



[communityreview.org](http://communityreview.org)

# Peer Learning Network News

March 2022

This newsletter provides updates from the PLN Housing Solutions Roundtable, and a view forward our combined three-state meetings this year. Plus, we share news from WeCAN and resources for your communities and for you as community leaders. Visit the [WeCAN PLN webpage](#) for news, detailed meeting notes, and updated learning opportunities.

## Housing Solutions Roundtable Rocked It!

We went into the January Housing Solutions Roundtable knowing that housing issues reach across our three states—Idaho, Montana, Wyoming—and beyond. If the follow-up survey responses are any indication, participants and presenters alike found common ground in shared problems, and common promise in the kinds of solutions that are being tried in small towns and rural communities and shared during the Roundtable.

Visit the [Housing Solutions page](#) on the WeCAN website to access the downloadable guides, Roundtable recordings and presentation slides. Here, you'll also find a bit of background about each speaker, and a helpful notation that will help you forward to the exact spot where each presentation begins in the recording. Keep an eye open for announcements of new resources posted on the page.

Here at WeCAN, we are still sorting through the options for connecting participants with the kinds of ongoing learning and technical support that you all have told us would help you move forward with even more know-how and confidence. Stay tuned!



From the follow-up survey: What did you like about the Housing Solutions Roundtable?

*The breadth of knowledge and geographic representation was fantastic!*

*It was helpful for me to know other communities have been dealing with affordable housing issues for some time and have found solutions that could be part of the solution in my community. Having a "playbook" to follow will be instrumental to the success of our plans and the speakers seemed willing to share ideas, resources and solutions.*

*I was impressed by the number of participants that I was NOT familiar with who attended and presented at the roundtable.*

*The Housing Toolkit is a winner! I have already sent it on to a dozen clients and fellow volunteers. I thought the case studies were excellent also in showing what small and rural communities can do. So much of the discussion is around big projects and solutions that small communities don't have the resources to undertake. I love the inventiveness and unique solutions that fit the community.*

*Current information about issues we are ALL experiencing. Really appreciated the resources provided...and the chat with other participants.*

*It was great that everyone was able to come together to actually talk about solutions.*





## The Peer Learning Network Goes Tri-State!

The Housing Solutions Roundtable showed that community leaders in our three states have a lot to learn from each other. With that in mind, we are consolidating the state Peer Learning Networks into one. Participants will still have opportunities to connect in state-specific breakout conversations when you all decide it makes sense.

The PLN is open to your colleagues, friends or neighbors. If you think they would value this learning opportunity, please invite them!

On March 9, the tri-state PLN met, and kicked off with a Ripple Effects

Mapping (REM) session facilitated by Lorie Higgins (Idaho) and Julie Daniels (Wyoming). REM is a fun way to show the impacts of a program by creating a visual mind map from participants' stories.

The March 9 group had a lively discussion about how the PLN has made a difference for them. It was such a great way to get insight into those ripple effects that we are inviting other past PLN participants to add their stories and insights. If you want to contribute, please contact Lorie Higgins ([higgins@uidaho.edu](mailto:higgins@uidaho.edu)).

### Mark Your Calendars

The WeCAN Peer Learning Network will meet on the second Wednesday of each month, 10-11 a.m. PT/11 a.m.-12 p.m. MT.

**Next meeting:** April 13

**Topic:** What's Next?

- Review the ripple map of PLN impacts.
- Identify 2022 topics. How can the PLN help you and your communities with your priorities?

**Welcome Rebecca Meyers,** Montana Economic Developers Association's first-ever Executive Director, and soon-to-be PLN regular!



## Montana PLN February Meeting

### Topic: Workforce Innovation

Wes Feist from the Montana [State Workforce Innovation Board](#) (SWIB) gave the group an overview of the work of the board and how rural communities and even individual employers can access assistance from this state body.

SWIB advises the Governor on statewide workforce development strategies that maximize the state's education, training, and employment resources in support of eco-

nomie development. In addition to this advisory role, under both federal mandate and state legislation, SWIB implements the State Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act.

SWIB administers a dizzying array of programs, but the main message Wes conveyed was that the Board is getting out into communities more so it can better advise the Governor. Groups like MEDA could be good partners for that.

His advice for rural communities looking for resources to help tackle their workforce concerns is to reach out to the Department of Labor for advice, support, and guidance to the best programs and contact. Matter of fact, Wes himself would be happy to help connect MEDA members and PLN participants.

Contact Wes Feist:  
[wesley.feist@montana.gov](mailto:wesley.feist@montana.gov)



## & Other Resources

### Call for Proposals on Scenario Planning and Changing Food Systems

The Consortium for Scenario Planning, in collaboration with the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, invites proposals for original tools that focus on applying scenario planning to enhance community food system resiliency.

Click [here](#) for guidelines and information on how to apply. The deadline for proposals is March 23, 2022. Interested in exploring partnering to submit a proposal to use an exploratory scenarios planning approach? [Email](#) Michele Archie (The Harbinger Consultancy).

### Virtual Agritourism Gatherings

The International Workshop on Agritourism presents [Agritourism Gatherings: A virtual series for farm, food and travel communities](#). These sessions are live, with recorded presentations and discussions posted on the website along with related resources. Topics range from culinary innovation on the farm, to using booking sites for farm stays and experiences, to regional agritourism strategies for community economic development.

### RCAP — Rural Community Assistance Partnership

This nonprofit is a [national network of partners with over 300 technical assistance providers](#) across the United States. A lot of RCAP's work focuses on drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste disposal—but RCAP's Technical Assistance Partners provide practical guidance and capacity-building expertise from financial advice, to environmental services like helping communities comply with federal and state regulations, to generating economic opportunities.

### About Those Electric Vehicle Charging Stations...

Liz Carey's article in the Daily Yonder, [Which Came First, the Electric Pickup or the Charging Station?](#) takes up questions about how rural areas will fare in the distribution of EV charging stations. It links to a searchable map of EV charging stations, plus the current and proposed charging station corridors, mostly along Interstate highways. What's that? Your community isn't located along one of these corridors? The U.S. Department of Transportation's rural EV toolkit, [Charging Forward](#), is designed to be a one-stop resource to help rural communities scope, plan and fund EV charging infrastructure.

### Destination Stewardship Report

Subscribe to this [free quarterly email newsletter](#) for community tourism success stories, profiles of places that have implemented multi-sector destination stewardship councils, conferences, research and publications—all geared toward informing, inspiring and connecting people who care about the places where tourism happens.

### 15% WeCAN Discount for Online Courses

Use the code WECAN for a 15% discount on all of the [Harbinger Consultancy's online courses](#) for community and economic development professionals, community leaders, land trusts, downtown organizations and other groups focused on community well-being. On tap:

- Outdoor Recreation Roadmap: A Community-Led Approach to Leveraging Your Natural Assets for Economic Success and Local Renewal
- The New Community Project Roadmap: Lessons from Crowdfunding for Repeatable Success in Building and Sustaining Community Initiatives
- Do-It-Yourself Community Food Tourism and Agritourism Assessments
- Do-It-Yourself Trail User Research You Can Start Right Away

And more. Plus, June dates for our Creative Placemaking course will be announced soon.



# How Has the PLN Made a Difference?

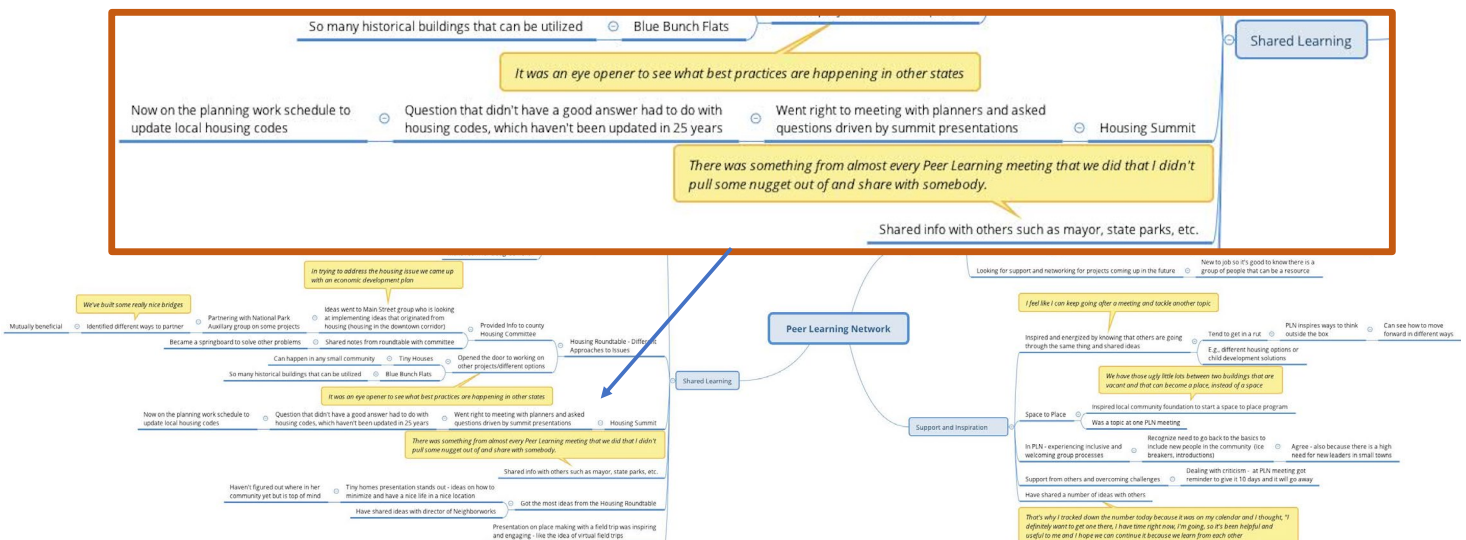
We are starting to build a Ripple Effects Map focused on the value that the WeCAN Peer Learning Network has brought to participants and their communities.

You can see the first version of the map below, and if you have a good magnifier you might be able to read it! The enlarged section illustrates the kinds of im-

pacts and benefits that have rippled out from the PLN, based on the March 9 PLN discussion.

Have you participated in the Idaho, Montana or Wyoming PLN? We'd love to add your insights to the map. Contact Lorie Higgins ([higgins@uidaho.edu](mailto:higgins@uidaho.edu)) to contribute. It's fun!

## Detail from the emerging map of PLN impacts and benefits



### Questions about the Peer Learning Network? Contact your state facilitator:

Idaho: Melissa Hamilton [mbhamilton@uidaho.edu](mailto:mbhamilton@uidaho.edu)  
 Montana: Rebecca Meyers [rebecca@medamembers.org](mailto:rebecca@medamembers.org)  
 Wyoming: Juliet Daniels [juliet.daniels@uwyo.edu](mailto:juliet.daniels@uwyo.edu)

### Want to join the monthly PLN meetings?

Want to join the monthly meetings? Contact Marci Miller [marcimiller@uidaho.edu](mailto:marcimiller@uidaho.edu)  
 Marci can help if you're not on the PLN meetings email list and calendar appointments—or don't know if you are.

### Newsletter contributors

Michele Archie • Julie Daniels • Melissa Hamilton • Gloria O'Rourke • Elizabeth Sloan • Lorie Higgins  
 Want to add something to the next newsletter? Contact Michele Archie [michele@harbingerconsult.com](mailto:michele@harbingerconsult.com)

### WeCAN collaborating organizations

Idaho Rural Partnership • Montana Economic Developers Association • Wyoming Business Council •  
 Extension faculty at University of Idaho, Montana State University & University of Wyoming