

# Colorado Parks & Wildlife

## Case Study: Strategy Retreat Facilitation

### BACKGROUND

With a recent change in leadership and the conclusion of their previous strategic plan, it was naturally time for Colorado Parks & Wildlife to revisit their organizational goals, budget priorities, and long-term investments. This point coincided with the completion of Corona Insights' market assessment for State Parks – a year-long analysis of visitor needs and habits. These two factors would have been reason enough for the leadership team to ask Karla Raines of Corona Insights to facilitate their upcoming board retreat.

However, State Parks found themselves in a unique position entering the next legislative session. Still recovering from recent budget cuts from the state, Colorado Parks & Wildlife needed to design an immediate action plan to prepare for the possibility of additional cuts and other financial scenarios. At the same time, these new budget realities made them question their overarching priorities for the next 3-5 years as well as their long-term sustainability. The organization was at a critical juncture facing an uncertain future.

From the get go, Corona grasped the complexity of this situation and its potential effects on both the organization's day-to-day functions and overall structure. As the retreat facilitator, Karla needed to guide the board and staff to find short-term solutions, while crafting long-term strategies. Never shy about asking the challenging questions, Karla understood that the group needed to leave with both focus and momentum.



“ We were spinning our wheels, but getting nowhere. We turned to Corona because they impressed us with the research they produced before. Without a doubt, Karla was the best facilitator to help us plan for the short term while proactively looking at the next 3-5 years. — Dean Winstanley, Director of Colorado Parks & Wildlife ”

### CORONA'S SOLUTION

Through our extensive experience leading retreats, we've learned the importance of advance data gathering in order to make the most of our client's time. Understanding the urgency of State Park's situation, Corona's first surveyed the board and top staff members on the organization's vision, distinct competence, and strategic issues and opportunities. A brief report of survey findings was distributed to all participants prior the retreat.

With this information in hand, Karla hit the ground running on day one. Not only did this process spark thinking about Colorado Parks & Wildlife's desired future and current challenges before the actual retreat, but it allowed the whole group to enter with ideas already in mind.

At the retreat, Corona started by defining and refining State Parks' core values and unique role. This exercise built consensus around State Parks' essential purpose and commitment to the community. Corona quickly summarized this conceptual framework and used it as a basis for the rest of the retreat. As the organization launches their upcoming strategic planning process and revitalized marketing efforts, these core concepts will serve as a strong foundation.

“ *The retreat was the catalyst to get us moving forward. It rallied our board and focused our thinking into strategic projects now under way.*  
— Dean Winstanley, Director of Colorado Parks & Wildlife

“ *Our overall experience with Corona was outstanding! We needed a long-term plan, but also needed something to get us through the next six months. Karla really got that. She didn't use a cookie-cutter approach and we weren't shoe-horned into a facilitation template that didn't fit.*  
— Dean Winstanley, Director of Colorado Parks & Wildlife

## CORONA'S SOLUTION—CONTINUED

Next, Corona introduced State Parks' short-term budgetary concerns and long-term stability. Corona directed a brainstorming session that led participants to consider alternate business model options. The group began to examine their entire “portfolio of assets,” looking at their variety of parks with a critical eye for relevance, performance, cost and branding. As a group, they formulated and assessed new funding models and revenue streams, strategic partnerships, and important government relationships.

## THE OUTCOME

In addition to a fresh approach for the future and a revived sense of commitment, the Colorado Parks & Wildlife board and staff left the retreat with detailed tasks, deadlines and a long-term direction. It was truly the spark they needed.

Derived directly from the analysis of business model options at the retreat, the Colorado Parks & Wildlife board and staff began putting together a comprehensive financial plan. This financial plan took into consideration various funding sources and strategic relationships, as well as a range of fiscal scenarios. The plan included six committees, all related to topics covered at the retreat, including reduction of operational costs, alternative funding streams, and long-term sustainability. This all-inclusive plan was a crucial outcome of the retreat, as it addressed State Parks budgetary concerns in both the short and long-term.

At the same time, the State Parks was updating their strategic plan for the next five years. The conceptual framework set at the retreat (i.e., updated vision, distinct competence, and role) will provide a guiding light for future strategic planning efforts.

From beginning to end, Corona led a data-driven and forward-thinking process that spurred Colorado Parks & Wildlife to assess their current situation, make crucial decisions about their priorities and act immediately.

