
Examples Of Different Non-Profit Organizations

Lander, Wyoming has more non-profit organizations than one would imagine a town of 7,000 having. The three different types of non-profit organization are well represented within the town. This paper will provide examples of organizations fitting the three different types as outlined in Murray's text, describe their roles within the community, and examine the external environment of non-profits in the Lander area.

Membership benefit organizations in Lander include the National Outdoor Leadership School, Elks, and the Senior Citizen's Center. These organizations offer services to those paying for memberships or courses.

NOLS is a leadership school based in Lander that takes pre-formed or random groups of paying students on 15-45 day expeditions in the backcountry. They teach team building, leadership, and survival skills. Students pay to take the courses, and are issued equipment and rations based on the price they pay. NOLS provides jobs to residents in the areas in which it operates, as well as offering a retail gear shop and rations room for locals. The main benefits are directed towards students. External threats include challenges to Wyoming public lands, economic decline, and the shrinking net worth of middle and lower class individuals.

Elks is a local fraternity-style religious organization that provides various opportunities to youth and veterans primarily. Members pay dues each month to be part of the Elks and volunteer at their various events. Member dues go towards lodge maintenance and a variety of programs, including drug awareness and prevention programs, scholarships, veteran services, and local projects. External threats include the general decline of religious affiliation among Americans and distaste for fraternity-style organizations.

The Senior Center is a communal building located near the retirement community in Lander. They offer a variety of services to those who are a part of the organization, including transportation from private homes to places like the grocery store, post office, and other community locations. Meals are served nightly, and are free for members. In addition, the center puts on events for its members. Younger members who can drive are required to man the shuttle for a specific number of hours per week, and the building is rented out for community events in order to pay for maintenance, taxes, and other fees associated with owning the building. Its main threat is the declination of the 65+ age group in Lander and surrounding areas.

Public benefit organizations in Lander include the First Stop Help Center, Child Development Services, and Community Entry Services. These organizations are "charity" type groups that help those in need of financial assistance or with specific health issues.

The First Stop Help Center is a financial assistance organization designed to provide monetary assistance to those in emergency situations. They accept government funds and private donations, and ask that those receiving assistance repay their loans when possible. They also provide classes on topics such as budgeting, parenting, and financial planning. They also direct clients to local services that fit their current situation and can help. External threats include

potential loss of income from the state of Wyoming as the oil and gas bubble bursts.

Child Development Services provides free developmental screenings for children through age 8. They offer no-charge physical and speech therapy for those found to be lagging behind, and have a pre-school. Children with developmental delays can attend free of charge, while those without developmental delays are charged at normal rates for the area. Paying students help offset the costs of those attending free of charge, and government funding provides the rest of the center's budget. External threats include the declination of births in the county.

Community Entry Services is a non-profit organization in Wyoming that helps provide opportunities for mentally handicapped individuals in the community. They run a thrift store in town that provides income for the organization and employs CES clients, and hosts "Dancing With The Stars: Lander" every year to bring in more funding. They also receive government funding. They help adults who would otherwise be institutionalized become productive members of the community and teach them basic life skills such as managing money, applying for a job, running a household, and more. CES also runs a series of homes in the community for these adults, with a companion available 24/7 to help with various physical and social needs. External threats are largely moot for CES, as Lander provides these services for the state at large and is the only organization that does so.

Advocacy organizations in Lander include the Wyoming Outdoor Council, the Wyoming Water for Wildlife Organization, and the Wyoming Wildlife Federation. These organizations lobby local and state governments for legislation supporting their causes, which largely focus on environmental issues in our state.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council is an advocacy group focusing on preserving Wyoming's public lands, implementing laws that outlaw fracking and other environmentally dangerous oil-related activities, and promoting "green" actions and activities across the state. They function almost entirely on privately donated funds from a variety of sources and groups, and strive to protect the Wyoming wilderness. External threats include lack of private donations and legislation that gets pushed through suddenly.

The Wyoming Water for Wildlife Organization is an advocacy group focused on keeping Wyoming's water clean and available for wildlife to access. They work with the Wyoming Outdoor Council and other outdoor-centric advocacy groups in order to further their goals. Like the Wyoming Outdoor Council, most of their funds come from private donations. Legislation and lack of private donations are also primary external threats for this organization.

The Wyoming Wildlife Federation is an advocacy group focused on protecting Wyoming's wildlife and their habitats, food and water sources, and migration routes. They work with Wyoming Fish and Game, organizations such as the Wyoming Outdoor Council and the Wyoming Water for Wildlife Organization to pool resources and achieve larger goals than each organization could achieve individually. Most of their funding comes from private donations and they receive a modest stipend from the state of Wyoming. Legislation, poaching, and lack of private donations are primary external threats for this organization as well.

Overall, all three types of non-profit organization are active in my community. They collect their revenues from many different sources, and in some cases (or for some causes) they even pool resources to achieve bigger or more expensive goals than one organization could achieve on its

own. Interestingly, these sometimes cross types- for example, the National Outdoor Leadership School's environmental stewardship and sustainability department works closely with the Wyoming Outdoor Council to protect Wyoming public lands and oppose fracking, private sales, and other measures that would threaten the amount of public access land in our state. I don't believe this is typical of non-profit organizations in that most of the time they maintain their own sphere- either member benefit, public service, or advocacy. There might be a little more cross over between the public service and advocacy spheres, but to see it between member benefit organizations and advocacy organizations is, I believe, rather unique. Whether this can be attributed to the small-town way of living or other factor is undetermined.

Part II

The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) is an incorporated member benefit non-profit. It is an educational organization that leads pre-formed or randomly formed groups of students on wilderness organizations for anywhere from 15 days to whole semesters. NOLS recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. NOLS has a full-time staff of 205 employees, a seasonal staff numbering around 450 per year, and a pool of 750 instructors. They operate on six continents, with 12 branches.

The main threats NOLS faces internally are employee turnover, lack of up-to-date information systems, and reluctance to change recurring issues. The main strengths NOLS has are that they are the only leadership school of their scope in the world, so they face virtually no competition within their field. Their education is unique, and used by the likes of NASA and the US Naval Academy. Because of their size and proprietary education, they don't need to be as competitive as they would if they did have market competition for students. NOLS' enrollment tends to be closely tied to the economy, as students pay around \$4,000 for a 30-day expedition and even more for semester long courses. Because of this, student enrollment is lower during rough financial times, usually determined by the US economy.

The board of directors at NOLS is composed of NOLS graduates, and in many cases former instructors or employees. These individuals are very familiar with NOLS' mission and goals, although they do tend to be disconnected from the realities of working at NOLS, leading to high levels of employee dissatisfaction and turnover due to stagnated wages, frustrating management practices, and antiquated information systems. The board does not interact much with employees, and is therefore slow to make changes to improve the school for its employees. The board does not conduct effectiveness reviews, and instead relies on numbers from the previous fiscal year to determine if the school is on the right track. This can create a disconnect between what is actually going on with the school and what is perceived to be going on, as the only one from within the organization who has contact with the board is the executive director. The ED tends to share the same clouded view of the organization as the board.

In addition, the gap between upper management and lower management and support staff is huge, making suggestions and improvements difficult, if not impossible, to deploy.

Overall, the board of directors at NOLS is not very effective. The only thing keeping this organization from going belly up is the lack of market competition, and impressive government contracts. Without these, the entire structure would fail.