

YAMPA VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
Routt, Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties
Cities of Craig and Steamboat Springs and Town of Hayden
1990-2011

History: After a long period of recession in the 1980s, public and private representatives of five communities of the Yampa Valley came together—for the first time in 80 years—with a grant from the Economic Development Administration and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs for a series of public meetings to create a regional economic plan. Citizens of both Moffat and Routt Counties recognized:

- (a) We share common assets. We are linked by our location on the Yampa River—one of the last relatively free-flowing rivers in the country, in an area with outstanding natural, scenic, environmental, recreational and wildlife resources—and by historic transportation corridors;
- (b) Our economies have been, in large part, dependent on coal mining and recreation, which are subject to the cyclical market of the energy industry and the seasonal dislocations of the recreation industry; and
- (c) We need to strengthen a diversified, regional economy.

The outcome was creation of the Yampa Valley Economic Development Council by Intergovernmental Agreement of five local governments in August 1990 to implement the *Northwest Colorado Economic Diversification Plan*. Original signatories included Routt County, Moffat County, Town of Hayden, City of Craig, and City of Steamboat Springs. Rio Blanco County joined in 1997 for telecommunications projects and in January 2005 as a full member.

Communication and process: The elected officials of the YVEDC meet quarterly, with the meeting location rotating between communities. All YVEDC meeting announcements and communications are sent out electronically and all documents (minutes, agendas, reports, etc.) can be found on the YVEDC “document archive on the YVEDC website: www.yvedc.org.

The YVEDC is a unique body in that all motions or resolutions require a unanimous vote of approval of the members present in order for the motion to carry. Three members of the six member council constitutes a quorum, so long as the members present are residents of at least two different counties. The YVEDC does not have its own staff, and instead relies on loaned staffing for regular meetings and for all project work.

The YVEDC follows a fairly standard process when deciding what projects or issues to address. Anyone can bring an issue or project idea forward to the group. The elected officials then go through a period of exploration – with briefings and additional information and discussion – on an issue or project idea. If the group decides to work on something, they will develop a discrete, stand alone project with a scope or work and budget, and will identify funding, staffing, partners, and the member agency that will serve as fiscal agent (if needed) for the project. When the YVEDC votes to move forward with a project, that vote must be confirmed with each member agency. Only once each member agency agrees to a project will the project move forward.

The YVEDC has worked on a wide range of projects – projects have been both large and small, and include starting discussions, starting up organizations or projects and spinning them off or handing them off to another group or organization, and carrying out discrete, one time projects. The YVEDC does not operate ongoing programs.

Accomplishments: The YVEDC has met regularly since 1990. A substantial benefit of the meetings includes the opportunity for elected officials in NW Colorado to come together to discuss and address issues facing the region. The regional effort has been rewarded with millions of dollars in state and federal grants. Since the inception of regional economic planning in 1989, the City of Steamboat Springs has provided continuous staff support to the YVEDC and its efforts to accomplish start-up and sustained implementation of a range of mutually productive and beneficial regional projects, including:

- Telecommunications infrastructure and the Beanpole Project
- Yampa River Legacy Project open space, agricultural lands and recreation
- Cultural/Heritage Tourism
- Agricultural and resort community alliance
- Yampa Valley Regional Airport infrastructure expansions
- Regional transportation, with upgrade of U.S. Highway 40 from Utah line to Rabbit Ears
- Multi-modal transportation and recreational and commuter trails
- Yampa River Basin Partnership
- Yampa Valley Partners to coordinate human services indicator data
- Regional recycling and composting