foundation at [www.wycf.org](http://www.wycf.org), or the Kellogg foundation at [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org), or the Ford Foundation at [www.FordFound.org](http://www.FordFound.org). A more complete foundation list can be found at the Foundation Center at [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org). For a small fee of \$29.95 a month you can have complete access to all their private foundations over 10,000 that give to non-profits. I also have this access and am very willing to complete grant searches for you.

**Suggestion 3: Begin to solve the Community-v-Sheriff's Office perception.** The team members received a letter at our town hall meeting that was typed written and not signed. However, it was clear that an adult member of your community wrote the letter.

*I quote: “I personally feel that our community is afraid of the Police Officers reaction if they try to stand up for what is right. If I tell his supervisor about this incident what kind of harassment will I suffer of my kids suffer. There’s been a family who moved here because of our small community and then moved away soon afterward because of the harassment they have received from the Police Officers. All this town really needs is a police force that is fair, does their jobs, and aren’t bullies to the youth.”*

We heard the same type of responses toward the Sheriff's Officers all across your community. The teen-agers echoed these responses as well as other adults and parents. You have a big problem in Meeteetse... MEDA, School Administrators, and the Town Council should ask to have a meeting with the Sheriff of Park County and explain to him this situation. My

understanding the Sheriff's Department handles the public safety for Meeteetse. He or She is an elected official and answers to the residents of Park County. A group of 5 to 10 city and school leaders should schedule a meeting, bring this report, and help the Sheriff's Department move past this issue in your community. Remember to be diplomatic and take a problem solving approach during your meeting. Arriving in the Sheriff's Office and simply offering complaints will sometimes exacerbate the situation. I would suggest making an unbiased or outside individual your spokes person and allow them to do most of the talking. This will also help create an atmosphere of problem solving instead of finger pointing.

Jim Thompson has some excellent resources in his report on how to further handle this problem if you do not receive an adequate response from your local sheriff's office.

## **Youth**

Challenges the team heard:

- Kids –vs- Cops
- Declining numbers of school kids
- Lack of job and internship opportunities
- Need 2<sup>nd</sup> Practice Gym

Possible Solutions: I am a true believer in *youth entrepreneurs*. These types of programs could be used to combat all of the problems listed above. Kids ages 10-20 have been involved in running successful lemonade stands to Web-Site Design Businesses. There are niche markets both inside Meeteetse and across the state of Wyoming that could be filled with youth run businesses. Your youth can learn to write business plans, find financing, and market their products and services as well as adults can.

### **Step One: Offer Training**

Hold a meeting with local business, school officials, local bank presidents, a representative of the local SBDC, 4-H Leaders, and anyone else who is interested.

Decide how you want to train your kids to own and operate their own business. Kids need information about writing business plans, receiving financing, and handling employees.

Great Training Resources include: Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning National REAL Director, Rick Larson, 115 Market Street, Suite 320 Durham, NC 27701 (919) 688-7325. This is a curriculum that takes school age children through the process of thinking like Entrepreneurs as well as teaching them the basic tools needed to start their own business. Contact Dwayne Heintz your Small Business Development Center Representative out of Powell for other leads on training both for adults and children. 1-800-383-0371 or [director@wavecom.net](mailto:director@wavecom.net).

### **Step Two: Infrastructure and Continued Support**

So now that everyone is excited about kids owning and running businesses give them the support to survive. Build some infrastructure for young entrepreneurs. Find a place for them to house their businesses. MEDA might rent some empty space in town that would house the business start-ups. Develop some type of small local competitive grants that could be used as start up financing. (\$200 dollars up to \$1000 dollars.) Provide follow up training for young business owners...offer free or low cost training on software applications. Organize a mentor program between existing local businesses and these young start-ups. Host a “get to know the local services” social where the youth entrepreneurs mingle and get to know, local banks, accountants, real estate agents, lawyers, and high speed data providers.

Resources: With MEDA’s Tax-exempt status you could again apply for private foundation grants.

We often heard that the youth have nothing to do in Meeteetse. I have two thoughts on this topic: 1) Kids never have enough to do. 2) They need to be involved in solving their problems. ***Your youth need to learn how to solve problems both in their own life and in your community.*** Start a junior MEDA, City Council, and County Commissioners. Have the traditional organizations recruit youth members and assign them task that involve problem-solving activities. Your youth will be amazing assets to these organizations. They have never been told, “We can’t do that because it won’t work.” They are true free thinkers and will help lead these organizations in new directions.

Problem: **Need a second gym for the Meeteetse School and community.** I doubt that your school has enough in its budget due to the continuing loss of funding from a decreasing population to take this project on by themselves. The community needs to decide that this is a priority and that they want to cooperatively make it happen. Have MEDA, School Board, School Administration, and all other interested parties (City and County Commissioners) meet together and decide how best to attack this problem. Who takes the lead? What exactly do we need? Would the school or the Meeteetse Rec. Department govern it? What else do we need besides a basketball gym that we could build into it?

*Like all good projects decide on:  
Goals, Timelines, Responsible People, and Measurable Outcomes*

Economics/Jobs/Population

- No family wage jobs
- Small size
- Lack of retail shopping or grocery store
- Lack of support for local businesses
- Declining Oil and Agriculture Industries
- Aging Population

It does not take a PhD Economist to understand that “Good Job’s Make Great Economies” Demographics of Meeteetse say: older ageing population, declining # of Families, and lack of jobs and job diversity.

Big problems for a little town, but not insurmountable. First question you want to ask is: What kind of jobs do you want? The first thing to remember is: Why do people want to live in Meeteetse? So who can you attract to your community based on those two questions? The current influx of new people consists of affluent retirees that are attracted to your way of life. They can be a great resource to your community but whom else and in what way could you attract a younger workforce to help maintain your school?

Look at your assets:

- Quality of living
- Telecommunications Infrastructure
- Rich History

I have a few ideas: Think about opening an arts conservatory. As I type this I can here people thinking, “What kind of Idea is this?” But they work very well in rural areas... One community in Clifton, Texas has opened the Bosque Conservatory. Operating since 1982 in the city of Clifton, Texas that has a population of less than 4000 residents in a county totaling just over 15,500, the Bosque Conservatory is a shining example of a community dream becoming reality. It is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer board and managed by a part-time administrator. Active volunteers have been key to its success, by:

- Organizing and perpetuating performing adult and children's theater programs;
- Hosting a nationally recognized judged art show and sale annually;
- Extending educational opportunities with classes in painting, sculpture, dance and karate, to name a few;
- Maintaining an active photography club with classes and workshops, and an annual judged photography show drawing entries statewide

People come from Waco, Dallas, and Austin to stay the weekend and look at photography exhibits, watch Community Theater, take sculpting classes and spend money in Clifton. This would be a fantastic next step for Meeteetse.

#### BOSQUE CONSERVATORY

1701 W. 9th Street

P.O. Box 373

Clifton, TX 76634

<http://www.centraltx.com/TheConservatory/default.asp>

[TheConservatory@htcomp.net](mailto:TheConservatory@htcomp.net)

***Artist enjoy beautiful rural places to compose music, paint, sculpt, and perform.***

Contact the Chamber Manager, Trudy Sheffield for more information on the Bosque Conservatory. Clifton also went through this same Resource Team process and she will be more than happy to help you find information and get ideas.

**Chamber of Commerce**

115 N. Avenue D  
Clifton, TX 76634  
254-675-3720

**Trudy Sheffield**

*Chamber Manager*

[clifton.chamber@htcomp.net](mailto:clifton.chamber@htcomp.net)

Idea 2: **Geeks love beauty too** I am convinced that you could attract software engineers and other lone eagles to Meeteetse. I have a friend who is writing a music composition retail software program. That he would sell via the Internet and he solely will maintain. His business plan says that he will net about \$250,000 per year. This is not a large amount but the program is highly specialized and he is looking at selling only 2,000 to 3,000 copies globally. He is 30 years old and loves the outdoors all he needs to work is a good Internet connection and some space. But what he wants is a beautiful place to live. These types of tech workers are also called ***lone eagles...they are not bound by geography due to the emerging technology of telecommuting.*** So how do you attract the lone eagles?

- Cultivate you own lone eagles
- Get to where they live (Big cities with too much crime and traffic, Austin, Cupertino, Boston, or Denver) and tell them about Meeteetse and what you have to offer them.
- Make sure you have something to offer them: housing, high-speed Internet connection, and social activities for young adults (20-50). You will not be able to get these things over night but an organized effort to improve their quality will help what ever the progress you are able to make.

Resources: Leah Bruschino, Regional Director, **Wyoming Business Council**, Contact information in report.

**Center for the New West:** [www.newwest.org](http://www.newwest.org) has an entire section devoted to Lone Eagles and how communities can attract them on their web-site.

**Infrastructure**

- No Rental Housing
- High Water Bills
- Unrealized telecom Capabilities

**Lack of Rental Housing:**

The first step in getting affordable housing in Meeteetse is to assess what you already have. I know you just went through an assessment...but this one is different. The **Wyoming Community Development Authority has a extensive detailed housing assessment.** That looks at things in your community like average rents, land prices, and occupancy rates. This will be very helpful in deciding what kind of housing you need. Do you need...Senior assisted living homes, low-income single-family housing, or multifamily housing?

Resources:

Fannie Mae Foundation. The Fannie Mae Foundation provides grants that revitalize neighborhoods and create affordable home ownership across America.

Fannie Mae Foundation

[www.fannienaefoundation.org](http://www.fannienaefoundation.org)

Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA)

George Axlund or Cheryl Gillium

P.O. Box 634

Casper, Wyoming 82602

307-265-0603

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Kelley Jorgensen

Senior Community Builder

Wyoming State Office

100 East B Street, Room 4229

Casper, WY 82601-1918

[Kelley L. Jorgensen@hud.gov](mailto:Kelley.L.Jorgensen@hud.gov)

[www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

### **High Water Bills**

Bottled Water Plant: I think this idea is a good one! I called a little community in Texas that does just this sort of thing and talked to their Economic Development Director about it. He says that the equipment costs are very reasonable for this sort of thing (about \$250,000 to \$300,000) but the real trick is in the marketing. Competition is so tight in the bottle water market that you would need to sit down with the local supermarket chains to see what it would take to get shelf space. Tom feels that obtaining space in stores is the real issue in this market. Also questions would need to be answered like...would the city own this operation or would a private industry run and own this operation? Give Tom a call if you are interested in seeing this project through.

<http://www.jasperedc.com/>

**Tom McClurg**, *Executive Director*

Jasper Economic Development Corporation

P.O. Box 610/465 South Main  
Jasper, Texas 75951  
409-383-6120

## Unrealized Telecom Capabilities

The first step to making these capabilities work for you is to invite some one from TCT West to be a member of the MEDA board. Having you local telecom company involved in the MEDA board would be very instrumental to helping things happen in your community.

There are several wireless broadband solutions for rural areas that have hit the market in the last 6 months. One that impressed me was Netbeam ([netbeam.net](http://netbeam.net)). They can provide DSL speed connection for about \$50.00 per month, same cost as DSL, via a wireless connection to your home. They only need a minimum of 25 customers to make this solution work for a community. If lack of broadband access is an issue for Meeteetse then this might be a great solution. They are not currently in Wyoming but they are looking for a good reason to get here.

Call Michael Karge (Pronounced *Car gee*) at 888-877-2079 or email him at [mkarge@netbeam.net](mailto:mkarge@netbeam.net). Also check out their website at [www.netbeam.net](http://www.netbeam.net) for more information.

Another solution worth checking out is OptiStreams they provide Satellite biased Internet solutions Alison Haugan the Vice President of Operations would be more than happy to talk to your community about their solution for broadband access. Her number is 866-438-6784 and her email is [Alison@optistreams.com](mailto:Alison@optistreams.com) Check out their website at [www.Optistreams.com](http://www.Optistreams.com).

### **Community Cooperation and Coordination**

- Limited Support for MEDA
- Negative local attitudes
- Fear of change
- Declining Volunteer base
- Communications problems with sheriffs department

Limited Support for MEDA, Negative Local Attitudes, Fear of Change, and a Declining Volunteer Base are hard problems to solve. There is one solution in my estimation.

***Make a huge effort to get your school age children involved in community affairs.***

The first thing I would do is to hold a meeting between MEDA, Meeteetse Museums, City, Park County, and the Meeteetse School district. Ask the School district if they can incorporate into their curriculum Community Service. History classes could spend an hour a week at the Meeteetse Museums working on all kinds of projects. Home Education Students could develop

menu's for the senior citizens center. You kids may grow up and leave your community, but if they have felt like that a special effort was made to include them the memories and feelings toward their hometown could be very useful for the long-term future of Meeteetse. Some of them will be millionaires or politicians...but you won't know which ones make it big for years. So it is best to treat them all with the same respect.

Another solution to this problem would be ongoing leadership training. I know that there is a County Wide Leadership Program (Leadership Park County), but I feel that Meeteetse would benefit from an ongoing program that trains 5-10 people every 6 months on how to be good leaders. Have a mixed group youth, business owners, senior citizens, elected officials, EMT's, and all other interested persons. Make people apply and be interviewed for these positions. Find an innovative curriculum to use and most of all make this program fun! This program is not for learning so much as it is for networking with people outside of your normal social circles. Use it for community problem solving. Most community leadership programs have their members give 20-40 hours of community service after they have completed them.

Monique Ojeda the communication and training coordinator for the Wyoming Association of Municipalities runs a great leadership-training program. Her contact number is 307-632-0398 or email her at [mojeda@wyomuni.org](mailto:mojeda@wyomuni.org).

The last thing I would like to address is the Merc. Building. The only question that you need to ask is? Does MEDA or any other organization in Meeteetse want to purchase this building? Do we want to allow it to remain in private hands? If MEDA wants to purchase the building you will need to first become a non-profit. Described in Quick Wins above. If you do want to purchase it then you need to decide what to do with it. Consolidate the three museums, open up a coop for food and hardware in town, or use the building for some other space? Or all three?

This is more of a planning question than a resources question. There is no reason to find resources if your community can not decide on a direction for the building. I do feel that it can be saved and used for community or economic development.

Random Resources for Funding and program assistance:

USDA-Rural Development  
Federal Building, Room 1005  
100 East B. St., P.O. Box 820  
Casper, Wyoming 82602  
307-261-6300  
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wy>

For Foundation Information contact the Foundation Center on the Web at [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org). For \$19.95 per month you are allowed unlimited searches for foundations that meet your criteria. These foundations only give to nonprofit organizations.

Downtown Development Resources:

Main Street Program  
1785 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-588-6219

[www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org) or [www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org)

Powell Wyoming has had great success with this program give Dave Reetz, with the economic development alliance, a call to find out more information. 307-754-2201 or [powell@wir.net](mailto:powell@wir.net)

Wyoming Community Network: Jennifer Goodman, Executive Director, 307-766-2107, [jgoodman@uwyo.edu](mailto:jgoodman@uwyo.edu), [www.WyomingCommuntiyNetwork.com](http://www.WyomingCommuntiyNetwork.com). ***My job is to help you find the resources to meet your development goals. I can also help during the planning and community visioning stages of this process.*** I am in the process of developing an online database filled with all the economic and community development resources. So check the website for more details in Early November 2000.

## **James G. (Jim) Thompson**

*Rural Sociologist/Community Development Specialist  
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics  
Rm C-220 Agr Bldg  
University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo, USA 82071  
307-766-4204/2386; Fax 307-766-5544  
jtgoss@uwyo.edu*

### **Overview of Issues and Challenges:**

I want to emphasize that a short visit like ours can provide some good insights into a community, but understanding a community requires more time than we had. So use any good ideas we may offer, but don't be offended if we misunderstand some issues. I make this disclaimer statement because I want to offer a particular view of where I think Meeteetse finds itself today, and use this viewpoint to organize my summary and responses to some of the major issues/challenges we heard about.

What I saw and heard is that the majority of Meeteetse residents who spoke at the meetings feel an almost critical need to grow the population of Meeteetse. This feeling is especially driven by the fact that some people believe the town is in danger of losing its school, i.e. the school population is at a threshold level. I agree that if a town loses its school, it will have real trouble growing; a school is the heart of any small town. Meeteetse's population has fluctuated by only 10 or so people in the last 10 years, 368 to about 380 today, or maybe even less today with the last round of job losses in the oil industry. So it has essentially had zero growth for over 10 years.

When we talk about community and economic development many people have different ideas about what should be done first, what is most important. The perspective I want to suggest, is that the community needs to focus on retaining and expanding its population size, and, therefore, should prioritize efforts by concentrating on activities/efforts that have the highest probability of success in retaining or expanding population in the short run. And I emphasize just getting people of any type—young or old, rich or poor, newcomers or old-timers, ranchers or energy workers, it doesn't matter. Meeteetse just needs more people, period. So I have prioritized issues in the following order, trying to include most of the major themes we heard about.

1. Do a "visioning" exercise to get community consensus on goals
2. Focus on promoting existing businesses and industries.
3. Emphasize value-added activities for existing businesses
4. Capture more retail spending; reverse the "leakage" problem
5. Promote public/private cooperation to provide good mix of housing
6. Resolve the local law enforcement problem

7. Utilize Mercantile building, but don't get too fixated on it.
8. Recruit new businesses, but use selective, focused marketing

### **1. Do a "Visioning" exercise to create consensus on community goals.**

What I heard during our visit at first appeared to be a lot of disagreement, a factionalized community. But on reflection I think we heard a lot of agreement about goals but not necessarily on how to achieve the goals, e.g. I think most people do agree that growing the population has to be at the top of the list. Second, I heard people "saying" that they were at odds with other groups in the community. I believe this is often just a "perception" in very small communities because everyone is "too visible". So I think there may be more of a cooperative attitude in the community than many realize. I think the way to find out is for the community to go through a "visioning" exercise. A well-executed visioning exercise can create community consensus and help reduce misunderstandings, and, hence, unnecessary conflicts which can cause important opportunities to grow to be negated. *If the community wants to do such an exercise I suggest using a well-trained facilitator from outside Park County.* There are probably good facilitators within the County, but the facilitator needs to be neutral and "perceived" as neutral by all groups. That will be difficult for any facilitator to achieve who lives in a relatively small county such as Park. Sources of assistance with visioning are:

*Wyoming Community Network: Attn. Jennifer Goodman; 307-766-2107*  
<http://www.wyomingcommunitynetwork.com/>

*(This new web site is online and will be continually updated and expanded. Most of the sources I know for community assistance are on this site or will soon be so, so I will only repeat a few of them in this report)*

*Wyoming Rural Development Council; Attn. Mary Randolph; 307-777-6430*

*Wyoming Business Council: Attn: Leah Bruscano;*

### **1. Focus on promoting existing businesses and industries.**

Concentrating on "business retention" is a standard well-developed method in economic development and I list below several sources for assistance with this method. But I think it deserves more emphasis than usual for Meeteetse because I believe the community faces more obstacles than some towns in trying to grow. Two major obstacles are the present small size, which creates certain diseconomies of scale, such as in utilities provision. And, second, its geographical location that is not on a major highway or interstate, far from a major population center, yet too close to Cody and Powell. So I believe development efforts need to focus on small gains, one job at a time so to speak. This means building local businesses of all types---agricultural, retail, energy---one job at a time, and expanding and developing businesses from "within".

The *Meeteetse Economic Development Study, 1995*, has some insightful information that can be used in this process. One section and graph show items most often purchased in Meeteetse, and items most often purchased outside Meeteetse, Question 1, pp. 1-9 (unfortunately the graphs aren't numbered so they are hard to refer to here). The responses in this section seem to be a starting point for locating expansion opportunities. For instance, items "most often purchased outside Meeteetse" include insurance, appliances, dental, automobiles and business services. It may be possible to develop satellite businesses for jobs for some of these. For instance, there is probably both unemployment and underemployment in the area. There may be an opportunity for a local insurance agent or two, and maybe a small satellite appliance store that might employ one or two people. In fact all five of these areas offer a potential for satellite offices or stores, even if part-time. A very focused, locally grounded marketing study might be able to clarify these opportunities.

Financing a marketing study and finding start-up funds (loans and grants) for such small risky businesses highlights the fact that Meeteetse probably needs considerable financial help from the county. Because Meeteetse's economic base is so small it has very limited financial capability. Most of the wealth producing resources in the area are in the county. Park County's assessed valuation per capita is about \$9750, which compares to about \$5,360 for a poor county like Albany, or 55% more per capita than Albany. Also, it appears that Park County is only levying 4% in sales tax; it seems to have two more one-cent sales tax options, the "General Purpose Option" and the "Special Purpose Option", which it could levy to be used in a variety of ways. Each one-cent of sales taxes yielded about \$4,000,000 in revenue in 1999, according to State sources. So why not put together a 5-year economic development plan and approach the Commissioners to access the one-cent General Purpose Optional sales tax and apply one-fourth of the proceeds for five years to the Meeteetse Local Planning Area.

The County might be willing to develop some special programs of financial assistance at least for a period of time until the town has some successes. How to share resources such as the optional tax revenues is always a tough political issue for politicians. But I feel Meeteetse could make a good case that it is in the best interests of the other towns in the county, and, indeed, all citizens of the County to help Meeteetse grow. Probably the community should set a population size as a target to be reached in a specified time frame, say 10 years. Personally, I think the ideal size would be 1,200 to 2,000 people. Below 1,200 there are serious, hard to overcome, diseconomies of scale.

Sources for assistance with business retention programs and methods, and for financial assistance include the following:

**Roger Coupal, Tex Taylor and Milt Green, with the Cooperative Extension Service;**  
**Phone 766-5124; <http://www.uwyo.edu/ag/ces/ceshome.htm>**

- 2. Emphasize value-added activities for existing businesses.**

Several good value-added business opportunities weren't mentioned directly or indirectly. One of the more obvious is outdoor-recreation businesses, such as a good Fishing/Sporting goods shop, which could arrange guided fishing trips, wild-life viewing, photography, kayaking, hiking, as well as ranch tours, horse back riding, wagon rides etc. It seems very important to try to get tourist traffic to stop in Meeteetse. Yet we did not see any signs other than the museum sign that would pull people into town and the area. It seems to me that a well-done, aesthetically attractive major billboard advertising several things to do in Meeteetse is needed. All of the above could be included with a special emphasis on the great museums (which are discussed elsewhere). One or several businesses providing the above services, trips could provide several good jobs. Further, guides for all these trips can create good summer jobs for local youth. There is no reason why young people can't be the major guides on many of these trips. And other young people could build the web pages, do the bookings, and handle the finances since much of this business transpires in the summer.

Many of the above activities can also serve as value-added businesses for local ranches, many of which need additional income. Access on private lands was mentioned as a problem. This is always a problem in Wyoming. But I find it is often exaggerated. But whether it is or not, there appeared to be a need for some systematic communication. I noticed there is already one "walk-in" access area provided by Wyoming Game and Fish. But charging for access onto private lands *for tourists* is probably a good thing. People are often more willing to pay when they can be guaranteed a quality experience. So most fly-fisherman would rather pay a trespass fee than be standing next to another party. This creates an opportunity for ranchers and local recreation providers to work together, while both benefit.

Sources for ideas and assistance include:

*Powell, Jeff; Department of Renewable Resources; 307-766-5164; [jeffpowl@uwyo.edu](mailto:jeffpowl@uwyo.edu) (for assistance with ranch recreation, esp. Bed and Breakfasts marketing analysis)*

***Wyoming Game and Fish Department; Contact: Brian W. Olsen (307) 473-3400***

*Wyoming Board of Outfitters; Jane Flagg, 1750 Westland Rd., Cheyenne, WY 82002, (307) 777-5323, (800) 264-0981.*

### **3. Capture more retail spending; reverse the "leakage" problem.**

In the retail sector one idea, which I especially liked, was to try to create reverse "leakage" of local spending. There are many things that have to be bought outside the area; only so much can be done to stop this leakage. But creating niche markets that can entice shoppers from nearby towns can bring in dollars. The Mercantile could be a source for specialty shops and perhaps an unusual eating establishment. Such retail shopping could be associated with outdoor recreation activities. Such as a fly-tying and rod-building shop closely associated with local guide services,

which can provide access (for a fee) onto private lands. When a resource like this becomes known it can draw local people from nearby areas. A package day trip arrangement for fishing with a lunch at the Woods River Lodge could be an example. The package tour could include a stop at a local shop to watch rod building and fly building with the opportunity to buy both at a slight discount.

I think we in Wyoming often forget or don't realize how much it means to a visitor to take a ranch tour of a working ranch, or to fish on a blue-ribbon trout stream with no crowds around, or ride for 30 minutes on an old ore wagon or chuckwagon. It is sometimes incredible to us how much discretionary money some of our more urban visitors have, and how they would like to spend it.

#### **6. Promote public/private cooperation to provide good mix of housing.**

We also heard conflicting reports about availability of housing, affordability and building sites. We were unable to obtain a recent housing inventory/assessment report. If one does not exist, it would be good to have one available. It may be possible to get the Park County Planning Office to do an update. The County Assessor's office may have the entire County in a GIS. If so, it would be useful to have a nicely formatted, housing and land-use report with colored GIS maps to assist with economic development efforts. A major plus for a prospective business owner is to be able to look quickly at such a report and be *assured* that he can have housing for his employees in six to eight weeks. It is the planning, plat approval and installation of utilities that takes up most of the time in developing new housing for a work force. So if a small town can have at least some sites ready to go, and some other sites platted, this gives it a major advantage in business recruitment.

We only had time to get sketchy information about the housing development and golf course east of town. Apparently the area is platted and approved, but has run into financial constraints. This may be an opportunity for a public-private cooperative venture. Perhaps this area could be modified, if needed, to provide a mix of housing types and prices, e.g. some less-expensive lots (maybe even subsidized by State or County funds), areas for modular houses, nice duplexes or condominiums, reasonably priced and high-priced single family homes. I suggest a mix of public/private funding because, in my opinion, the community is going to have to take some unorthodox actions to get growth started. And having housing sites "ready-to-go" in a time frame which can meet a prospective business's housing needs is often the difference between success and failure in recruitment.

I suspect some people will object to mixing public and private funds because some private developers "will reap some underserved profits" so to speak. I feel we often "cut off our noses...." in these areas. So what if some developer makes such extra profit. The community needs the housing, and now not five years from now. It also needs the golf course to be able to offer more amenities. So, if some reasonable compromises can be made, this project might be

able to solve several development obstacles.

If the golf course were made public it might be one of those “niche” services that could draw people in from surrounding areas. A new local business could market a package including ½ day of golf, a wild-life viewing trip, lunch at a local spot, overnight at a B&B on a local ranch, finishing with an evening or morning horseback ride. I suspect many clients afterwards would value this day more than their time in Yellowstone.

#### **4. Resolve the local law enforcement problem.**

There is undoubtedly some sort of problem between local law enforcement officers and a wide variety of local citizens. This is not just a conflict with youths; we heard this complaint from a wide range of citizens. We, however, did not get a chance to visit directly with any law enforcement people. But I think this problem needs to be resolved immediately. The kind of complaints we heard suggests that this is a problem that should not be put off, someone could get hurt soon. It was made clear to us that some people are afraid of local law enforcement officers. I am not saying this fear is justified, but if a person feels that way then their fear is real.

I checked with the Attorney General’s Office as to correct procedure for resolving the problem. If a private citizen wants to take action on this matter they should first contact the local sheriff’s office and request a review of the situation. If this doesn’t happen, they should next contact the County Attorney. If that doesn’t work, they should contact the Division of Criminal Justice in Cheyenne. Names and numbers for these people are:

**County Sheriff; Bill Brewer; 307-527-8700**

*County Attorney; Kelly Rankin; 307-527-8660*

*Division of Criminal Justice; Thomas Pagel, Director; Cheyenne; 307-777-7181*

If none of the above responds adequately, contact:

*Department of Criminal Justice; Dr. Malcolm Holmes; University of Wyoming, Laramie, 307-766-2988*

#### **5. Recruit new businesses, but with selective, targeted approach.**

I left discussion of recruitment of new businesses until last to emphasize that retention, expansion and local start-ups are more likely to succeed, particularly at this stage. I feel that the limited resources should be spent in these areas first. For general assistance and references for resources on all aspects of new business recruitment contact the Wyoming Business Council, 307-777-2800.

The community evidently has good, high-speed Internet access. This offers the opportunity for

several types of Internet related businesses. First there may be a niche for a computer repair and sales shop that also offers Internet connectivity (email services and web access). Several young people seemed really interested in this type of activity. Perhaps a “Business Incubator” program could be started in this area through the schools and maybe with the help of the County CES Office. Contacts are:

*Business Incubator Program; Quincy Ellis, Early, Texas, 915-649-9300, email= [eedc@web-access.nt](mailto:eedc@web-access.nt)*

*Cooperative Extension Service, Park County, Rhonda Shipman, Cody, 307-754-5733, email = [rshipp@parkco.wtp.net](mailto:rshipp@parkco.wtp.net)*

Meeteetse may not be ready for a business/industrial park (or, may already have one??). But potential office buildings such as the old Forest Service Building could be identified and a plan developed for how these buildings can be made completely serviceable and made available to new businesses such as an internet firm or a satellite office. Contacts for grants and loans to update or expand utilities and Internet connections are through out this report. Shortly the Wyoming Community Network web site, listed above, will have a summary of related programs.

Nancy Weidel, Local Preservation Coordinator, Historian  
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
2301 Central Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
(307) 777-6312

## **Historical Resources**

\* The history of Meeteetse is a very important asset according to all listening groups. The fact that so many people pointed this out is an asset in itself because oftentimes local people do not appreciate their own history. Meeteetse is ahead of the game in this respect.

\* The history of a town can be told through its historic buildings and Meeteetse has a collection of interesting historic buildings like the Merc, the old hotel, the schoolhouse, and the buildings that house the three separate museums. There is also a wonderful variety of nearby historic sites on both public and private land such as Kirwin; historic ranches - both dude and working ones; the townsite of Arland; along with the three museums. Again, Meeteetse is well ahead of many larger communities in its variety of historic resources and also fortunate in that its history is that of the “real West”, i.e. they don’t have to create a phony history of a wild west, they’ve got the real McCoy right in front of them. Even though tourist trends change, I believe that visitation to a REAL west will remain a staple of the tourism industry, and most likely become increasingly popular as those types of true historic places continue to disappear in the West due to rapid development and population growth.

\* I suggest that the town establish a certified Historic Preservation Board which in federal lingo is known as a Certified Local Government or CLG. The certification procedure involves passing a local historic preservation ordinance and establishing a board. This relatively simple process opens the door to eligibility for grant funds from the State Historic Preservation Office that could be used for local preservation projects, a walking tour brochure of historic buildings and sites for example. It also connects Meeteetse to a larger historic preservation network at the state and national level.

\* Contact: Nancy Weidel, State Historic Preservation Office  
2301 Central Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
307-777-6312  
307-777-6421 (fax)  
[nweide@state.wy.us](mailto:nweide@state.wy.us)

\* The Wyoming State Museum is a resource for a variety of free information regarding

the technical aspects of running a museum. Staff positions include historians, curators, interpretation and education/outreach specialists, a registrar, a conservator, and a carpenter. Staff often provides small museums around the state with information regarding collection management and curatorial issues to name just a few topics. Depending on the travel budget, staff are available to provide on-site consultations to local museums.

\*Contact: Marie Wilson-McKee, Director  
Wyoming State Museum  
2301 Central Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
307-777-7828  
mwilso@state.wy.us

\* Another resource for technical assistance and networking potential for small museums is the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums (CWAM). For a yearly membership fee, member museums become eligible to apply for grant funds for a museum assessment, cooperative purchase of supplies, an environmental monitoring kit, and a newsletter. The organization is completing a Registrar's handbook. CWAM also has a yearly conference which rotates between Colorado and Wyoming and features workshops and lectures on all aspects of running a museum. While I'm certainly not suggesting the Meeteetse Museum join every museum organization known to mankind, if they are not currently a member of this one they may want to consider joining.

\*Contact: Betsy Martinson  
Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum  
987 Lookout Mountain Road  
Golden, CO 80401  
303-526-9744  
303-526-0197 (fax)  
[BMarti3051@aol.com](mailto:BMarti3051@aol.com)

\* There are numerous websites that contain information pertinent to all aspects of museums. The sites provide links to tons of other museum-related information such as a resource bibliography. One site to start at would be:

\*Contact: Western Museums Association  
[www.westmuse.org/](http://www.westmuse.org/)

\* Potential funding sources for museum exhibits include:

\* Contact: Wyoming Council for the Humanities  
Judith Powers

Box 3643  
Laramie, WY 82071  
307-766-2003  
[jpowers@uwyo.edu](mailto:jpowers@uwyo.edu)

\* Contact: Wyoming Arts Council  
Marirose Morris, Grants  
2320 Capitol Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
307-777-7723  
[Mmorri@state.wy.us](mailto:Mmorri@state.wy.us)

\*Contact: Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
Nancy Weidel (see above)

CLG grant funds can also be used for museum projects if there is an historic preservation component to the project.

Another resource is The Big Book of Museum Grant Money, a foundation directory prepared by the Taft Group for the American Association of Museums, copyright 1995. This book provides a variety of information for the beginning museum grants writer and indexes corporate funding sources.

## **Tourism and Recreation**

\* Tourism and recreation potential is high for the Meeteetse area. Heritage tourism is becoming a larger segment of the tourist market; a “heritage tourist” is basically a person who wants to “see and touch” real history as opposed to say a recreated history like Disneyland’s Frontier Town. Heritage tourist sites in and around Meeteetse which convey a sense of the history of the town include: the historic Main Street and river crossing; the old buildings; archeological sites; the cemetery; Kirwin and the old freight trail; Arland townsite; parts of the Red Lodge to Meeteetse trail; the various historic ranches. Of course, not all of these sites are on public land so dealing with private landowners would be an important future issue if tourism is to be further developed.

The area also has great recreation potential as the well-designed “Meeteetse Area Recreation Guide” demonstrates. But who, outside of the region, knows about it?

Wyoming’s statewide tourism department has been reorganized and is currently under the Wyoming Business Council. Although they are not yet ready to launch it, they are developing a training program for local communities about promoting tourism and recreation as a part of

tourism. The plan is to visit communities who request their assistance.

\*Contact:Laurie Green  
Director of Tourism  
Wyoming Business Council  
307-777-2800  
lgreen@state.wy.us

A word of caution about jumping on the Tourism bandwagon in search of a quick fix. Remember that ultimately the goal is to improve the quality of life for the residents of the town not just tourists.

### **The Meeteetse Mercantile**

The Merc was another topic mentioned by many people in the listening sessions. Obviously, the building represents the town itself to many of the residents and something needs to be done to put it back into some type of productive use - soon. The idea we heard about most was for it to reopen as a grocery/hardware store which is sorely needed in the town. If the building were to be rehabilitated for commercial/income producing purposes, it could qualify for a 20% tax credit for the owner assuming it met the National Park Service standards for rehab and the funds spent on rehab qualified for the credit. (In order to qualify for the tax credit, the Merc would need to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places before the rehab project was completed; the building IS eligible for the National Register). Please note that a non-profit organization could NOT take advantage of the potential tax credits.

The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office can provide, free of charge, an architect to evaluate the building in terms of rehab possibilities, advise on how to meet federal rehab standards, and information on the tax credit program.

\*Contact for information on Tax Credit Projects & Architectural Assistance  
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
Sheila Bricher-Wade  
2301 Central Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
307-777-6179  
[sbrich@state.wy.us](mailto:sbrich@state.wy.us)

There has been some talk about combining the three museums into one building, possibly the Mercantile. Although that is an attractive idea, the tax credits would not be available for rehab if a non-profit group owned the building. Perhaps a separate corporation could be set up to own the building and lease it to the museum. Please be sure and consult an attorney and an

accountant if you are contemplating this direction.

It makes financial sense to combine the three museums into one larger building whether it is the Mercantile or perhaps the Belden Museum building. As spread out as the museums are now, the chances of tourists hitting all three spots is unlikely ((I speak from personal experience).

Could the museums consolidate and partner with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center? Certainly, the BBHC has much deeper pockets than the county and perhaps could provide the necessary funding to get the county museum started in a new space. A partnership with the BBHC would also mean more advertising for the Meeteetse museum and therefore the town.

Or the county could choose to continue the museum as a town museum. The county would save money by consolidation of the separate facilities as maintenance and upkeep on the three buildings is certainly not as cost effective as on one building. If the three museums were to be combined into one and kept as a county, rather than a BBHC-affiliated site, a major fund-raising effort should be undertaken to make the new museum a drawing card for tourists and Wyoming residents alike. The Belden Museum is particularly unique and attention could be focused on that collection to attract visitors and scholars who might not stop at a local history museum. Although fund-raising might be difficult, it might be worthwhile to invest some money into hiring a professional for the job who could locate, for instance, members of wealthy families who had experienced the Pitchfork as a dude ranch and been photographed by Belden.

### **City Government**

The Wyoming Association of Municipalities (WAM) offers training for elected officials.

\*Contact: Monique Ojeda  
Wyoming Association of Municipalities  
200 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
307-632-0398  
Mojeda@wgomuni.org

**LINDA ZIEGLER**

USDA/Rural Development  
208 Shiloh Road  
Worland, WY 82401  
307-347-2456 Ext. 192  
FAX 307-347-8806  
Email: [linda.ziegler@wyworland.fsc.usda.gov](mailto:linda.ziegler@wyworland.fsc.usda.gov)

**Community Cooperation and Coordination**

CHALLENGE: We heard that there is limited support for MEDA, negative local attitudes, fear of change, declining volunteer base, communication problems with Sheriff's department.

SOLUTIONS: It is recommended that the MEDA hold a **Town Hall Meeting** as soon as possible, no more than a month after receiving the Resource Team Report, and invite and encourage everyone that participated in the Resource Team assessment process to attend. Use this meeting to develop some goals for Meeteetse, short term as well as long term goals, and establish committees to implement the goals set at this meeting. Set specific time frames for completion of these goals, then celebrate the accomplishment of these goals. Make sure committee chairs are given the ability to choose their team members. You may want to have Jennifer Goodman help facilitate this meeting. A facilitator will keep the meeting focused and encourage input from all participants. Have periodic meetings to keep one another informed on the progress of the committees.

SOLUTIONS: You may want to try some quick and easy projects to start with:

**Have a Community Wide Clean Up day**, -- Involve the school, civic organizations, churches, and anyone who has an interest in seeing your community look neat and clean. Set aside a day and organize bas of people to work on specific projects, mow vacant lots, paint windows on downtown buildings, and pick up junk and trash around town. You may want to offer property owners the service of removing some unsightly objects that clutter lawns in town. Or

**Have a Scarecrow Contest** --Since Halloween is approaching have a scarecrow contest between the school, the churches, the farmers/ranchers, the City Council, etc. Have someone from out of Town act as judge, and offer a prize such as a free lunch or dinner at local restaurant or free pizza, then auction off the scarecrows and give proceeds to the MEDA.

**Economics/Jobs/Population,**

CHALLENGE: We heard you tell us that you feel there no supportable family wage jobs, the small population and size of Meeteetse, no retail shopping or grocery store, lack of support for local businesses, declining oil and Agricultural Industries and the aging population. These are common problems for most small towns in Wyoming.

SOLUTION: I feel that because of the recreational resources available to the area, these should

be capitalized on. Put up signs advertising the cross country ski trails, have some of the high school students make up brochures to distribute to adjacent towns such as Thermopolis, Cody, Powell, Basin, Greybull, and Worland. Advertise and encourage hunting. Encourage the ranchers and farmers to waive their fee for hunting on their land for a while. Include the seniors in the planning and designing of the brochures.

**SOLUTION:** The road to economic opportunity and community development starts with broad participation by all segments of the community. This may include, among others, the political and governmental leadership, community groups, health and social service groups, environmental groups, religious organizations, the private and nonprofit sectors, centers of learning, and other community institutions.

**RESOURCES:** One of the resources available may be for the local farmers and ranchers to consider forming one or more co-operatives. A cooperative is a user-owned business that processes and markets products, purchases production supplies or consumer goods, and provides other services needed by rural residents. By working together for their mutual benefit in cooperatives, rural residents are able to reduce costs, obtain services that might otherwise be unavailable, such as the grocery store, and achieve greater returns for their products. The Cooperative Services program of Rural Business Cooperative Service is administered in Wyoming out of the USDA/Rural Development Office in Casper located at 100 East B Street or write to P. O. Box 820, Casper, WY 82602 or call John Cochran, Director Business & Cooperatives Program at (307) 261-6319.

The Rural Utilities Service through the local Rural Electrical Association can provide funds to finance a broad array of projects, including for profit businesses. Grants are targeted to certain purposes such as community development assistance, education and training for economic development, medical care, telecommunications for education, job training or medical services, and technical assistance. Contact Randy Lowe at TCT West in Basin at 1-877-487-4835 or Guy Charles with the Big Horn Rural Electric Company, P. O. Box 270, Basin, WY, at 307-568-2419 or email at [guyc@bigHORNREA.com](mailto:guyc@bigHORNREA.com).

## **Infrastructure**

**CHALLENGE:** We heard that there was very little to no affordable Rental Housing.

**RECOURCE:** It is suggested that you contact Cheryl Gillum, Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA), P. O. Box 634, Casper, WY 82602 or call (307) 265-0603 to request assistance in completing a needs assessment to determine the need for a rental housing project.

**CHALLENGE:** High Water Bills was a major complaint from local town homeowners. –

**SOULUTION:** Unfortunately nothing can be done to change the water assessments being charged by the Town. The only thing that can be done is water conservation.

**RESOURCE:** Request the assistance of the local County Extension Agent or Conservation

District to help give ideas on water conservation, different types of grasses and plants that can be grown with little or no water.

CHALLENGE: Unrealized telecom capabilities.

SOLUTION: Request assistance with educational classes in the use of telecommunication systems.

RESOURCE; Randy Lowe of TCT West in Basin should be contacted and this problem discussed with them.

### **Outdoor Recreation**

CHALLENGE: Need to Develop resources for tourism

SOLUTIONS: The travel and tourism division of the Wyoming Business Council will assist communities with identifying and promoting attractions. Promotion of the community includes promotion of the retail service sector as well, particularly the downtown area. The National Main Street Center offers programs that take a long-term perspective towards revitalizing downtowns this is an excellent resource.

RESOURCE: The Wyoming Business Council contact for tourism development is Laurie Green at 307 777 2808. The National Main Street Center may be contacted at 202 588 6219 or [www.mainst.org](http://www.mainst.org).

CHALLENGE: We heard that there is a lack of access to public and private lands.

SOLUTION: Hold public meetings between private landowners, public landowners and local community interest groups that feel they are not being treated fairly. Request that a mediator conduct these meetings.

CHALLENGE: We heard from several sources that they feel there is a need to completed the development of the golf course.

SOLUTION: It is my understanding that the area where the golf course was to be located has been purchased by a private individual.

### **Youth**

CHALLENGE: The youth seem to have legitimate concerns about their future.

They have what appears to be a real problem with the law enforcement officers of Meeteetse. They too are concerned about the declining numbers of the school enrollment and understand the impact of that. They are interested in finding jobs locally so that they do not have to travel to Cody to work in the summer. Some of the high school students have a desire to learn about what is out in the real world for them.

SOLUTION: Hold a Youth Summit -- Why try to guess what would keep

Meeteetse kids occupied and off the street and out of trouble when you can ask them? Take 2 or 3 hours of a school day and invite the parents, church leaders, civic organizations, and school kids as well as invite the local law enforcement to participate in small groups to discuss the local youth related problems and possible solutions to those problems.

**RESOURCE:** The Hot Springs County School system has a program in the High School that allows high school students to work in the community for credits which also gives them the opportunity to find out if there are certain career they might be interested in. Contact the Hot Springs County High School Principal, Margaret Stansill, 307-864-5415.