

Tourism & Outdoor Recreation Sector — Project Interview Summary

Sierra Region - Campgrounds

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Assets

Think about the natural assets — public lands, parks, trails, or other features — and the community assets — community facilities, airports, train stations, unique areas, and/or cultural events — that draw visitors to the region, and how the project connects to them. Then consider what kinds of investments, whether in staff capacity, coordination, or regional information sharing, the project would most benefit from to move forward.

Consider:

- What natural assets attract people to the region, and how does the project connect to them?
- What community assets attract and bring people to the region, and how does the project connect to them?
- What investments would most help the project advance?

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- Natural Assets
 - **Federal public land**
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - Inyo, Stanislaus, and Humboldt-Toiyabe national forests
 - National Parks
 - Yosemite National Park
 - Devil's Postpile and Manzanar national monuments
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - The project provides visitors opportunities to camp in **well-maintained contemporary campgrounds**
 - The project serves as a **gateway for public access** to significant federal land holdings in the region
- Community Assets and Regional Access
 - Limited community assets exist beyond a **federal highway** and **some air service** into the region
 - These public access assets allow **easy access to campgrounds** for visitor experiences
 - **Transportation infrastructure** is the primary community asset facilitating project success

Challenges:

- **Staffing Resources**
 - Sufficient funding for staffing is very important for **project management**

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- Administrative capacity funding is essential because **administering state and federal grants is complicated** and requires specialized skill sets
- Project success depends on **adequate human resources, administrative expertise, and partnership development**

2 Policy & Regulations

Reflect on the policies or regulations the project has encountered, and whether they have opened doors or created roadblocks. Consider also where the policy landscape simply does not match conditions on the ground, and whether a governance structure — like a joint powers authority or special district — could help bridge that gap.

Consider:

- *Which policies or regulations have helped or hindered the project?*
- *Where does the policy landscape not match reality on the ground, and what structures might help?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- State funding from **Proposition 68**
- The **Innovative Finance for National Forests** program
- **California's Jobs First** policies
- The **Great American Outdoors Act** has helped significantly to enhance campgrounds and address the maintenance backlog
- The **U.S. Forest Service's mission to develop partnerships with local communities** has supported the project
- Multiple state and federal policy initiatives have provided essential financial and programmatic support

Challenges:

- Uncertain and confusing federal environment
- **Bridging state and federal funding** requires skilled staff who can facilitate complex transactions
- A **massive deferred maintenance backlog** has rendered many campgrounds obsolete and impeded on-the-ground work
- Securing sufficient administrative capacity to handle **complex state and federal grant requirements**

3 Funding

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Consider what funding opportunities have identified and pursued, and what challenges have arisen if none are available. Think about how well current funding aligns with the actual needs and timeline — including reimbursement structures, long-term maintenance, and the ability to braid multiple sources together — and whether a capacity gap exists between the project and the funding it requires.

Consider:

- *What funding opportunities have been found, and what gaps or challenges remain?*
- *How well does available funding match the project's real needs, and can multiple funding sources be leveraged?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- **Funding is available** to carry project through planning phase to developing “bid ready” documents
- **Multiple state and federal funding sources** have been identified for planning work

Challenges:

- Funding secured for design and planning is typically **insufficient to bring documents to full bid-ready status**
- **Local skilled staff** are needed to serve as expeditors and bridge compatibility issues between state and federal funding streams
- The **administrative burden** of managing multiple, often incompatible funding sources is significant
- **Implementation funding questions** remain unresolved

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Data

Think about what data resources exist in the region to support your project — things like visitation numbers, economic impact, or user behavior — and what is missing that should be measured. Consider who owns the data, what happens to it when the project ends, and whether data to demonstrate the project's value to the agencies and funders who need to act on it can be used.

Consider:

- *What data is available and what important data is still missing?*
- *Who owns the data, and can it be used to make the case to funders and decision-makers?*

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Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- Data is available from **destination marketing organizations, the U.S. Forest Service**, and other federal agencies

Challenges:

- Additional visitor and usage data collection is required for effective design planning
- Relevant **data exists but is fragmented** across multiple organizations and not regularly updated
- Additional **data on campground usage and visitor numbers is needed** to inform design decisions
- **Geographic boundaries between Visit California regions and Jobs First regions do not align**, creating mismatches between visitor data and regional economic development needs

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Climate Change

Reflect on whether climate change is a factor in the project — through shifting seasons, temperature fluctuations, or changing visitor behaviors — and how the project is responding or adapting. Consider whether the project is connected to climate resilience or mitigation funding, and what it would take to do so.

Consider:

- *How is climate change affecting the project, and how are the project sponsors responding?*
- *Is the project connected to climate resilience or mitigation funding opportunities?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- **Climate change considerations are actively incorporated** into campground infrastructure redesign and planning

Challenges:

- **Climate change is significantly impacting campground** locations, resilience, and camping seasons
- **Federal climate resilience or mitigation funding is not available** for this type of recreation infrastructure project
- **Connecting recreation infrastructure to California's Proposition 4** funding presents significant challenges

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- Despite climate change informing campground redesigns, **the project has not secured climate-related funding opportunities**

6 Workforce

Think about the workforce gaps standing in the way of the project moving forward, and whether the project's proponents are finding the skills, contractors, and project managers they need locally. Consider also whether the project creates opportunities to build longer-term workforce pipelines through partnerships with community colleges, workforce boards, or local hire programs.

Consider:

- *What workforce gaps are slowing the project, and is the project finding the talent needed locally?*
- *Does the project create opportunities to build long-term workforce pipelines in the region?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- **Local skilled workers, contractors, and project managers** are available and could support the project
- Strong potential exists for **partnerships with community colleges, local hire programs, and local contractors**
- A **long-term workforce pipeline** could be built if sustained federal and/or state investment is secured

Challenges:

- Funding for local contractors and project managers is **sporadic and inconsistent**
- The project is currently **limited to the planning and design** phase only
- Implementation must go through a **federal bid process**, raising concerns about whether local contractors can meet federal bidding requirements
- Local capacity exists but cannot be activated without **sustained investment**

7 Collaboratives

Reflect on the collaborative relationships your project depends on — across jurisdictions, land managers, or tribal partners — and where those relationships are accelerating progress or slowing things down. Consider whether there is a regional body or coordination structure your project needs but does not yet have access to.

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Consider:

- *What collaborative relationships does your project depend on, and where are they helping or hindering?*
- *Is there a regional body or coordination structure you need but don't yet have?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- **Strong agency partnerships**, particularly with U.S. Forest Service management, are fundamental to project advancement
- **Information sharing bodies** have been helpful to the project
- A **formal regional coordination body is not considered necessary** for this project type
- **Building relationships with federal partners** is incredibly important

Challenges:

- Skilled NGO facilitators and expeditors have been essential for braiding state and federal funding together, but **ongoing capacity to hire and retain** them is needed

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Branding & Marketing

Think about whether your project or region has a clear identity, and how effectively you are telling your story to your community, to funders, and to decision-makers at the state and federal level. Consider whether your project's brand or identity could go beyond marketing to become a tool for financing, advocacy, or building political will.

Consider:

- *Does your project or region have a clear identity, and how well are you telling that story?*
- *Could your project's brand become a financing or advocacy tool, not just a marketing one?*

Discussion Points

Opportunities:

- The project is **straightforward to explain** to community members, funders, and government decision-makers
- **Project success could serve as a valuable tool** for future financing, advocacy, and building political support
- Investment in branding and marketing could **unlock financing and advocacy opportunities** beyond traditional marketing

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Challenges:

- The project and region currently **lack a clear brand identity**, despite the region's existing reputation
- The project's story is **not being actively communicated** to key audiences
- **No investment in branding or marketing** has been made, despite its potential value as a financing and advocacy tool