

# Rawlins Community Assessment Follow-up Meeting



January 25, 2007

*Setting Goals and Priorities for the  
Community*

# Rawlins 2006 Major Themes

*(these are not listed in order of importance)*

*(these are the themes that the following recommendations address)*

## **Lack of Housing**

- Workforce
- Senior
- Rentals
- Affordable

## **Services**

- Substance Abuse treatment
- Medical
- Youth crisis center
- 24/7 childcare
- Assisted Living
- Hospice
- Home healthcare
- Marketing existing services

## **Planning**

- Boom/bust economy
- Diversification
- Workforce development
- Higher education

## **Image**

- Pride

- Ordinance enforcement
- Re-planning of blighted areas
- Re-branding the community
- Gateways

## **Infrastructure**

- Sidewalks, curbs and gutter
- Expansion of services into new growth areas
- Expansion of the underpass/south side access

## **Sense of Community**

- Pride
- Integration of new residents
- Volunteer recruitment/training
- Leadership training

## **Public Transportation**

- Commercial air service
- Local public transit

## **Tourism Development**

- Marketing
- Attractions
- Museum
- History

## Team Member Recommendations

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### **Introduction**

I wish to thank the Rawlins community for its gracious hospitality extended during the assessment. I was also pleased with the organization and logistical support provided by the City of Rawlins Staff. I have a personal affection and affinity for the Community from having lived and worked in the community for eight years and having returned from time to time since then to work on specific projects like this one.

I was particularly pleased to see some of the successes the community has had since the first assessment conducted five years ago. I feel that the community has made a great deal of progress recently in striving towards meeting its goals and aspirations. I am hopeful that this Community Assessment process will provide further impetus for progress as well as a roadmap for future direction in the Community.

### **General Observations**

This assessment is unique in that it is the first repeat assessment performed under the program in Wyoming. As additional communities reach their five-year, anniversary dates and wish to reevaluate their progress and priorities, this assessment will form a blueprint for those efforts. The accomplishments that Rawlins has made in the past few years are significant. The new municipal golf course, the higher education center, the re-designation as a Main Street Community, the opening of the Carbon County Mercantile all represent steps in the right direction. In talking with community leaders, it is also apparent that the community has recently entered a new era of growth due to energy development in the area as well as expansion of the Wyoming State Penitentiary. In the previous Assessment, economic development and job creation were top concerns. Today it is workforce and housing availability.

In spite of the progress made there still appear, to me, several lingering issues that the community is struggling with. Perhaps the most important of these revolves around community self image and pride. A second is what I would call a lack of community self-confidence in the future sustainability of Rawlins. A third area has to do with planning for the future development of the City to foster economic opportunity. These items encompass three theme topics that I will offer comments on and identified by the Resource Team as **Community Image, Community Pride and Planning for the Future.**

## Community Image

### Description of the problem

This theme is one in which the community has struggled for many years. In my estimation, it has two components. One is the actual visual image that the community presents to visitors and those passing through the community. The second is the more abstract perception or image of the community held by non-residents based on the reputation of the community. Much of this later image problem is based on not only how the community looks, but also on perceptions about "What it is like to live in Rawlins". These perceptions, wrong or right, might be based on a reputation as a "prison town" or wind and bad weather. They may relate to the stark desert environment or even the history of the area. This later image issue cannot be changed quickly or easily but the key may lie in the physical image issue mentioned first. I will deal with the second issue under the related theme of **Community Pride**.

Having lived and worked Rawlins over twenty years ago I observed that many of the same physical blighting influences that were in existence then, are still present in the community. Although there has been some progress over the past three decades, much remains to be done. This seems to indicate a new, more aggressive approach, needs to be implemented if these problems are to be solved once and for all. This calls for a new approach to re-planning the entrances and major travel corridors into, around and through the community. This effort should have broad community support, based on the number of persons who mentioned it during the listening sessions. It will require a concerted political will by city government as well as involvement of affected property owners, businesses and citizens in the planning process to be successful.

Let me be clear, I am not talking about simple "beautification" of public right of ways or landscaping although this is certainly one element. A few property owners and businesses may be extremely unhappy with the approach I am recommending because it will cause them to have to spend money or risk losing their property. It will require that some change the way they do business or even force them out of business. On the positive side, those who have strong businesses and are willing to reinvest in their property will be better off. The overall benefit to economic development readiness and community pride will more than offset the negatives. It will also be a long-term process and require several years to be fully implemented.

### Recommendations

The basic recommendation is that **the City of Rawlins seeks to undertake an intense and targeted re-planning and redevelopment effort for its entrances and major travel corridors**. The authority and basis for the planning effort has ample legal support in Wyoming Statutes. Chapter 15 Section 15-1-503 and Section 15-1-503 provides the Planning Commission shall, as part of its duties, in keeping its Master Plan current show "*(vii) General character, extent and layout of the re-planning of blighted districts and slum areas*". In the next Section 15-1-504, it states in part that the purpose of master planning the community includes "...accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Municipality which will best promote the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy in the process of development.

The redevelopment process is spelled out in detail in an entire chapter of the Wyoming State Statutes encompassed in Chapter 9 – Urban Renewal. The establishment of an Urban Renewal Authority has been a successful tool in several Wyoming communities. One of the most notable successes has been in Evanston, Wyoming.

This effort for re-planning and redeveloping portions of the community can also meet housing, economic development and community development needs of the community. It should be approached as a positive process in which specific goals and targeted areas are addressed. I would recommend that one priority corridor area be identified and planned at a time. A good one to start with would be a corridor one to three blocks wide running from the intersection of the bypass with Cedar street west to the intersection of Cedar and Spruce. Additional areas on the west side and the south side should also be considered separately.

As a collateral effort to the entrances and corridors effort, the city should also redouble its efforts at code enforcement focusing primarily on zoning and nuisance ordinances and derelict buildings subject to the Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings. This effort would primarily be targeted at the residential neighborhoods to reverse any blighting influences occurring there.

#### **Implementation Resources**

This is an ideal project to begin with **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding** and in later stages utilize **Business Ready Communities (BRC)** funding for economic development projects. Various types of housing development funding can also be harnessed for this purpose. I would recommend starting with a **CDBG - Planning Only Grant**. This would be used to develop a particular corridor plan to develop the specific opportunities for redevelopment and the specific target area boundaries in which blight is concentrated. Since “Removal of Slums and Blight” is a National Policy Objective for CDBG, several follow-on grants may be possible to implement various aspects of acquisition, demolition and redevelopment within the target area. From there, through an RFP process, as well as use of housing and economic development grant programs such as BRC, positive redevelopment can occur. There is also extensive bond and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) authority available to municipalities through use of the Urban Renewal Statutes cited above.

#### **Contacts**

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## **Community Pride**

### **Description of the Problem**

As mentioned above, another dimension of the image problem in Rawlins is a Theme we have called **Community Pride**. This theme relates to the self-image and external image of the Rawlins Community. Many adults from different listening sessions and particularly the high school youth talked, in great depth, about their lack of pride in the community. They were also concerned that the Community was ridiculed in other parts of the State because of its poor image. The youth, in particular, were adamant in their opinion that this lack of pride is a major factor influencing whether they would choose to stay in the community or return to it someday.

Several problems were articulated, including old derelict buildings, community cleanliness, the perception of the community as a "prison town", lack of trees, the Glenn Addition corrals, the transient nature of some residents, social problems in the community and a number of other concerns.

### **Recommendations**

The issue of **Community Pride** should be addressed as an internal and external marketing program. As progress is made in cleaning up the community this needs to be celebrated and recognized by the leaders of the community. The internal marketing program is intended to give citizens a constant flow of information which will lead them to understand how the community is improving itself. In addition, this marketing program should be directed to new residents so that they are integrated into community life. Civic organizations, the City and Newspaper should all work together to promote the community to its own citizens.

External marketing involves the idea of "re-branding" the community to the outside world. The "Pronghorn Pride" initiative could form the basis for doing this, however if there is to be a permanent shift in external perceptions about the community then the "re-branding" must be sustainable over time. Some professional assistance in public relations and forming a marketing identity for the community would be advisable. The community should be comfortable and supportive of the marketing message however sometimes a "homegrown" approach can result in a message that is off target with the perceptions of the outside world. The "brand" selected must be genuine and have ring of authenticity in order to be believed. Many such programs rely heavily on the unique factors of history and culture which each community possesses. It also needs to capture the essence of the message, which the community wishes to convey. It does not necessarily "sugar coat" the image of the community but should appeal to the imagination and come from spirit of the community. No brand appeals to everyone but only those who are susceptible to its lure. Finally it should be tested with external focus groups and ultimately in press reaction from the outside world and adjusted as appropriate. This would be an ideal effort for the Carbon County

Economic Development Corporation to lead and coordinate in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce.

### **Implementation Resources**

This effort would best be undertaken with local funding as well as private foundation monies. Some technical assistance might also be garnered from two sources connected to the Wyoming Business Council. One is the Wyoming Market Research Center in Laramie and the second is the Promotion and Marketing Staff of the Business Council. Funding for the program might also be available from the Wyoming Community Foundation, which takes matching grant applications several times a year. Much of the nuts and bolts of both an internal and external marketing program can be carried out locally once a "re-branding plan" and message is formulated.

### **Contacts**

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(This service must be accessed through Tom Johnson, the WBC Regional Director for the area. See contact information below)

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DCI International  
WBC Public Relations firm in New York  
(Access through Rachael Girt)

### **Planning for the Future**

#### **Description of the Problem**

Throughout the listening sessions, the resource team heard many comments related to the need for planning the future of Rawlins. Some of these comments related to the immediate growth pressures, which the community is currently feeling in providing additional housing,

infrastructure and services to a growing population. In other cases, it was expressed as a fear of change and what the effects of growth might be on the current way of life, in the community. Finally there seemed to be a great deal of apprehension over whether the current growth was just the beginning of another "Boom and Bust" cycle which would ultimately leave the local economy in shambles in a few years. In a sense, this latter view seemed to reflect a widespread and deep-seated lack of confidence in the long-term sustainability of the community among its citizens.

This problem of how to take care of short-term growth needs while building a community which is sustainable over the long run represents a classic planning problem not unlike what Wyoming as a whole faces. The key is to use some of the transitory wealth created by current growth to create enough diversification and "Critical Mass" to sustain the community during future downturns in the economy. **Planning for the Future** involves not only planning for physical growth of the community but also planning strategically to position the community for future economic success as well. Sometimes it becomes "difficult to drain the swamp when you are busy fighting the alligators". Rawlins finds itself in that dilemma today. However only during periods of growth does a community have the luxury of also having the resources to accomplish long term goals which will ultimately serve the community's long term interests.

### **Recommendations**

In my view, for the first time, Rawlins is doing a number of things right with its current economic development effort. Efforts to strengthen the retail and service base in the economy through participation in the Main Street Program and funding of the Carbon Mercantile are excellent starts. The linkage of Higher Education and Economic Development is also a huge step forward. Efforts at development of workforce housing and workforce development are also important. All these efforts need to be funded for expansion and sustainability over a long period. The economic development process should be removed from the whims of economy and political influence by deeper, institutionalized funding mechanisms. Here are some different ways to do that, by taking advantage of the current growth cycle in assessed valuation and energy development now in full swing:

1. **Champion the idea of forming a Joint Powers Board (JPB) to institutionalize and replace the current Carbon County Council of Governments.** Building on how the COG has functioned in the past, it could be used as a central financing entity with all the powers available in State Statute in terms of pooling local financing, bonding authority, purchase and sale of real property and grant eligibility. In turn, as a corpus of funding was assembled it could be used as a matching pool for grant projects. I would recommend that this be started with an initial earmark of ½ mil for a period of three years, contributed from the County's growing assessed valuation. Individual towns and ED organizations could apply for utilization of the funding similar to what is being done now with the Capital Facilities Tax projects. Any recapture that occurs from grants funded under this pool, would be returned and reinvested in additional economic development and community development projects. As an added bonus, this new JPB, with appropriate local governmental authorization, could itself be a grantee for State grants such as Business Ready Communities

and the new Community Facilities Program, in cases where projects have multi-jurisdictional benefits.

2. **Take advantage of the new Sales and Use Tax for economic development** and make permanent, at least a 1/4 cent, earmarked for economic development as part of the current sales tax structure. Again, this would be primarily paid by the energy development now occurring. This money should be available to fund operations of ongoing economic development organizations by the appropriate governmental entities.
3. **Form a Community Trust Foundation in Rawlins**, for project development. The Wyoming Community Foundation can help with this concept and will manage the trust fund long-term on the behalf of the community. This will help capture some of the private, intergenerational wealth transfer that will occur in the community over the next several decades. This would be especially appropriate funding to do further development of higher education, cultural and quality of life amenities for the community.
4. **Engage in a private fundraising campaign** to help fund the Carbon County Economic Development Corporation. This is an ideal time to get more private sector commitment to economic development while times are good. Please consider hiring a professional fundraiser for this effort as the results are proven, to be much more successful using this approach. The fundraising can pay the costs internally while netting the organization a stable operating budget over each fundraising cycle, usually 4 to 5 years. The Wyoming Economic Development Association can steer you to communities who have already used this approach successfully.

Besides the obvious benefit of new funding to leverage community and economic development projects, there is an important side benefit to putting these four new funding ideas in play. The dialogue they will create will serve to focus the community on its future goals and aspirations. This form of "**Planning for the Future**" has already been demonstrated in the remarkable effort at cooperation and coordination between governments in Carbon County for use of the sixth cent, Capital Facilities Tax over the past several years. Development of these new financial tools would foster similar discussion and cooperation both within the Rawlins Community itself and Countywide.

As a second example, professionally managed private fundraising efforts, as discussed in item 4, nearly always result in reenergized and much more focused and successful economic development efforts afterward. Wyoming economic development organizations like Cheyenne Leads, Campbell County Economic Development Corporation, the Casper Area Economic Development Alliance as well as other organizations in the state, have all found this to be true.

Each of these suggested funding mechanisms together or taken separately could serve to energize and grow community confidence in what it can do for itself. Ultimately, community sustainability comes not from what resources the community has, but what it is willing to do for itself and for its future.

### **Resources for Implementation**

Both, Items 1 and 2 can be undertaken by local elected officials with little expense or outside help. Technical and legal guidance, if needed, could be provided by the Wyoming Association of Municipalities and the Wyoming Association of County Officials. Item 3 would gladly be assisted by the Wyoming Community Foundation. For Item 4, the Wyoming Economic Development Association can provide the names of several communities that have experience with private fundraising for economic development. The Wyoming Business Council Regional Director can also help with this. Typically, fund raising consultants are more than happy to come and meet with a community and explain their process free of charge as part of business development efforts. I have listed the leading national firm below. They have worked extensively in Wyoming in the past, but there are many qualified firms around.

### **Contacts**

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### **Introduction**

Thank you, Town of Rawlins residents, for your wonderful hospitality and the opportunity to visit your community. It gave me the opportunity to appreciate what you have in your community and why you choose to live in this part of Wyoming. I was impressed by the openness of the participants. I commend Deb Lucero for the marketing and preparation of the assessment, her tenacity was incredible. It was evident that there really are people in the community that truly care. Keep up the great work, your community will be all that you want it to be with perseverance.

### **Theme: HOUSING**

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### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING, RENTALS, SENIOR, WORKFORCE**

**Challenge:** One of the challenges that was talked about numerous times was the lack of affordable housing. Not just housing, but affordable housing. Rawlins seems to have had a dramatic change in the prices of the housing stock; about five years ago you could buy a modest size single family home for around \$70,000 to \$80,000 give or take. Now there are new modest size housing being built in the area that have a ticket price of \$200,000 to \$300,000. This kind of price tag may be suitable for the higher income folks, but not those who are in the very low and low income categories, such as the numerous prison workers. From what I understand this has resulted in many people living in Hotels.

Other communities have faced a similar problem and have used a variety of methods to solve the problem. There are a few options available for the community to explore, as well as individuals who are in need of affordable housing.

**Solution:** USDA-Rural Development has a program called the Self-Help Housing program. The programs main purpose is to reduce the cost of construction so that affording housing can be provided. Individual houses are built under supervision by a group of families who will live in the dwellings. In short, it is a group mutually helping each other with the guidance of a construction expert.

The actual housing construction loan is made through Rural Developments 502 direct housing loan program. The applicants must be very low or low income to qualify and must repay a loan for the cash cost of the house. An estimated 60% of the labor is provided by the families to build the homes, which reduces the total cost of construction resulting in affordable housing.

It begins with a Technical Assistance Grant for Self-Help Housing. Public bodies or public or private nonprofit corporations are eligible for the grant to hire the personnel to carry out a program of technical assistance for self-help housing, pay necessary and reasonable office and administrative expenses, make essential equipment, such as power tools available to families participating in self-help housing construction and to pay fees for training self-help group members in construction techniques. The Technical Assistance Grantee recruits and screens the applicants utilizing Rural Development guidelines.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development at 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Solution:** Loans for rental housing are available from USDA Rural Development under Section 515 direct loan program and the 538 guaranteed loan program. The loan(s) are offered to for profit, and non-profit groups as well as individuals to construct low income rental housing. The loans provide living units for persons with very low, low and moderate incomes and can be designated as Family or Elderly. The loans are primarily made to build apartment style housing.

A needs survey would be necessary to outline what the need is, how many units are needed and whether there is a need for family versus elderly housing units. The funds are available through NOFA (Notification of Funding Availability) and the community must be included on the designated places list. Rawlins has been on this list for the past couple of years.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development at 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Solution:** USDA/Rural Development also offers 502 direct home loans to qualified applicants. The maximum loan for this program in Carbon County is \$129,600, which could be another challenge. If perhaps there is a house within this price range, Rural Development could assist in the purchase of the home to a qualified applicant. The interest rate could be subsidized down to as low as 1% interest rate to make the payments more affordable.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development at 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Solution:** Rural Development Guaranteed Loan program assists the low to moderate-income families in achieving their homeownership dream. The loans are originated and made by a bank and RD will guarantee the loan the bank makes. Unlike the typical conventional loans, this loan does not have Mortgage Insurance Premiums and there is no down payment requirement. The bank can loan 100% of the market value with this program and there is a one time 2% guarantee fee that can be rolled into the loan if the market value will support it. The loan limits are higher than the RD 502 direct loan program, which are the WCDA loan limits. Any lender can confirm the loan limits for your area.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development at 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Solution:** Rural Developments 504 loan and grant program can assist very low-income applicants with a 1% loan to make repairs to the home they already own. If the applicant is 62 years old or older and does not show repayment for a loan, they may qualify for a grant up to \$7,500 to make health and safety repairs to their homes such as a new heating system, windows, new roof, or accessibility features and more.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development at 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Resource:** The Fannie Mae Foundation provides grants that revitalize neighborhoods and create affordable home ownership across America. Fannie Mae Foundation  
[www.fanniemae.com](http://www.fanniemae.com)

**Solution:** Wyoming Community Development Authority has a HOME program, which has funds available to finance single family homes for low-income purchasers. This program involves an interested builder who will construct homes using HOME funds then sell them to authorized buyers. Rural Development can participate with WCDA in financing these homes. WCDA also has low interest loans for first time home buyers to purchase homes.

**Resource:** Cheryl Gillum, Housing Programs Director for the WCDA, 155 North Beech, and Casper, WY 82601. Her phone number is 307-265-0603.

**Resource:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also has affordable housing programs available. Chris Stearns, Wyoming State Office, 100 East B Street, Room 4229 Casper, WY 82601-1918  
[www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

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## Theme: SERVICES

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### ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY

**Challenge:** There was an apparent need for an Assisted Living Facility in the community.

**Solution:** Again a needs assessment should be done to determine the size of facility needed. This type of facility would be considered through a USDA Rural Development Community Facility loan/grant program to assist in construction. Direct loans/grants are available as well as guaranteed loans. Through the community facility program, essential community facilities must provide an essential service to the local community – the service should be a service that is typically provided by a local unit of government; be needed for the orderly development of the rural community, considered a public improvement; and may not include private, commercial, or business undertakings. Significant community support is a critical factor in determining applicant eligibility since the type of project (financed through a nonprofit organization) has to emulate the same level of need and support that a public body would rely on. The following are eligible to apply for community facility loans: governmental entities such as towns, cities, counties, or special-purpose districts; nonprofit organizations

(including associations, private corporations, or cooperatives) if they can demonstrate significant ties with the local rural communities.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development, 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Solution:** Another possible program is the Congregate Housing and Group Home programs funded also by USDA/Rural Development. Congregate housing is residential housing consisting of private apartments and central dining facilities in which services are provided to tenants to enable them to remain independent. A group home is housing that is occupied by elderly, handicapped or disabled tenants sharing living space within a rental unit in which a resident assistant may be required. All congregate housing and group homes finance by Rural Development must provide at least 1 nutritious meal a day, 7 days a week; transportation to shopping, services and medical facilities; routine housekeeping; non-medical personal services, such as assistance with shampooing hair, dressing, bathing, etc.; recreation and social activities.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development, 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY, 307- 856-7524 Ext. 4

There are two successful congregate housing projects, one in Riverton and one in Green River, built by Don Walgrave at 505 Northwood Dr., Redwood Falls, MN 56283, 508-637-2145. The name of the congregate housing in Riverton is Owl Creek Apartments located at 2220 Rose Lane (307) 856-6068.

State and area agencies on aging or other appropriate agencies may be able to provide some of the above named services as well.

### **YOUTH CRISIS CENTER, CHILD CARE CENTER, HOSPICE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

**Challenge:** Concerns were voiced on the desperate need for a Hospice, youth crisis center, child care and substance abuse treatment center. Others were primarily concerned with the lack of transportation.

USDA Rural Development can assist in the development of each of these essential public community facilities through the Community Facilities loan/grant program. A market study would be essential in the planning process and can be funded with a grant from the USDA Rural Developments Rural Business Enterprise Grant program. Rural Development can partner with other funding organizations to achieve the project desired. To minimize the amount borrowed, the applicant/community can look at the 1% capital gains tax, as well as fundraising.

In addition to fund raising efforts the community might consider the following:

1. Form a Non Profit Organization.
2. The Town of Rawlins could apply for the loans and grants.

**Resource:** USDA Rural Development, 508 N. Broadway, Riverton, WY 82501, 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Resource:** Local banks have funds available for projects and the loan can be guaranteed by Rural Development. Contact a local bank or contact Rural Development at 307-856-7524 Ext. 4.

**Resource:** Any of the Bond Councils in the state can help set up bond elections and give advice as to the best bonding route to pursue. Three bonding companies are:

- a. Borthwick Law Firm, 1312 Capitol Ave., Suite 506, P.O. Box 1124, Cheyenne, WY 82001, phone 307-635-2433.
- b. Herschler, Frudenthal, Salzburg & Bonds, 314 E. 21<sup>st</sup> Street, P.O. Box 387, Cheyenne, WY 82003-0387, Phone 307-634-2240.
- c. Wiederspahn, Lummis & Liepas, PC, 2020 Carey Ave., Suite 700, Cheyenne, WY 82001, phone 307-638-6417.

**Resource:** Loans and Grants may be available through the State Loan and Investment Board for these types of projects, contact Brad Miskimins. Phone 307-777-6646.

**Resource:** Additional funding may be available through Private foundations which can be found on the Internet at the Foundation Center. Their web site is [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)

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**Introduction:**

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the people of Rawlins for the warm reception and open, honest discussions that were held during the assessment. I would also like to thank the City of Rawlins (especially Deb Lucero and Dave Derragon) for the excellent preparation and planning for the assessment. The community assessment ran very smoothly and that was due to the hard work and careful planning by the community. I was very impressed with the honesty and openness of the community members during the listening sessions. The City of Rawlins has a very interesting history that was fascinating to explore during the assessment. I hope that the community assessment and report will be a great motivator to the citizens of Rawlins to work together and implement positive change! Thanks again for your hospitality and the chance to visit with the people of Rawlins!

**Theme: Sense of community**

**Challenges: Pride, integration of new residents, volunteer recruitment/training and leadership training.**

**Recommendations:**

The resource team heard in nearly every listening session about lack of pride. The lack of pride seemed to include how the residents felt about the look of the town, especially from I-80. I also sensed a lack of pride due to the residents identifying Rawlins as a "prison town." I really believe that sentiment may be felt mostly by the residents themselves. As someone who isn't originally from Wyoming, I never heard derogatory comments made toward Rawlins as an "ugly prison town" when I moved here and began my travels around the state. I really believe that Rawlins citizens need to begin to reprogram their thinking about being a prison town. First of all, the old pen is a very interesting historical entity that is not being fully used to its potential to bring people into town. Second, on the last day of the assessment I had the opportunity to take a tour of the current Wyoming Penitentiary and I found it to be quite interesting and an asset to the economy of Rawlins. The lack of pride sentiment that the team heard seemed to be centered around the look of the town

and what it is supposedly known for. If the residents identify Rawlins as a prison town, then there is a great opportunity to embrace that idea and use it as a marketing tool instead of a reason to feel sorry for yourself. There is another segment of the pride issue that is important not to forget. The resource team heard from citizens in nearly every listening session about how the people of Rawlins were a great asset. Many people stated that they choose to live in Rawlins and are not just there by accident or requirement. Now that is something to be proud of!

We also heard about the need to improve the integration of new residents to Rawlins. At a population of around 9,000 people, Rawlins is a great size to be big enough to have services, but small enough to maintain that small town feel and friendliness. Going back to the pride issue for a second, there seemed to be a concern of some people just moving to Rawlins to make money during the boom, not caring about the community and having little or no pride in their residences or town. I believe that you could lessen that abuse by making a concerted effort to really engage new citizens. A very simple way could be a welcome basket filled with information about what Rawlins has to offer. This could be accomplished by the Chamber of Commerce, City, and local businesses and volunteers. Another idea would be to hold a new residents, welcome to Rawlins reception once a month. This could be held at the train depot and could be a very simple way to greet people into the community (and even recruit volunteers for community projects) and for new residents to visit with other residents and learn a little about Rawlins interesting history and culture.

An issue that was heard during the listening sessions is that there is a need for volunteer recruitment/training and leadership training. The people who currently volunteer were very much appreciated, but there was definite sense of the STP (same ten people) doing most of the work. I really believe that there are many more people that would help, but just have to be asked. When the resource team met with the high school students, I asked how often they are asked to volunteer and help out on projects and was told almost never. The students really seemed interested in becoming more involved with community activities if for no other reason than to have something to do. What a great way to create a passion for volunteering in Rawlins residents at a young age. I really think that the key to asking people is not just simply sending out a postcard or putting up flyers of volunteers needed, but actually calling people. Make a list of what type of volunteer is needed and desired, what qualities that they may need and create a list of the core type of people you desire. Then contact them, you may find that their passions and interests align with that of your organization.

Addressing the need for leadership training, I offer up the assistance of the Wyoming Rural Development Council. We can assist with facilitation, strategic planning, leadership, and board training. I also recommend that you utilize the Cooperative Extension program and the Resource Conservation and Development Program for these needs. I also recommend utilizing the strengths of the youth in the leadership training endeavor. While I couldn't find that Rawlins has an FFA (Future Farmers of America, although its much more than just agriculture) chapter, both Baggs and Saratoga do, and they can be great resources for parliamentary procedure and public speaking. I recommend contacting either of these chapters as they can present how to run a meeting (its surprising how good the kids can be and how they often know more about running a meeting than adults) and how to effectively speak in public. I also recommend considering starting an FFA chapter in Rawlins as it can be a very fun, educational and rewarding program for high school students. I also recommend utilizing your local talent through the 4-H program.

There are many programs in Wyoming that offer leadership training and we can all become better leaders! The Wyoming Heritage Alliance sponsors a annual program, which meets several times per years in different locations in the state. The Wyoming Business Council's Agri-Business Division and the Wyoming Agricultural Leadership Council sponsor the Wyoming L.E.A.D. program. This is a 55-day class over an 18-month period focusing on many diverse issues and topics (and includes a trip to Washington D.C. and somewhere abroad). I have spoken with past participants who have found the experience to be extremely rewarding both personally and professionally.

**Resources:**

**Wyoming Rural Development Council**

2219 Carey Avenue  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

**Wyoming FFA State Advisor**

Ron Pulse  
1400 East College Drive

Cheyenne, WY 82007  
(307) 778-1192  
[rpulse@lccc.wy.edu](mailto:rpulse@lccc.wy.edu)

**Carbon County Extension Office**

Carbon Bldg, Rom 393  
Box 280  
Rawlins, WY 82301-0280  
Phone: (307) 328-2642  
e-mail: Carbon County CES  
Fax: (307) 328-2646

**Theme: Tourism**

**Challenges: Marketing, attractions, museum and history**

**Recommendations:**

I believe that the City of Rawlins can approach the tourism project by creating a comprehensive marketing plan that includes: attractions, museum and history. I had no idea how much Rawlins had to offer until the community assessment. The resource team took a tour of the community which was both interesting and informative, but we could have spent another two days exploring Rawlins unique history, natural resources, and amenities (not to mention the recreational opportunities so close to Rawlins). I believe that Rawlins needs to work on creating a town theme, or "brand." This should be something simple and easy to remember. You could build upon the antelope theme that has already been started or work to find a new brand for the town.

I think that Carbon County already has an excellent website set up to market what is available, but it could be expanded for the City of Rawlins. The City website is a good start, but could be spruced up with more graphics and pictures. It's amazing how a good picture can show the best parts of a

town, while a bad one can bring down the image of a town. A idea could be to create a package deal for tourists, showcasing the best that Rawlins has to offer. The old pen could be the draw into town, while the history of Big Nose George and other colorful local characters could be the way to draw people into downtown and the allure of the local natural resources could be the way to get them to stay a night.

I think that you could really generate some excitement in town by this “rebranding” of Rawlins and get everyone involved (an idea would be a contest for a town theme or image) from the elementary school to the senior center.

I also recommend contacting Wyoming Travel Tourism, a division of the Wyoming Business Council. They can assist with all types of marketing and advertising and there will be a new market research project coming out soon that could be very beneficial to Rawlins.

#### **Resources:**

Colorado Wyoming Association of Museums  
Sarah Gadd  
University of Wyoming Art Museum  
Dept 3807 1000 E University Avenue  
Laramie, WY 82071

Leslie Kedelty  
Wyoming Business Council – Travel and Tourism  
215 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002  
307-777-2839

#### **Theme: Services**

**Challenges: Substance Abuse treatment, youth crisis center, 24/7 childcare, assisted living, hospice, home healthcare and marketing existing services.**

#### **Recommendations:**

The issue of the need for substance abuse treatment came up often during the assessment. Methamphetamine has been the main drug threat to Wyoming since the mid 1990’s according to the National Drug Intelligence Center. The Drug Enforcement Administration says that 50% of all drug arrests in Wyoming are for methamphetamine possession, manufacture or distribution. By-products of meth use has shown an increase in violent crimes, domestic violence and child abuse. Clearly we need to find a solution at a local, state and national level for this drug.

The number one solution that I would recommend is education. Some programs are already in place, but the issue needs to be taken on at various levels in order to be effective. Other Wyoming communities have organized drug task forces or committees to attack the problem and educate on a broader basis. For example the Little Snake River Valley identified drug use as a major priority from their assessment, so the three communities joined forces to create a task force to educate kids and

parents about the dangers of the drug and to seek solutions to keeping it out of the youth in their communities.

I suggest contacting the Wyoming Meth Initiative's website (listed below) to learn what is already going on the state and to see how Rawlins could become involved. One way that I can think of is to implement a drug court or peer advisory council for kids. I believe that to be effective, the problem needs to be attacked from many fronts: arrests, education, awareness and prevention.

I also suggest visiting the Drug Enforcement Administration's website and click on the just think twice link. This site is an excellent source to show the effects of meth on the body (including before and after pictures that are truly alarming both on the body and brain), how easy it is to become addicted, the effects on homes, motels and the environment and how to break free from meth. I think that resources from this site are very awakening for anyone to witness, yet easy reading and comprehension for school age children. There are also links from this website to MTV, HBO and Oprah videos on this topic, which may be an effective way to show the effects of meth.

While researching this topic I have found suggestions that point to the need for emergency detention for meth users. The reason for this includes users in the "tweaking stage" can become quite violent and paranoid without provocation towards anyone. The emergency detention time is often necessary for 24 to 48 hours. From there research states that meth users need long term rehabilitation and intervention to truly become meth free. While this would be a long term goal, it seems necessary to truly get a handle on this crisis. I have listed some resources for more information below.

#### **Resources:**

The Wyoming Meth Initiative and the Citizens Education Project  
[http://www.citizensedproject.org/THE\\_WYOMING\\_METH\\_INITIATIVE.htm](http://www.citizensedproject.org/THE_WYOMING_METH_INITIATIVE.htm)

Drug Enforcement Administration  
<http://www.dea.gov/>

<http://www.justthinktwice.com/gotmeth/whyriskit.html>

Family intervention  
<http://lovefirst.net>

The effects of crystal meth on the brain can be seen at: Amen Clinics and Brain SPECT Imaging.  
Visit [www.amenclinics.com](http://www.amenclinics.com).

[www.valleyhope.com](http://www.valleyhope.com)

<http://www.drugfree.org/>

To view a pdf of Wyoming's methamphetamine initiatives  
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/186266.pdf>

To learn more about drug courts

<http://www.nadcp.org/>

National Drug Intelligence Center

*Wyoming Drug Threat Assessment*

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs07/712/meth.htm>

The State Department of Education's Health and Safety Unit has grants for Safe Drug Free Schools and Communities with a purpose to educate and prevent drug use/abuse by Wyoming children and youth.

Dr. Gerry Maas

Hathaway Bldg, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

2300 Capitol Avenue

Cheyenne, WY 82002

307-777-6282

### **Recommendations for: youth crisis center, 24/7 childcare, assisted living, hospice and home healthcare**

While researching this issue, it was hard to find useful recommendations for the: youth crisis center, 24/7 childcare, assisted living, hospice and home healthcare. It seems that as with many projects the main key here is funding, or the lack of. Due to the high cost of running these facilities it is hard to find an entrepreneur to open them and have them still be affordable to those who need it most. I recommend talking with Tom Johnson, with the Wyoming Business Council about the Community Development Block Grant Program which could help to fund some of these facilities. I have also listed some resources below of organizations that may be able to offer some assistance.

### **Resources:**

Rural Assistance Center: <http://www.raonline.org/states/wyoming.php>

Midwest Assistance Program: <http://www.map-inc.org/home.htm>

Mountain Pacific Quality Health: <http://www.mpqhf.org/>

Rural Community Assistance Corporation: <http://www.rcac.org/>

### **Recommendations for marketing existing services:**

During the community assessment, the resource team observed that often the citizens weren't always aware that a service existed. We often heard, under the problems and challenges question that Rawlins is lacking a service, then another participant would step up and say, oh we already have that, didn't you know? A recommendation to get over this hurdle would be to utilize the newspaper in Rawlins. The City could run a "services" or "what the city has to offer" page in the newspaper. I also recommend that a quick easy one page list of services (along with business or organization names and contact information) could be created and left at City Hall, the post office and other locations frequented by Rawlins citizens. It seems to me that Rawlins has a lot to offer, it just needs to be proud and let its citizens and the rest of state know what it has to offer.

### **Conclusion**

I enjoyed my time spent in Rawlins listening to the citizens and learning more about the history and culture of your community. The City has a lot to offer its citizens and to visitors. The resource team heard about a lot of positive actions that Rawlins has already taken to improve itself such as: music in the park, becoming a Main Street Community and the Carbon Mercantile to name a few. I encourage you to continue the good work, inspire your neighbors to become involved and build upon the successes that you have created since the first community assessment!

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Business & Industry Development  
Wyoming Business Council  
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**Introduction:**

Thank you to Rawlins for being such great hosts while we were in your town for the assessment. Especially, thanks to our fearless chauffer/caterer/organizer/prison tour liaison, Deb Lucero. Also, Dave Derragon, and the Right Honorable Mayor, Christine Bjork, thank you for your hospitality and your interest in, and passion for, your community.

Passion for where you live is essential if you are going to make a difference in improving your community. I worry some about the apparent lack of passion for Rawlins that is in the citizens. Over and over again at the listening sessions it came across pretty clearly that the community suffers from a pretty low image of it's self. We heard multiple times that "the rest of the state just thinks of us as a prison town." First off, that's absolutely not true, at least in my experience, and secondly, who cares what the rest of the state thinks? The important thing is that Rawlins fosters community pride (example: Deb Lucero) and convinces itself that it's a good place to be that can be even better

(example: Pronghorn Pride). Once the community collectively feels like it has something to be proud of, people on the outside will pick up on it.

I don't mean to say that you should just be blindly proud, but there are already things happening in Rawlins that are truly great, and should be bragged about. Other things that do still need fixing should be fixed, so you have even more to brag about.

**Theme: Tourism**

**Challenge:** People stop for an Hour or so, and then head on down the road. Lack of common branding of tourism efforts.

**Solution:** Make what you already have better, and promote everything as one asset.

The old Pen in Rawlins is one of the finest tourism assets in the country. Prisons have an appeal to people so much so that they will plan an entire vacation around seeing and experiencing old prisons. I think it's almost the thrill of the forbidden. Hopefully, the opportunity to see a prison won't arise for most people in normal life. Being able to visit old prisons is a safe way to get a piece of an otherwise pretty scary experience.

Honestly, I'm not sure most tourists even stop for an hour in Rawlins, because if you're not fast at catching every billboard on the interstate, you'll probably miss the one that talks about the old pen being there. I believe that the statistics are something like one in eleven people will notice a billboard, and an even smaller amount of people will actually read the information. You're then left with the ones that act on the information they just read. I don't have the numbers, but needless to say, billboards aren't really an ideal form of advertising, unless they are placed in several areas approaching the destination.

The Pronghorn Pride initiative is one of the best ideas that I've seen for tourism development. When the initiative is successful in getting the I-80 visitors center built, it will hopefully serve as the gateway to the city/county and all of its offerings. This will be the most effective way of getting people to stay longer. The visitor's center can take the opportunity to tell the stories of the community, and then visitors will have the opportunity to go on into town to see and touch the history that they just learned about in the interpretive center.

Because of the common interests of several groups in the community and county of promoting tourism, it seems like one body could be responsible for implementing the promotion and assuring uniformity. The Chamber of Commerce may be this instrument. The organization is already formed, and its status as a county wide organization allows them to assist all localities in promoting their tourism interests in a unified way. The various funding venues could simply be directed to a Chamber of Commerce promotion campaign.

Obviously the Carbon County Visitor's Council, as the board responsible for collection and dissemination of lodging tax dollars is a funding source for something like this. I also believe that general chamber funds should be used for this project. Business owners have a very vested interest in seeing tourism increase in the area.

Another source of funding is through philanthropic means. Pronghorn Pride already funds itself with the generosity of people purchasing the antelope sculptures, and seems to have success at it. To facilitate this philanthropic campaign I would recommend starting a Wyoming Community Foundation Affiliate to collect funds. Several communities over the state have formed affiliates with the basic goal of promoting local interests. The website [www.wycf.org](http://www.wycf.org) explains their affiliate program as follows:

*Because Wyoming is a vast state, the harnessing of local energies for the common good is the philosophical cornerstone of the Wyoming Community Foundation. From the beginning in 1989, the Wyoming Community Foundation has strongly encouraged the development of affiliates throughout the state. Affiliates are local area community foundations that advise on a geographically focused collection of funds. They are components of the WYCF sharing in our charitable tax-exempt status and developed to increase the philanthropic base for the respective locale. Affiliate boards and advisory committees are made up of community minded individuals who have the ability to assess community needs, to implement their own asset development, evaluate area grant applications, encourage partnerships and initiate activities to enhance their own geographic area.*

*Affiliates may include several types of funds that are directed to the benefit of their respective geographic area. The local affiliate board evaluates grant proposals and makes recommendations for distribution of income from their component funds. Final authority of these distributions rests solely with the WYCF Board of Directors, however, it is the policy of this board to approve recommendations unless it is found that the designated distribution is illegal, improper or not in accordance with the charitable purposes of the WYCF.*

*While many decisions regarding grant making and asset development are made locally, the WYCF handles administrative functions such as fund accounting, investment management and reporting.*

Although it may seem terribly obvious, it's always better to raise funds yourself instead of heading for the grant trough. It really gets back to the community pride issues that I was talking about before. Not to diminish the work that goes into getting grant funding, or the absolute necessity of grants to get things done, but when a community can truly say that "we" did something it makes it a whole lot better. Not to mention, there are people in every community in Wyoming with some serious cash that are willing to part with it for the betterment of the community. There are also large numbers of people in every community that can only give a little, but collectively it becomes a lot.

My overall recommendation for a WYCF Affiliate organization would be that it be tied to the Pronghorn Pride initiative. It seems like marketing would be easier if an existing effort were used for a new and additional purpose. We'll leave that one to you though. The community needs to decide what the best way to do this is, and there may be legal or organizational reasons why that may not work. Whatever the final organization looks like, the goals need to be lofty. I would recommend millions of dollars as goals. It's not at all unrealistic. I know of a couple of towns in Wyoming that have a total population of around 500 that are looking to put together a WYCF Affiliate organization that will have a goal of \$1,000,000+ for their fundraising. They fully expect to fund it too because they can band together to get it done.

Finally, back to promoting the Old Pen specifically.... Funds raised through the WYCF affiliate should be granted to the old pen JPB as well as to the general promotion campaign ran through the

chamber. The Old Pen JPB could use the additional funds for site improvements and maintenance, as well as enhancements to the site to make it more of a destination. Current city and county funds for operations should be kept at current levels, no matter how much money is received from other sources.

Cooperation on all levels is necessary to promote tourism in the community. Separate groups have to be willing to work together and at times let one entity decide what the best is, and be willing to follow and fund where it is needed. For example, if it was decided that the Chamber would in fact be the coordinating agency on common branding, it would be necessary for all other groups, funding or not, to let the chamber make the decisions and to implement them.

**Resources:**

***Wyoming Community Foundation***

George Gault, President  
313 S. 2nd Street  
Laramie, WY  
82070  
1-866-70-T-R-U-S-T  
Phone: (307) 721-8300  
Fax: (307) 721-8333  
Email: [wcf@wycf.org](mailto:wcf@wycf.org),  
[george@wycf.org](mailto:george@wycf.org)  
[www.wycf.org](http://www.wycf.org)

**Theme: Image**

**Problem: Overall Image**

**Solution:**

Image was talked about at nearly all if not all of the listening sessions during the assessment. I understand that much progress has been made since the initial assessment that was done five years ago (Kudos to you all for making such great progress.) I actually found Rawlins to be a fairly attractive town, with some great amenities that similarly sized communities would die to have. The largest issue that I see with image, as an outsider is the self-image that the community has. Hopefully though, I've addressed that enough in the previous sections talking about working together and getting things done to be proud of.

The aspect of your image that I would like to address mostly is the physical image of Rawlins as one drives by on I-80. Honestly, it's not good at all. You're not unique in this though. There very few towns that have their good side butted up against any interstate. It's a simple function of commerce and industry. Industrial sites are best suited by being near the interstate, and industrial sites are the ugliest things in any community.

There is one particular site that is not industrial, and needs to be addressed. Ask anyone who drives I-80 with any regularity what the worst thing about Rawlins is and they will tell you it's the stables. Not the prison! I know the stables have a function, and are actually a pretty cool thing, they just

look awful. My understanding is that they were built before the interstate was there and they were basically in a great spot on the outskirts of town. Things change I guess.

Because of their value and status as a pretty unique amenity they should be kept. However, I would recommend one of two things. Either some serious money is put into them by their current owner (City of Rawlins), or they are relocated to a better site that doesn't allow for your community to be defined by them. Either way, the look needs to be uniform, and covenants need to be in place to insure that things are kept up properly. I realize that either option is going to be costly, but the stables are an income generating asset that could surely take on some debt to finance a move or improvements. I would encourage the idea of moving them as my favored choice. The land that they currently occupy could be very valuable as development land.

My general recommendation for the land would be to develop it as a mixed use development. Don't use it all for housing, as would be tempting in a time of housing shortages. If some of the land is designated as business property, the Wyoming Business Council's Business Ready Communities program could be used to fund infrastructure development on the business portion of the property. Rawlins has taken advantage of this program in the past and made great improvements to existing commercial areas with the funds. Rawlins, like the rest of Wyoming, needs desperately to make efforts to diversify the economy while the cash is flowing in from the boom we are currently experiencing. We can't just accept that the boom will bust and we'll all be left with nothing again. There's absolutely no reason to let this one go without making every effort to get our community economies to the point where booms in the mineral industry don't dictate the "who, what, when, where, why and how" of our state. Bringing in new, and fostering the growth of existing business, not related to the minerals industry, is the only way we will truly diversify.

Beyond the stables, generally cleanliness is an issue in Rawlins and all towns in Wyoming. The wind that we all enjoy so much contributes to the problem by blowing things around before they can get picked up, but a simple lack of initiative and pride contributes a lion's share. I really feel like cleanliness will come with community pride, and isn't something that can be specifically addressed enough to solve the problem. It seems to be something that happens gradually as a community starts to respect itself wants other people to come in and see what they have to offer. I commend the city of Rawlins for their current enforcement of rubbish ordinances though. They are effective where they can be, and it does make a difference.

Also, I commend the city for being chosen as Wyoming Main Street Community. I encourage people in the community to become involved in the process. Nothing promotes a community like a great and thriving main street. With rumors of Wal-Mart in the air main street better be looking pretty good, or the vacuum will suck all of the viable businesses away to be located next to the biggest name in retail, and you'll be left with a bunch of abandoned buildings and a downtown with no personality.

**Theme: Services**

**Problem: Lack of coordinated marketing effort**

**Solution:**

It was brought up in several of the listening sessions that there are really great social services offered in Rawlins and Carbon County, both by non-profits and by government entities. The problem

comes when trying marketing the services to the appropriate people, and when making the programs known to the public in general. In fact, during one of the listening sessions for non-profits and social services people, there were people in the room had not heard of the services of other attendee's agencies.

In a community with so many great services available, it seems nuts not to have a coordinated marketing effort. I don't however; know that it's entirely possible to market all services at once and with a singular campaign. I think that efforts need to be made to market individual services in a similar way. The best way that I can think of is if the City and civic organizations in the community commit to marketing all social services for free. Websites are the least expensive and easiest way to do this. A simple listing of all services available with contact information and links to websites would be simple enough to place on the city's website. The city would just have to solicit non-profits and other agencies to send their information to the city for posting, and to periodically update.

One service that I can think of to assist in marketing some of these services is available through the Wyoming Business Council. Though it's not necessarily marketed as a service of the WBC, our marketing department has great abilities in web marketing and website optimization. Optimization means basically making your website more visible to search engines like Google, so the when someone types in "Youth Crisis in Rawlins" for example, your site is more likely to come up right away. There are several things that can be done fairly easily such as making sure headlines are text and not graphics and placing keywords in your site repeatedly. Anyway, now that I've offered the services of a department I don't really have permission to offer, I would encourage you to contact them.

Also, I would encourage local charity organizations to organize themselves and form coalitions. Most likely there isn't the spirit of competition in the non-profit world like there is in the for-profit sector.

Part of the funds that are raised through my recommended WYCF Affiliate program could also be used for marketing efforts. Like I said before, this program needs to have goals in the millions of dollars. I think you'll be able to use it.

**Resources:**

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