

# Opportunities for Action:

## A Synthesis from Roundtables in Support of the Bureau of Land Management's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation



The public lands and waters managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provide unmatched outdoor recreation opportunities that connect us with these special places. As the official charitable arm of the BLM, the Foundation for America's Public Lands (the Foundation) convened partners from across the country to help us reimagine outdoor recreation on America's public lands and waters.

Over the last decade, BLM has seen a substantial uptick in visitors, with a 40% surge in visitors since 2012. However, the agency's budget and staffing levels have not kept pace. With demand growing, along with limited current resources, the BLM must transform its approach to recreation management.

In August 2023, the BLM released its [Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation](#) and invited stakeholders to weigh in on this new vision to provide exceptional and unique recreational experiences on public lands and waters. As one of its first program initiatives, the Foundation partnered with the BLM to ensure its Blueprint aligns with the needs of the communities it serves.

The Foundation invited input from more than 120 organizations representing a broad range of recreation interests including motorized and non-motorized; hunters and anglers; businesses; heritage, affinity, and conservation nonprofits; and local, state and Tribal governments.

In response to the partner input received at the roundtables, in November 2023 the Foundation released a report of responsive actions the BLM can consider to foster greater partner engagement, build an inclusive culture, and help address the challenges they face to ensure public lands and waters are available, accessible, and able to be enjoyed by current and future generations.

DOWNLOAD



The Blueprint is available on the BLM's website:

[blm.gov/programs/recreation/our-strategy](https://blm.gov/programs/recreation/our-strategy)



## Summary of Key Insights:

As the official charitable arm of the BLM, the Foundation for America's Public Lands (the Foundation) convened partners from across the country to help us reimagine outdoor recreation on America's public lands and waters. Partners are excited about the new direction, and many are ready to engage in problem-solving strategic thinking about implementation.

**1 Invest in the People and Systems Needed to Make the BLM a Partnering Agency.** Strengthening an organization-wide commitment to partnership, including establishing a BLM National Partnership Office, could help build trust and communication, while also providing entry points for partnership conversations with the BLM.

**2 Work with Partners to Advance Near-Term Actions:** While roundtable participants embraced the Blueprint's broad vision and framework for a paradigm shift, all were eager to understand and contribute to shared implementation actions. BLM Leadership and partner participants universally noted the challenges of translating the Blueprint's overarching framework into clear and consistent direction, accountability and support at district and field office levels, where managers face capacity constraints and are central to effective implementation. Nearly all expressed a desire to remain engaged to inform strategies and prioritize implementation actions.

**3 Clearly Articulate What is Needed to Implement the Blueprint.** Participants asked for clarity around what components of the Blueprint can be implemented under current funding levels, which require new appropriations, and which may be resourced through other avenues such as corporate sponsorships, volunteers, or community-based partnerships. By clarifying the role of increased appropriations and developing accessible databases that document and track recreational resource gaps, the BLM can better communicate why it needs increased resources to carry out its refreshed outdoor recreation vision.

**4 Prioritize Early Wins to Improve Access and Foster a Culture of Inclusion.** Roundtable participants emphasized the challenges and opportunities of improving access to BLM outdoor recreation experiences. Many discussed physical barriers in the form of landlocked public lands, limited river access and unclear services and consideration of persons with disabilities. BLM could create guidance to support positive recreational experiences for historically underserved and underrepresented populations and persons with disabilities.

**5 Streamline Planning and Decision-making to Meet Urgent Needs.** Participants expressed frustration with BLM planning processes, which are time consuming and often languish without being completed or implemented. By working with state, Tribal, and local governments—and clarifying analysis and decision making-processes—the BLM can foster collaborative solutions among diverse partners and target high-priority needs.

**6 Develop and Scale Collaborative Recreation Approaches with Partners and the BLM to Demonstrate Models for Success.** Roundtable participants shared their insights and ideas on possible roles and programming that the Foundation for America's Public Lands can develop as the congressionally chartered partner of the BLM to further implementation of the Blueprint. That includes awareness building, convening, and funding programs. They also identified opportunities for the Foundation to leverage outside resources to demonstrate effective solutions, interface with partners and the private sector on critical data and research needs and facilitate coordination and communications necessary to advance the Blueprint's vision.





## Options for Action with Early Investment:

Responsive actions the BLM can consider to incorporate these key insights learned include the following:

### PRIORITY ACTIONS:

- 1 Strategically Focus Investment on a Few Landscapes to Demonstrate Success at Scale.** Co-invest with the Bureau in a suite of recreation assessment, planning, infrastructure, education and stewardship projects in a few locations to demonstrate the impact of targeted resources.
- 2 Invest in Youth, Veteran, and Service Corps Projects.** Prioritize projects through youth, veteran, and service corps that respond to recreation demand, protect resources, and develop career pathways, including assisting the Bureau in elevating the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) and implementing the Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) Strategic Plan.
- 3 Convene Partners to Grow and Sustain a Movement in Support of the Blueprint.** Explore opportunities to support additional national and regional convenings to chart progress, prioritize implementation, and foster collaborative approaches to recreation management linking the Blueprint Framework to on the ground needs and opportunities, as well as evaluate engagement, advocacy, and implementation capacity needs at partner organizations to understand where the Foundation might offer additional support.

### OTHER ACTIONS:

- 1 Explore Opportunities to Support Priority Research, Data and Technical Assistance Needs.** Convene recreation industry, the private sector and other partners to explore barriers and opportunities to enhance visitor use data. That includes exploring opportunities to contract for geospatial and remote-sensing analysis and digitization, investing in critical research on BLM recreation use and management, and developing a partnership guide to help communities understand BLM structure and orient organizations to tools for partnerships.
- 2 Strengthen Branding, Outreach, and Communications.** Use polling, focus groups and other strategies to test messaging necessary to reach current and potential BLM recreation users and inspire them to share in the stewardship and enjoyment of their public lands.

We need strong partnerships to ensure the BLM has the resources it needs to implement its vision for outdoor recreation. This report is just the beginning, and the Foundation looks forward to ongoing, future partnership to make the vision a reality.



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