Jay Kemmerer WORTH Institute

College of Business
Center for Business and Economic Analysis

NOLS

The Contribution of the National Outdoor Leadership School to Wyoming's Economy

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NOLS


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Executive Summary

This study examines the economic contribution of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) to the economies of Wyoming and Fremont County. NOLS is an organization headquartered in Lander, Wyoming that provides courses teaching leadership skills, wilderness medicine, and other competencies. The school has global reach with students from all 50 states and around the world.

Table 1.1 shows the total annual contribution of NOLS in fiscal year 2024 to the economies of Fremont County and Wyoming, including both operational expenses and spending on construction and maintenance of buildings. NOLS contributes significantly to Fremont County, supporting 142 jobs, generating $10.95 million in labor income, $12.59 million in value added, and $16.22 million in economic output. NOLS had additional impacts in other areas of Wyoming, resulting in total impacts to Wyoming of 153 jobs, $11.61 million in labor income, $13.45 million in value added, and $18.77 million in economic output.

Table 1.1: Summary of economic impacts of NOLS

Economic area	Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Fremont County	Direct	107	$9,437,971	$9,496,225	$10,764,857
	Indirect	7	$302,225	$468,220	$833,405
	Induced	29	$1,210,037	$2,621,281	$4,626,228
	Total	142	$10,950,233	$12,585,726	$16,224,489
Wyoming	Direct	112	$9,788,843	$9,884,351	$12,353,545
	Indirect	11	$535,260	$782,381	$1,506,310
	Induced	31	$1,283,471	$2,780,348	$4,906,981
	Total	153	$11,607,575	$13,447,080	$18,766,836

In addition to economic impacts from NOLS operations and construction, this report examines the impact NOLS has through visitor spending. Because NOLS offers goods and services that visitors likely use while in Lander, it is not possible to separate visitor spending from operations impacts. Therefore, they are reported separately. Visitor impacts should not be summed up with operations and construction impacts. Table 1.2 summarizes the economic impact NOLS has through visitor spending in Wyoming.

Table 1.2: Summary of economic impacts from visitors

Impact	Employment	Labor income	Value added	Output
Direct	6	$152,658	$283,949	$575,852
Indirect	1	$45,092	$79,897	$189,714
Induced	1	$24,525	$53,570	$94,287
Total	7	$222,275	$417,417	$859,853

1 Introduction

NOLS focuses on teaching leadership skills in a variety of outdoor and classroom contexts, from medical emergencies to wilderness expeditions and beyond. People from diverse backgrounds come to NOLS to test and expand their outdoor skills and develop leadership competencies that can be translated to their professional and personal lives. Students come from all over the United States and from around the world for trainings. The school was founded in 1965 teaching primarily outdoor skills in the Sinks Canyon area. Since then, the school has expanded to three locations in Wyoming and an additional eleven campuses worldwide.

NOLS has a significant global presence, with both students and faculty coming from around the world. In the 2024 fiscal year, NOLS had 1,211 expedition students and 966 wilderness medicine students from all 50 states come to Wyoming for courses in addition to many more students around the world. NOLS introduces students from around the world to Wyoming, its natural beauty, and its sense of hospitality. These students create lasting memories and often maintain lifetime connections to NOLS, Fremont County, and Wyoming. NOLS is an asset in marketing Wyoming to both visitors and residents as a place to live, work, and recreate in the great outdoors. While this report focuses on the measurable economic impacts of NOLS, readers should keep the other, less quantifiable impacts in mind. Section 5 discusses other impacts in more detail.

NOLS makes meaningful non-economic contributions to Wyoming as well. For example, NOLS Wilderness Medicine provides emergency medicine training to the University of Wyoming Medical school first-year class, the Fremont County Search and Rescue team, Shoshone National Forest rangers, and over 450 EMTs annually qualified to work in the State of Wyoming. Additionally, NOLS contributes to Wyoming's culture of outdoor recreation, leadership, and stewardship through the courses and experiences it provides to students.

Due to its significant presence, NOLS has a substantial impact on the economy of Wyoming and Fremont County in particular. This report investigates this impact using expense data provided by NOLS. Expenses are used to model direct economic impacts in IMPLAN, which estimates indirect and induced economic impacts. Section 3 explains economic impact analysis and the methodology used to determine the economic impact NOLS has in Wyoming and in Fremont County. Section 4 presents the results of economic modeling. Section 5 discusses other impacts that cannot be quantified in this report. Section 6 concludes.

Apart from the economic impact analysis, this report also includes demographic and visitation information to highlight the broader, unquantifiable contributions of NOLS. The geographic diversity of students and faculty is presented in visualizations to demonstrate the role NOLS plays in fostering cultural exchange and learning. The tables and figures for the non-quantifiable impacts of NOLS are included in Appendices B and C. Overall, the report shows how NOLS brings economic value and community vibrancy in Wyoming.

2 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to estimate the economic impact of NOLS, with a specific focus on its operations in Fremont County, Wyoming. An economic contribution analysis examines how an organization contributes to the economy of a specified region through its spending using input-output modeling. This includes an analysis of three kinds of impacts. *Direct* impacts are generated when a firm pays its employees, purchases supplies or services, and otherwise spends money to support operations. *Indirect* impacts are generated by business further up the supply chain. When a supplier uses funds received by the firm to pay its own suppliers and employees, this is considered an indirect impact. Finally, *induced* impacts are caused by employees of both the firm and other firms along its supply chain spending their wages and salaries in the local economy.

For example, when NOLS conducts an outdoor leadership course, it receives tuition funds from students. Revenues by NOLS are not included in the economic contribution analysis, however, when NOLS uses revenues to pay for wilderness rations and other supplies to use during the course, that is considered a direct impact. The wages and salaries paid to faculty to conduct the course are also considered direct impacts. If the wilderness ration supplier is in Wyoming, an indirect impact occurs when the supplier uses its proceeds to pay its own employees and suppliers. Finally, an induced impact occurs when NOLS faculty spend their wages and salaries in the local economy. Any purchases from outside the region under consideration subtract from economic impacts. These are referred to as *leakages*. For more information on economic impact analyses, see Appendix A.

Impacts in IMPLAN are separated into several economic indicators: full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, labor income, value added, and output. A single FTE job roughly corresponds to the hours that would be worked by a single full-time employee. For example, two employees who work 20 hours per week represent a single FTE job. Labor income represents the wages, salaries, benefits, and employment taxes supported by economic activity. Value added is the total amount of goods and services supported by economic activity measured in final goods and services prices. Output is the total amount of goods and services supported by economic activity measured in the prices of final goods and services plus all intermediate goods and services required to produce final goods and services. For more information on the difference between output and value added, see *Output, Value Added, and Double Counting*, (2019).

This report examines three kinds of contributions made by NOLS, impacts from operations, impacts from construction activity, and impacts from visitor spending. Impacts from operations are separated from impacts from construction because impacts from operations are more likely to be ongoing and therefore are considered representative of the contribution NOLS makes to its local economy every year. By contrast, impacts from construction activity change year-to-year as new projects are started or completed and should therefore be considered temporary.

Impacts from visitor spending are estimated separately for two reasons. First, they are estimated using a different methodology from NOLS operations and construction. NOLS operations and construction impacts are estimated using expense data provided by NOLS. Visitor spending impacts are estimated using estimates of the number of visitor-nights NOLS generates and data on spending per visitor-night from an annual visitor spending report produced by Dean Runyan Associates for the Wyoming Office of Tourism (Dean

Runyan Associates, 2025; Hereafter the Dean Runyan Report). Second, because of the kinds of services NOLS provides to students and faculty, it is not possible to separate visitor spending impacts from operations impacts. NOLS operates a hotel, kitchen, and retail gear store in Lander that are used by students and faculty when staying in Lander. NOLS additionally reimburses faculty for travel to Lander. All of these impacts overlap with those measured by visitor spending, so at least some visitor spending double-counts the impact of NOLS operations. However, some visitor spending is likely in addition to NOLS impacts as visitors may choose to eat at local restaurants, visit local retailers, or stay in local hotels. Without more data, it is not possible to estimate the portion of visitor spending that does not overlap with NOLS operations. For this reason, it is not appropriate to sum visitor impacts with impacts from operations and construction to calculate total impacts. Total economic impacts by NOLS in fiscal year 2024 will be somewhere between the sum of impacts from operation and construction and the sum of all three kinds of impacts.

2.1 OPERATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

The first step in conducting an economic contribution analysis is to estimate direct impacts. To do so, this analysis uses detailed records of NOLS's annual operating expenditures, including payroll data of employees, procurement, facility management, taxes and fees, instructional materials, and travelling. In addition to operating expenses, NOLS provided information on construction expenses that are used to estimate the direct impact of construction activity.

IMPLAN uses a system of 528 industry categories for classifying expenses. For example, purchasing rations at a grocery store would be an expense classified in IMPLAN industry 389: Retail – food and beverage stores. To correctly estimate indirect impacts, this report classifies spending by NOLS into IMPLAN industry categories. NOLS provided both a summary of major operating expense categories as well as detailed tables of expenses. Some summary categories are easily classified into IMPLAN industries, while other categories require classifying individual expenses. For this project, each summary expense category or expense item was reviewed and classified into the most relevant IMPLAN industry. Table D.1 in Appendix D shows how each spending category was classified. Examples of industry categories include Air transportation, Water transportation, Transit and Ground passenger transportation, Hotel and Motels, and Retail-General merchandise stores, among others. See Appendix D for more details.

IMPLAN ordinarily estimates indirect and induced impacts using pre-defined spending patterns for each industry. However, NOLS does not fit neatly into IMPLAN's industry categories as an outdoor leadership school. Therefore, the industry classification described in the previous paragraph is used to construct a new spending pattern for NOLS. Once constructed, most operating expenses in Wyoming are entered as intermediate inputs in IMPLAN.

Some expenses by NOLS were reimbursements made to the employees, such as mileage. These expenses are categorized as employee compensation and included in labor costs. All labor costs, such as salaries, wages, and benefits for NOLS employees, were input as employee compensation within IMPLAN. Finally, although NOLS is a nonprofit and therefore does not pay many taxes, some expenses like recreational use fees on public lands are classified as taxes and entered in IMPLAN as Taxes on Production and Imports.

In addition to examining the impact on Wyoming's economy, this report also estimates the impact of NOLS on Fremont County's economy. To estimate this impact, expenses that took place in Fremont County were classified using the information provided by NOLS. However, no location information could be found for some expenses and, therefore, the results for Fremont County may be understated in this report if some expenses took place in Fremont County but could not be classified by location.

Impacts from construction are modeled separately and are classified as direct output for IMPLAN industry 55: Maintenance construction of nonresidential structures. In addition to construction expenses, NOLS also provided capital expenditure in other categories, like computer equipment and furnishings. However, most of these expenses were out-of-state and therefore would not have any impact on Wyoming. Therefore, non-construction capital expenses are not modeled here. Like operating expenses, construction is also modeled for both Wyoming and Fremont County.

2.2 VISITOR SPENDING IMPACTS

Impacts from visitor spending are estimated in three steps. First, using information provided by NOLS about students, faculty, and courses, visitor-nights in Fremont County are estimated. Second, spending per visitor night is distributed across industry categories using data from the Dean Runyan report to calculate total visitor spending from NOLS by industry category. Finally, total visitor spending by industry category is input into IMPLAN as industry output to produce estimates of indirect and induced impacts.

Based on conversations with NOLS staff and data provided by NOLS, visitor-nights come from three primary sources: students staying in Lander before, between, and after courses begin, faculty from outside Wyoming staying in Lander before, between, and after courses, and parents, guardians, or other companions traveling with students to Lander. NOLS indicated that in fiscal year 2024, there were 1,072 expedition students in stand along courses (courses with a single section), 139 students in semester (multi-section) courses, and 966 students in wilderness medicine courses. On average, students spend one day in Lander before and one day in Lander after a stand along or wilderness medicine course, meaning an estimated 3,360 visitor nights in fiscal year 2024. Students in semester courses have about three to four course sections per semester and spend an additional two to five days in Lander between courses. With 139 students in semester courses, this results in an estimated 1,216 additional visitor nights. Overall, students generated an estimated 5,352 visitor nights in fiscal year 2024.

In fiscal year 2024, NOLS indicated that there were 73 international expedition faculty working in Wyoming on expedition courses, and an additional 9 faculty working on wilderness medicine courses for a total of 82 international instructors. Faculty spend different amounts of time in Wyoming depending on the kind and number of courses taught, but NOLS estimates that each international faculty member spent about five days in Lander before, after, and between courses, resulting in 410 visitor nights. In addition to courses taught by international faculty, NOLS has several meetings throughout the year attended by international directors, staff, or other travelers. These resulted in an additional estimated 242 visitor days of travel. Jointly, faculty and other international staff account for 651 additional visitor nights.

Most courses offered by NOLS are taken by students 18 years old or older, and therefore there are unlikely to be parents, guardians, or other companions traveling with students. However, NOLS does offer expedition

courses that are taken by minors. NOLS indicated that there were 228 such students in fiscal year 2024 in Wyoming. Assuming one companion per student who stays one night before and after each course results in an additional 456 visitor nights. Table 3.1 shows visitor nights from all three sources. In total, there were an estimated 6,460 visitor nights from travelers to NOLS.

Table 3.1: Visitor nights from travelers to NOLS

Type of traveler	Visitor nights
International faculty	410
Other international travelers	242
Students	5,352
Parents	456
Total	6,460

The Dean Runyan report estimates that each visitor night generates $119 in visitor spending. $119 multiplied by the estimated visitor nights generated by NOLS results in an estimated $768,710 in visitor spending generated in fiscal year 2024.[1] Using the data on spending by industry in the Dean Runyan Report, total visitor spending is allocated to industries as indicated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Visitor spending industry allocation

Industry	Spending allocation	Visitor Spending from NOLS
Accommodations	21.0%	$161,213
Arts, ent., and rec.	18.5%	$142,017
Food service	25.3%	$194,614
Food stores	8.1%	$62,145
Local trans. and gas	13.8%	$105,933
Retail sales	11.7%	$90,270
Visitor air	1.6%	$12,518
Total	100.0%	$768,710

Visitor spending estimates in each industry category are input as an industry output event for Fremont County in IMPLAN. There may be additional impacts in Wyoming outside Fremont County, but due to data limitations it is not possible to estimate them. Because IMPLAN's system of 528 industries do not align exactly with the industry categories in the Dean Runyan report, some IMPLAN industries are aggregated together. The resulting indirect and induced impacts are presented in Section 4.3 below.

1 Note that estimated visitor nights are rounded in Table 3.1, so estimated visitor spending used in IMPLAN analysis is slightly less than $119 x 6460.

3 Results

The results of modeling the impacts from operations and construction are presented here. Results are separated by impacts on Wyoming and impacts on Fremont County.

3.1 OPERATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS ON WYOMING

Table 4.1: Economic impacts of NOLS operations in Wyoming in Fiscal Year 2024

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	111	$9,726,643	$9,787,935	$12,129,249
Indirect	10	$520,823	$750,544	$1,444,433
Induced	30	$1,273,751	$2,759,292	$4,869,819
Total	152	$11,521,217	$13,297,771	$18,443,501

Table 4.1 shows how NOLS operations impact Wyoming. The direct impact includes 111 FTE jobs, generating $9.73 million in labor income, $9.79 million in value added and a total economic output of $12.13 million. The indirect effects which arise from supply chain and business-to-business purchases support an additional 10 FTE jobs, $521 thousand in labor income, $751 thousand in value added, and $1.44 million in total output. Finally, the induced effects, which result from household spending by employees, contribute 30 more FTE jobs, $1.27 million in labor income, $2.76 million in value added, and $4.90 million in output. In total, NOLS supports approximately 152 FTE jobs, generates over $11.52 million in labor income, $13.30 million in value added, and produces a total economic output of $18.44 million within Wyoming.

Table 4.2: Tax impacts of NOLS operations in Wyoming in Fiscal Year 2024

Impact	Sub County General	Sub County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$1,230	$13,904	$7,229	$169,719	$2,468,437	$2,660,519
Indirect	$804	$7,932	$3,238	$40,808	$138,977	$191,759
Induced	$5,506	$53,847	$21,573	$255,531	$380,587	$717,042
Total	$7,539	$75,683	$32,040	$466,057	$2,988,001	$3,569,320

Table 4.2 shows the impact on local, county, state, and federal tax receipts from NOLS operations. IMPLAN estimates tax receipts for five levels of government. County, state, and federal governments are self-explanatory. Sub county special districts are defined as districts within a county where taxes are collected for special purposes, like medical, firefighting, or school districts. Sub county general districts are districts granted broad taxing authority, like municipalities. NOLS operations generated an estimated $3.6 million in total tax revenue in fiscal year 2024. Most of this, around $2.99 million, goes to the federal government, mainly through employee income taxes and business-related taxes. The state government received about $466,057 county governments received an estimated $32,040; sub county special districts received an estimated

$75,683; and sub county general districts received $7,539. Taxes are generated by NOLS's direct spending, the businesses it works with and the employees who spend their earnings on the local economy. This means that NOLS not only creates jobs and economic activity but also helps support public services through taxes. Overall, NOLS has a strong impact on government revenue at all levels.

Table 4.3: Economic impacts of construction activity by NOLS in Wyoming in Fiscal Year 2024

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	1.2	$62,200	$96,416	$224,296
Indirect	0.3	$14,437	$31,837	$61,877
Induced	0.2	$9,720	$21,056	$37,162
Total	1.8	$86,357	$149,309	$323,335

Table 4.3 shows the impact on Wyoming from construction expenses by NOLS in fiscal year 2024. Unlike a traditional school, many NOLS courses are conducted outdoors, largely on public lands. Therefore, it is not surprising that NOLS does not have a large impact through the construction or maintenance of buildings. Nevertheless, construction expenses in Wyoming created 1.8 FTE jobs, $86,357 in labor income, $149,309 in value added, and $323,335 in economic output, mostly through direct impacts.

Table 4.4: Tax impacts of construction activity by NOLS in Wyoming in Fiscal Year 2024

Impact	Sub County General	Sub County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$32	$326	$140	$2,056	$16,813	$19,367
Indirect	$106	$1,038	$414	$4,824	$4,332	$10,715
Induced	$42	$411	$165	$1,950	$2,904	$5,471
Total	$181	$1,775	$719	$8,829	$24,049	$35,553

Table 4.4 shows tax revenues generated by construction expenses. The capital expenditure on building infrastructure in Wyoming by NOLS generates a total of $365,553 in tax revenue across different levels of government. The federal government receives the largest share, $24,049, followed by the state government with around $8,829. Smaller amounts went to county governments ($719), special districts ($1,775), and sub county general governments ($181).

3.2 OPERATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS ON FREMONT COUNTY

Table 4.5 shows the impact of NOLS operations on the economy of Fremont County.

Table 4.5: Economic impact of NOLS operations in Fremont County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	106	$9,395,643	$9,430,612	$10,612,218
Indirect	6	$292,428	$446,600	$791,400
Induced	29	$1,203,449	$2,607,001	$4,601,041
Total	141	$10,891,520	$12,484,213	$16,004,659

Because NOLS is headquartered in Lander, most of the economic impact to Wyoming is accounted for by Fremont County, with 141 out of 147 total FTE jobs, $10.90 million out of $11.52 million in labor income, $12.48 million out of $13.30 million in value added, and $16 million out of $18.44 million in output. Table 4.6 shows how NOLS operations in Fremont County impact tax revenues. Like economic impacts, much of the tax impact NOLS has on Wyoming is accounted for by Fremont County, with $6,585 out of $7,539 in taxes to sub county general jurisdictions, $65,408 out of $75,683 to sub county special districts, $27,854 the Fremont County government out of $32,040 to all Wyoming county governments, $413,236 out of $466,057 in state taxes, and $2.82 million out of $2.99 million in federal taxes.

Table 4.6: Tax impacts of NOLS operations in Fremont County in Fiscal Year 2024

Impact	Sub County General	Sub County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$789	$9,544	$5,443	$146,452	$2,383,766	$2,545,993
Indirect	$506	$4,988	$2,030	$25,356	$79,061	$111,941
Induced	$5,202	$50,875	$20,382	$241,428	$359,581	$677,468
Total	$6,497	$65,408	$27,854	$413,236	$2,822,408	$3,335,403

Most of the construction activity by NOLS takes place in Fremont County as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Economic impacts of NOLS construction activity in Fremont County

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct	0.8	$42,329	$65,614	$152,639
Indirect	0.2	$9,797	$21,619	$42,004
Induced	0.2	$6,587	$14,280	$25,186
Total	1.2	$58,713	$101,513	$219,830

Construction activity in Fremont County supported 1.2 FTE jobs, $58,713 in labor income, $101,513 in value added and $219,830 in economic output. Table 4.8 shows that much of the tax revenue generated by construction activity occurs in Fremont County, with $123 going to sub county general districts, $1,207 to sub county special districts, $489 to the Fremont County government, $489 to the State of Wyoming, and $16,350 to the federal government.

Table 4.8: Tax impacts of NOLS construction activity in Fremont County

Impact	Sub County General	Sub County Special Districts	County	State	Federal	Total
Direct	$22	$222	$96	$1,399	$11,441	$13,180
Indirect	$72	$706	$282	$3,280	$2,940	$7,281
Induced	$29	$279	$112	$1,324	$1,969	$3,712
Total	$123	$1,207	$489	$6,003	$16,350	$24,172

3.2.1 Contextualizing the economic impact of NOLS operations

The economic impact figures presented here can be difficult to contextualize at first glance. This section presents economic data for Fremont County and for Wyoming so that readers can place NOLS in its context with other establishments. County and state-level data on establishment size is difficult to find and often proprietary, so this report does not directly compare NOLS to other employers in Fremont County or Wyoming. However, public data is available on the number of firms grouped into categories by number of employees from the U. S. Census County Business Patterns (CBP, US Census Bureau, 2025). Figure 4.1 shows the number of establishments in Fremont County in each size category used by the CBP.

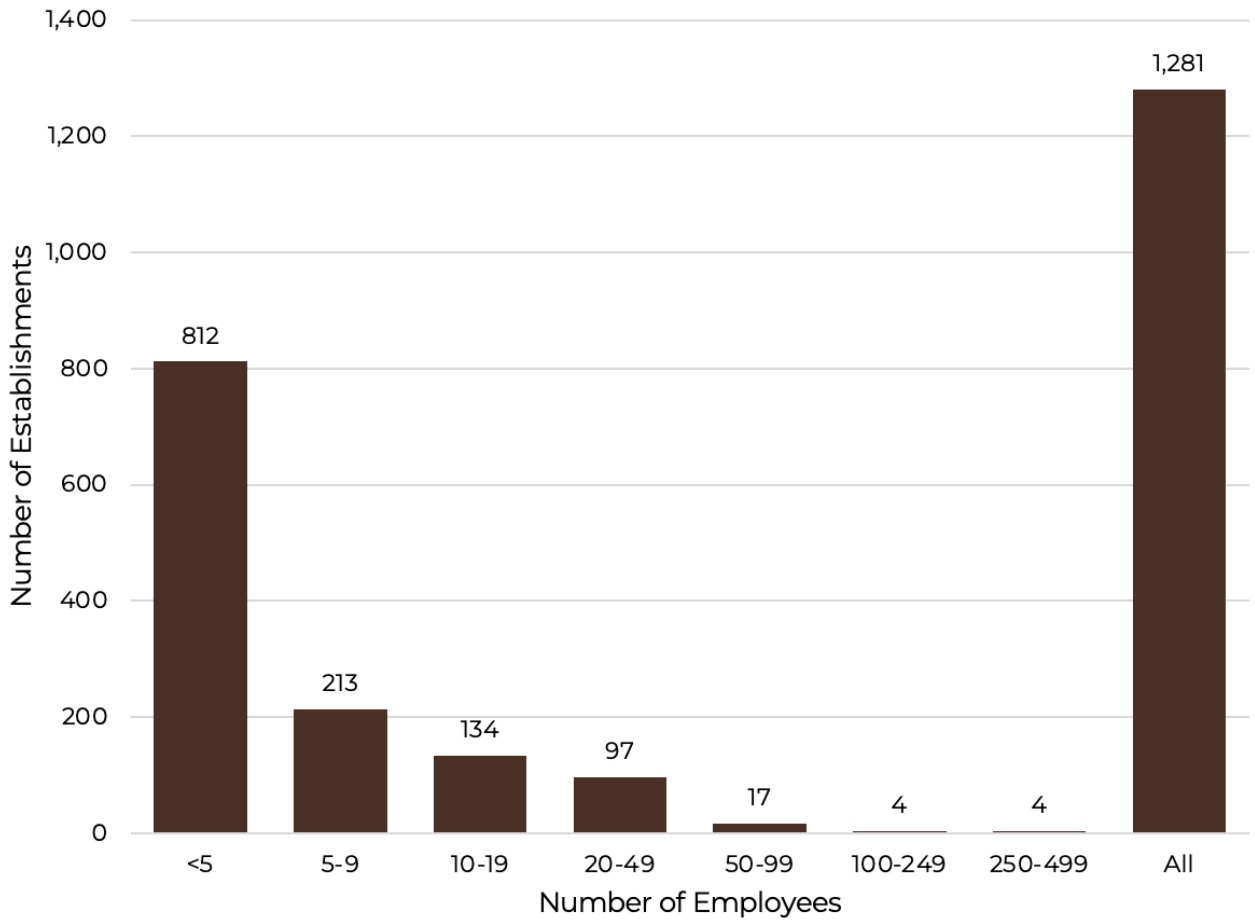

Figure 4.1: Establishments grouped by number of employees in Fremont County

With 106 employees in Fremont County, NOLS is one of the top 8 employers, with more employees than 99.3% of establishments. In addition to being a top employer in Fremont County, NOLS also has better compensation compared to other employers. According to data provided by NOLS, the median employee compensation at NOLS in fiscal year 2024 was $44,000, while the median employee compensation in Fremont County in 2023 was $35,583 (US Census Bureau, 2024). The median worker at NOLS makes $8,417 more than the median worker in Fremont County. Figure 4.2 shows the number of establishments in Wyoming in each size category used by the CBP.

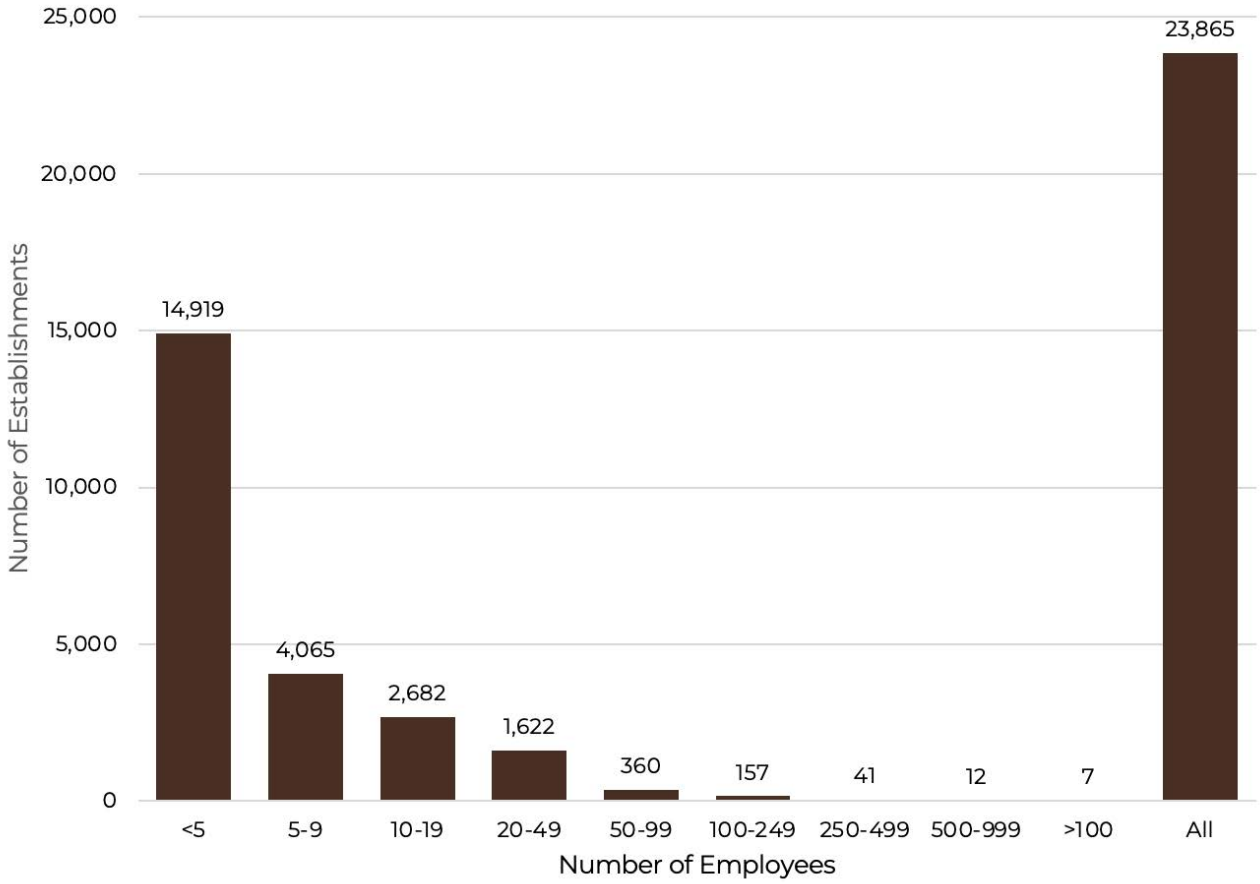

Figure 4.2: Establishments grouped by number of employees in Wyoming

With 111 employees in Wyoming, NOLS is one of the top 217 employers, with more employees than 99% of establishments in Wyoming. The median employee compensation for NOLS employees in all of Wyoming is $43,018, which is $1,444 more than median compensation in Wyoming of $41,574 (US Census Bureau, 2024).

3.3 IMPACTS FROM VISITOR SPENDING

Visitor impacts are presented by industry Table 4.9.9 and Table 4.10.

Table 4.9: Economic impacts from visitor spending

Industry	Impact	Employment	Labor income	Value added	Output
Accommodations	Direct	1.4	$52,852	$102,639	$165,556
	Indirect	0.2	$9,054	$15,923	$36,557
	Induced	0.2	$7,574	$16,544	$29,118
	Total	1.8	$69,480	$135,106	$231,231

Arts, ent., and rec	Direct	1.5	$18,877	$45,731	$144,255
	Indirect	0.5	$18,149	$31,338	$78,420
	Induced	0.1	$4,645	$10,145	$17,856
	Total	2.1	$41,671	$87,213	$240,531
Food service	Direct	2.2	$56,314	$91,790	$198,258
	Indirect	0.3	$14,141	$25,731	$58,300
	Induced	0.2	$8,700	$19,003	$33,445
	Total	2.7	$79,155	$136,524	$290,003
Food stores	Direct	0.2	$6,654	$12,684	$18,022
	Indirect	0.0	$807	$1,474	$3,768
	Induced	0.0	$937	$2,048	$3,604
	Total	0.2	$8,398	$16,205	$25,394
Local trans. and gas	Direct	0.1	$1,990	$3,789	$5,183
	Indirect	0.0	$215	$374	$901
	Induced	0.0	$273	$597	$1,051
	Total	0.1	$2,478	$4,761	$7,135
Retail sales	Direct	0.3	$11,072	$22,693	$32,025
	Indirect	0.0	$1,421	$2,562	$6,367
	Induced	0.0	$1,580	$3,451	$6,074
	Total	0.4	$14,073	$28,706	$44,466
Visitor air	Direct	0.0	$4,899	$4,623	$12,551
	Indirect	0.0	$1,304	$2,495	$5,401
	Induced	0.0	$817	$1,783	$3,139
	Total	0.1	$7,020	$8,902	$21,092
Total	Direct	5.7	$152,658	$283,949	$575,852
	Indirect	1.1	$45,092	$79,897	$189,714
	Induced	0.6	$24,525	$53,570	$94,287
	Grand Total	7.4	$222,275	$417,417	$859,853

Visitors are estimated to have the greatest impact through food service, which includes restaurants, bars, food trucks, and other places that serve prepared food and drinks. When including direct, indirect, and induced impacts, NOLS supports 2.7 FTE jobs, $79,155 in labor income, $136,524 in value added, and $290,003 in economic output through food service purchases by visitors. Visitors are expected to have the smallest impact from local transportation and gas, with 0.1 FTE jobs, $2,478 in labor income, $4,761 in value added, and $7,135 in economic output. This category largely consists of gasoline purchases at service stations. Despite

Fremont County's mineral wealth, gasoline purchases by service stations largely come from national providers, leading to high leakages in this industry. In total, visitors support 7.4 FTE jobs, $222,275 labor income, $417,417 value added and $859,853 economic output in Fremont County.

Unlike economic impacts, arts, entertainment, and recreation spending by visitors is expected to have the greatest impact on taxes, supporting $445 in sub county general, $4,341 in sub county special district, $1,728 in county, $19,942 in state, and $11,901 in federal taxes for a total of $38,356. This industry category includes recreation on public lands where a large part of the cost is fees to local governments. This may explain why tax impacts are higher for arts, entertainment, and recreation. In total, visitor spending supports $1,088 sub county general, $10,633 sub county special district, $4,255 county, $50,129 state, and $63,129 federal taxes for a total of $129,234.

Table 4.10: Tax impacts from visitor spending

Industry	Impact	Sub county general	Sub county special district	County	State	Federal
Accommodations	Direct	$164	$1,602	$644	$7,744	$15,018
	Indirect	$20	$200	$81	$994	$2,558
	Induced	$32	$316	$126	$1,499	$2,270
	Total	$216	$2,118	$852	$10,238	$19,845
Arts, ent., and rec	Direct	$379	$3,691	$1,467	$16,788	$5,444
	Indirect	$46	$456	$184	$2,235	$5,065
	Induced	$20	$194	$78	$919	$1,392
	Total	$445	$4,341	$1,728	$19,942	$11,901
Food service	Direct	$168	$1,643	$661	$8,002	$15,678
	Indirect	$28	$279	$113	$1,399	$4,041
	Induced	$37	$363	$145	$1,722	$2,607
	Total	$233	$2,284	$920	$11,122	$22,326
Food stores	Direct	$39	$385	$154	$1,807	$1,968
	Indirect	$2	$16	$6	$79	$229
	Induced	$4	$39	$16	$186	$281
	Total	$45	$440	$176	$2,072	$2,478
Local trans. and gas	Direct	$10	$100	$40	$470	$550
	Indirect	$1	$5	$2	$25	$60
	Induced	$1	$11	$5	$54	$82
	Total	$12	$117	$47	$549	$692

Retail sales	Direct	$102	$992	$395	$4,582	$3,281
	Indirect	$3	$25	$10	$126	$402
	Induced	$7	$66	$26	$313	$473
	Total	$111	$1,082	$432	$5,020	$4,156
Visitor air	Direct	$15	$149	$60	$705	$1,113
	Indirect	$7	$68	$27	$320	$373
	Induced	$3	$34	$14	$161	$245
	Total	$26	$251	$101	$1,187	$1,732
Total	Direct	$877	$8,562	$3,421	$40,097	$43,051
	Indirect	$107	$1,049	$424	$5,178	$12,727
	Induced	$104	$1,022	$409	$4,854	$7,350
	Grand Total	$1,088	$10,633	$4,255	$50,129	$63,129

4 Impacts not quantified in this report

Some limitations on the methodology and results should be noted. First, as mentioned in the introduction, this study only examines economic impacts that can be directly attributed to NOLS operations and construction. There are other impacts that are more difficult to quantify that should be considered. Some of these impacts are briefly outlined here.

It may be that NOLS students return to Wyoming on trips after being introduced to outdoor recreation opportunities through NOLS. This would result in additional visitation attributable to NOLS that is not accounted for in this report. Without more data, there is no way to know the size of this impact. Therefore, this report does not account for any additional visitor spending outside of the services provided by NOLS, though readers should be aware that the visitor impact of NOLS may be understated.

Related to this effect, there is a well-known association between outdoor recreation amenities and economic development. Headwaters Economics (2019), for example, shows that counties with higher outdoor recreation amenities have, on average, higher rates of in-migration, especially for higher income residents, leading to greater economic growth. NOLS leadership indicated that many former NOLS students have relocated to Wyoming, providing evidence that NOLS contributes to this effect, but it is not possible to measure this effect with the data that is available.

Finally, it is difficult to quantify the impact on Wyoming of the skills taught by NOLS to students. NOLS courses teach students leadership skills in a variety of challenging situations, from medical emergencies to endurance over long treks through wilderness. Many organizations find the competencies taught at NOLS useful and have ongoing relationships with the school. For example, the U. S. Naval Academy continues to send midshipmen on NOLS courses to practice effective leadership in challenging environments. These relationships speak to the value of NOLS as an educational resource. Many of the expedition students at

NOLS (435 out of 12,351 students from fiscal years 2023 to 2025) are from Wyoming and return to their jobs and communities after attending a course. Once home, students can apply the skills learned at NOLS in new contexts. While this undoubtedly is beneficial to Wyoming's economy, it is not possible to assign a dollar amount to this benefit with the data available.

The benefits outlined in this section may be difficult to quantify, but they nevertheless are an important contribution of NOLS to Wyoming's economy. In addition to economic benefits, NOLS contributes to Wyoming's culture of outdoor recreation, leadership, and stewardship through the courses and experiences it provides to students. Quantifying these benefits is beyond the scope of this report but should nevertheless be recognized when considering the impact NOLS has on Wyoming.

5 Conclusion

This report examines the economic impact that NOLS has on the economies of Wyoming and on Fremont County through spending. Through direct, indirect, and induced effects, NOLS supported 153 FTE jobs, generated $11.61 million in labor income, $13.45 million in value added, and $18.77 million in economic output in fiscal year 2024. Much of that impact occurred in Fremont County, where NOLS supported 142 FTE jobs, generated $10.95 million in labor income, $12.59 million in value added, and $16.22 million in economic output.

NOLS impacts Wyoming's economy by attracting visitors to Lander and other areas. In Fremont County, visitors are estimated to support 7.4 jobs, $222,275 in labor income, $417,417 in value added, and $859,853 in economic output. While some visitor spending occurs at NOLS through its hotel, kitchen, and retail operations, visitors likely spend money at other businesses as well, representing some additional impact that NOLS has above and beyond its operations and capital investment.

Indirect and induced impacts estimated in this report rely on input-output modeling, which makes assumptions and has limitations that are discussed in Appendix A. Visitor impacts rely on the additional assumption that visitors to NOLS have similar spending patterns to typical visitors to Fremont County. If this assumption does not hold, then visitor impacts may be higher, lower, or distributed differently across industries.

In addition to the economic impacts reported here, NOLS has other impacts that cannot be easily quantified but are nevertheless discussed in this report. NOLS contributes to the tourist economy in Wyoming beyond the visitor spending reported here by introducing students to outdoor recreation opportunities that may cause them to return to Wyoming for future recreation visits. NOLS may also play a role in incentivizing higher income individuals to move to Wyoming by familiarizing them with outdoor recreation opportunities. NOLS also benefits Wyoming's economy by training its workforce in leadership skills. Though these benefits are not quantified here, they should be considered in discussing the contribution NOLS makes to Wyoming's economy.

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Appendix A Input-output modeling

WHAT IS ECONOMIC IMPACT AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS?

Economic impact analyses are a widely accepted research approach used to better comprehend the effect of a new event or industry changes on local and state economies. Economic contribution analyses examine the total economic activity resulting from an existing industry or business. These analyses typically use input-output methodologies to re-create inter-industry linkages and calculate the impact on a regional economy.

We typically use the Impact Analysis for PLANning (IMPLAN) software package to conduct our analysis. This cloud-based software package allows us to estimate resulting economic activity in terms of employment, labor income, value added (i.e., increase in Wyoming's gross domestic product (GDP), total output, and generated tax revenues. IMPLAN allows us to calculate economic impacts at the state, county, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), and ZIP code levels. Although IMPLAN is our primary software package for calculating economic impacts, we also have licenses to other programs such as REMI, SiteStats, Moody's Analytics, and Lightcast.

Modeling economic impact requires the examination of three distinct types of effects. To illustrate, assume the project requires several construction jobs. These jobs, and their associated compensation and output, are what we refer to as the direct effect. Beyond this initial effect, there will also be an increase in the demand for intermediate goods needed in construction, e.g., steel. This is called the indirect effect. Further, the additional income of workers within the construction industry will lead to added economic activity in terms of buying goods and services, which, in turn, creates new economic activity in a region. In other words, individuals' spending will induce more spending, which we refer to as the induced effect. The total impact is the sum of direct, indirect, and induced effects, as illustrated in the figure below. In sum, an exogenous direct increase in economic activity, in a given geographic area, creates a ripple effect in the economy of that area. The totality of the ripple effect is what we refer to as the total impact.

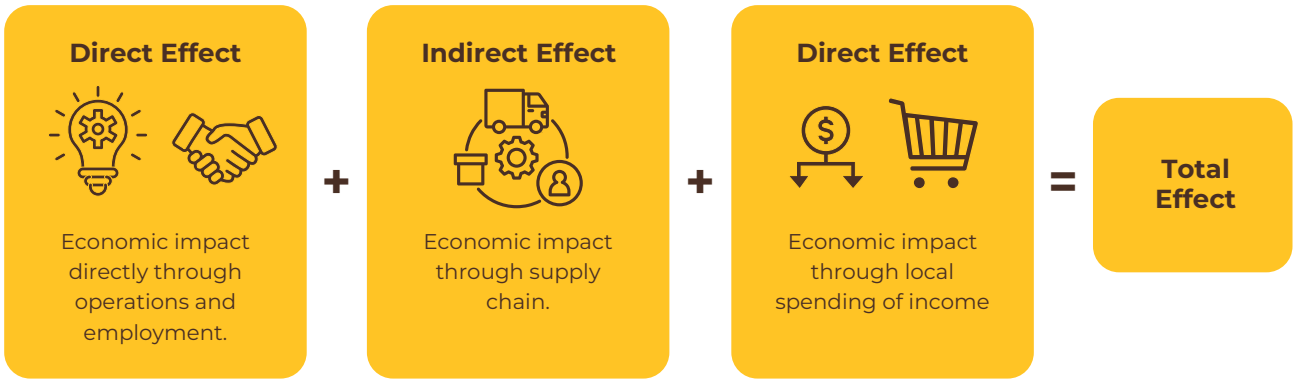

Figure A.1: Direct, indirect, and induced impacts.

HOW DOES ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS RELATE TO COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS?

Economic impact analyses consider a new event or change in an industry. Economic contribution analyses consider the impact of an existing industry. It is common for both types of analyses to only report the economic benefits and not the costs. This makes sense for existing industries where investments may be partially or fully irreversible. However, it is less justifiable when considering a new event or a change in an existing industry. To determine the optimal use of limited resources, it is necessary to consider both the benefits AND costs of an investment. Therefore, the CBEA strives to calculate the full costs of any new investment whenever possible and do a full cost-benefit or return-on-investment (ROI) analysis.

WHAT BENEFITS AND COSTS ARE INCLUDED IN AN ECONOMIC IMPACT (OR CONTRIBUTION) ANALYSIS?

Not all benefits and costs of an investment or existing industry are quantifiable. For example, consider the construction of a new community hospital. Our standard cost-benefit analysis would report costs such as capital expenditures (CAPEX) and operating expenditures (OPEX), in addition to the economic benefits such as new jobs, value added, tax revenues, and total output. However, the construction of the hospital may also lead to additional costs such as traffic congestion, noise and air pollution, and housing shortages. The construction of the hospital is also likely to have additional benefits that are not easy to quantify such as improving the quality of life of patients and encouraging further economic development in the region. The CBEA recognizes that these non-quantifiable costs and benefits exist and, to the extent possible, will list them in our final report.

Additional economic impact terminology is shown in Table 7. In addition, economic impact analyses make some key assumptions about the industry and firm, as well as how the "ripple effects" of these changes reverberate throughout the economy. In Table 8 a brief outline of these assumptions and the resulting implications are provided.

Table A.1: Additional Economic Impact Terminology

Variable	Definition
Employment	Employment refers to an industry-specific mix of full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs. Expressed as full-time equivalents (FTE).
Labor Income	Labor income refers to all forms of employment income, including employee compensation (i.e., wages, salaries, and benefits) and proprietor income.
Value Added	Value added is the difference between an industry's total output and the cost of its intermediate inputs; it is a measure of the contribution to GDP.
Output	Output is the value of production by industry in a calendar year. It can also be described as annual revenues plus net inventory change. It is often referred to as total economic impact.
Multipliers	Multipliers describe how, for a given change in a particular industry, a resulting change will occur in the overall economy. For instance, employment multipliers describe the total jobs generated as a result of one job in the target industry.

Table A.2: Economic Impact Analysis Assumptions

Assumption	Description
Constant Returns to Scale	The quantity of inputs needed per unit of output does not change.
No Supply Constraints	Input-output methodology assumes that there are no restrictions on inputs, raw materials, or labor needed to produce an unlimited quantity of output.
Fixed Input Structure	Changes in the economy may impact the industry's level of output, but do not impact the mix of commodities and services the industry requires to produce that output.
Fixed Technology	The same technology is used to produce each of the industry's products.
Constant Byproduct Coefficients	This is required by the fixed technology assumption. An industry will produce the same mix of goods or services regardless of the level of production.
Static Model	The model does not include price changes and general equilibrium effects are not accounted for.

Appendix B NOLS expedition students

Figure B.1 maps the home states of NOLS expedition students from fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025. Note that enrollment for fiscal year 2025 was not complete when this data was collected. Not shown are 120 students from Washington, D. C. and four students from Puerto Rico.

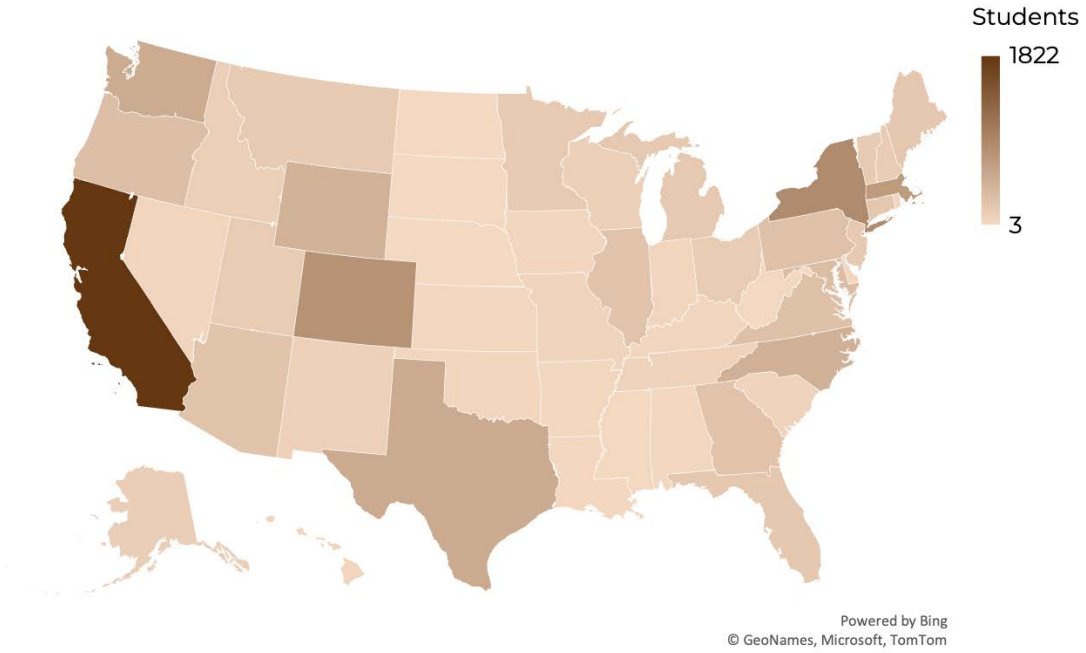

Figure B.1: Home states of NOLS students

California had the most students at 1,822, while North Dakota had the least with 3 students.Figure B.22 shows the home counties of the 435 expedition students from Wyoming. Fremont County had the most students with 277, while no students are from Campbell, Crook, Niobrara, or Platte County.

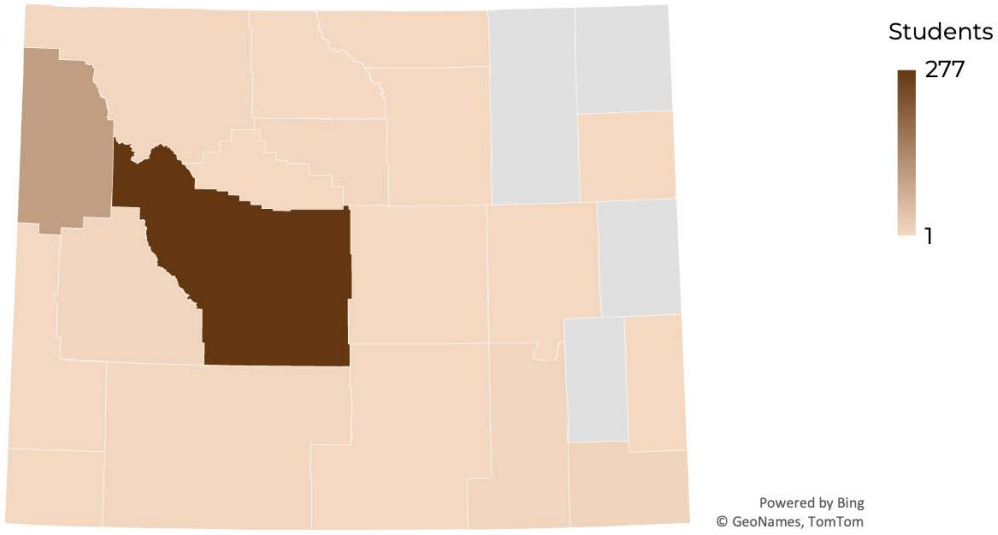

Figure B.2: Home counties of NOLS students from Wyoming

In addition to the 11,100 students from the United States or its territories, an additional 1,013 students were international (origin countries unknown).

In addition to a global presence among students, faculty teaching courses at NOLS come from and lead courses across the globeFigure B.3.3 shows the home countries of international expedition instructors at NOLS.

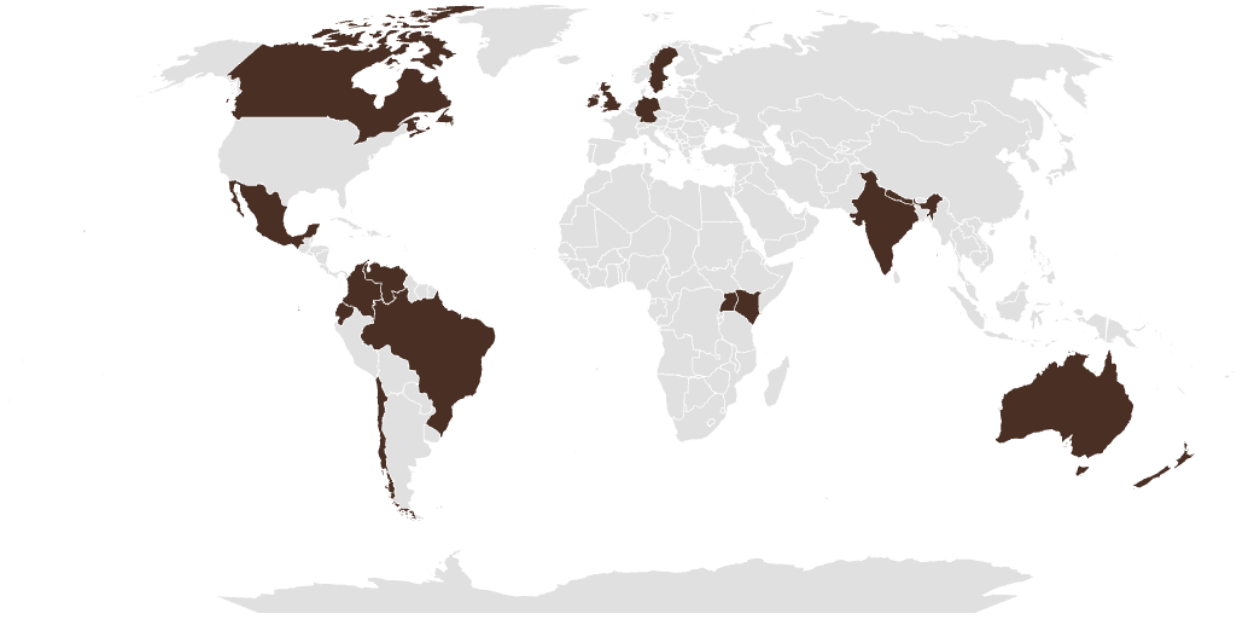

Figure B.3: Home countries of NOLS faculty outside the U. Figure B.4B.4 shows the countries outside the U. S. where faculty at NOLS teach expedition courses.

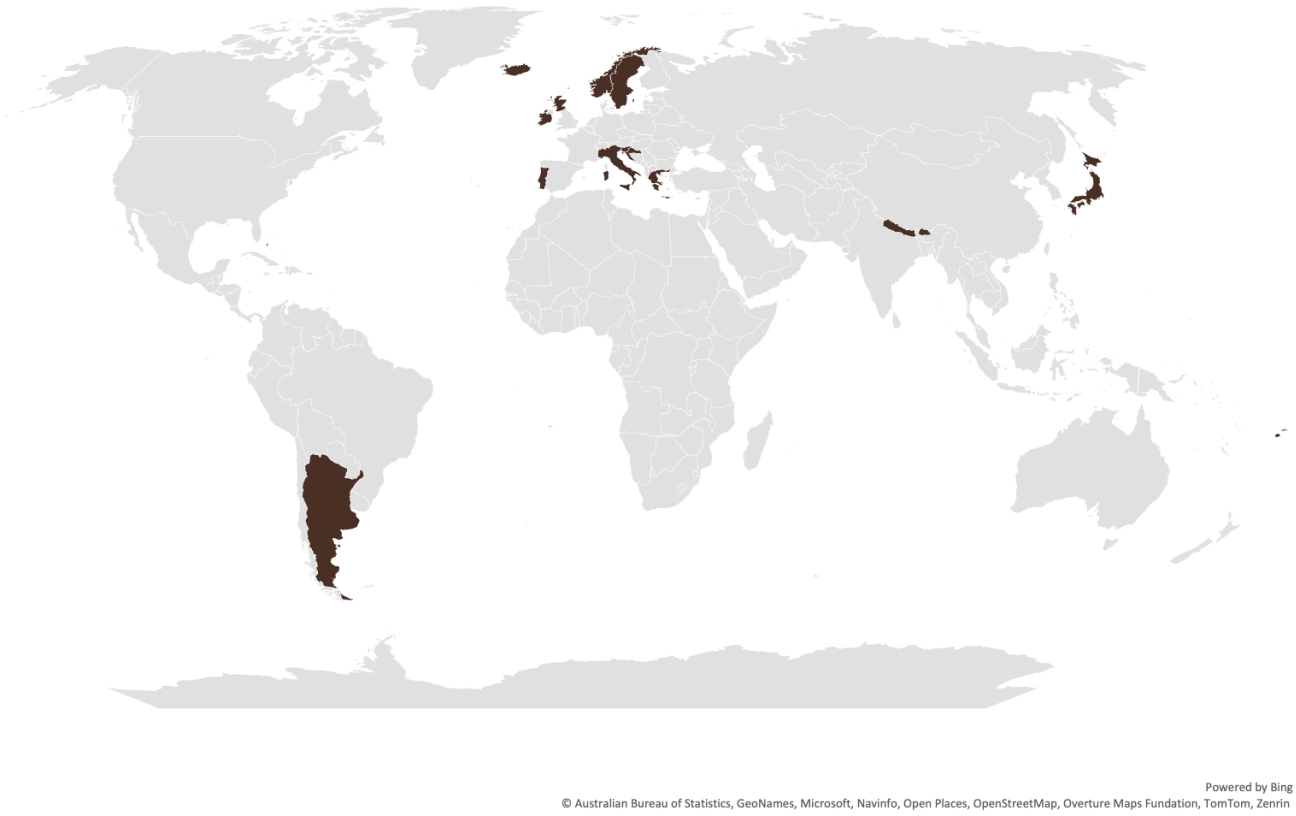

Figure B.4: Countries where NOLS faculty conduct courses outside the U. S.

Despite its international reach, NOLS remains firmly rooted in its Wyoming, with its headquarters in Lander and most courses based out of the school's Rocky Mountain campus. As shownTable B.1 B.1, courses based out of the Rocky Mountain campus range in length from a single day to 139 days, with an average course length of 23 days. Note that most of the courses in fiscal year 2025 are scheduled but have not been completed as of writing.

Table B.1: Summary of courses offered by NOLS Rocky Mountain

	FY23	FY24	FY25	All years
Total number of courses	128	134	144	406
Average course length (days	24	22	22	23
Shortest course length (days)	3	1	1	1
Longest course length (days)	139	90	90	139

Courses at the Rocky Mountain campus utilize a variety of public lands, including the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests and waterways on the Green River in Colorado and Utah.

Students at NOLS come from a variety of backgrounds. NOLS provided the CBEA with demographic information about students from fiscal years 2023 to 2025 that is summarized here. Students ranged in age from six to 88 years old, though most students are between the ages of 16 and 35. Figure B.5 shows the age distribution of all students for fiscal years 2023 to 2025.

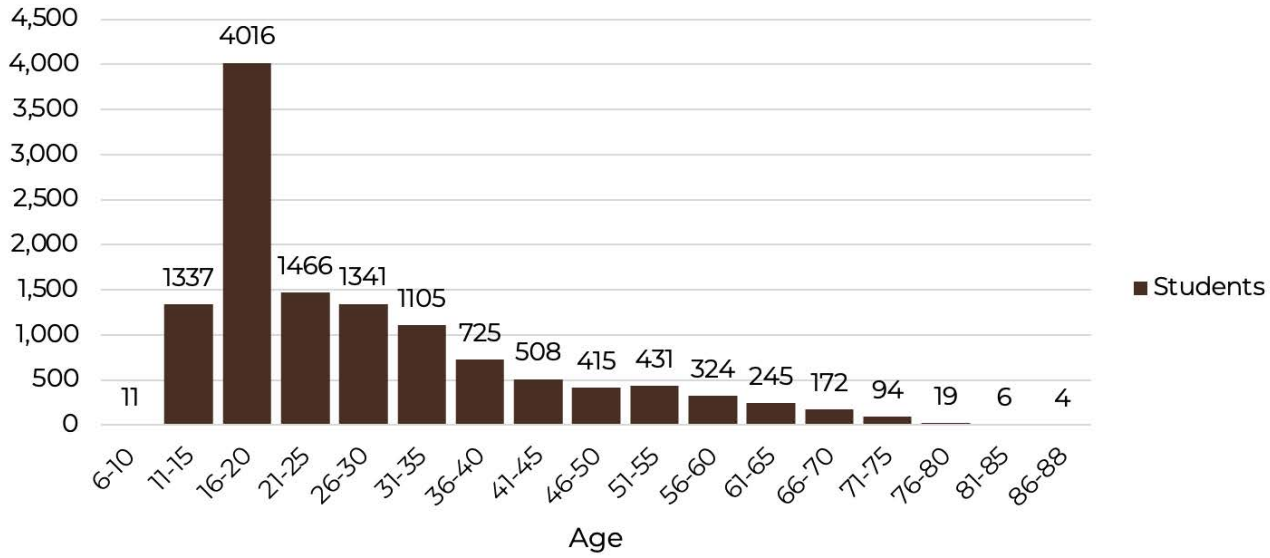

Figure B.5: Age distribution of NOLS students

NOLS also collects information on the gender and race/ethnicity of students, which is summarized inTable B.22 and Table B.3.

Table B.2: Genders of NOLS students

	FY23		FY24		FY25		Total	
Gender	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Female	2,293	48.7%	1,882	44.6%	1,524	44.5%	5,699	46.1%
Male	2,251	47.8%	2,213	52.4%	1,799	52.6%	6,263	50.7%
Unknown	163	3.5%	127	3.0%	99	2.9%	389	3.1%
Total	4,707	100.0%	4,222	100.0%	3,422	100.0%	12,351	100.0%

Examining Table B.2, more students reported being male than female in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, but more students reported being female than male in fiscal year 2023. Overall, about 4.6% more males than females attended or will attend NOLS courses in fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Table B.3 shows the breakdown of race and ethnicity of NOLS students. There was a much lower response rate among students in reporting race and ethnicity, and therefore this table does not include the 11,048 students (89%) that had an unknown race or ethnicity or did not report a race or ethnicity. Of students from fiscal years 2023 to 2025 with a known race or ethnicity, 79.3% are White. The second largest category are students reporting Hispanic/Latino ethnicity at 7.9%. The smallest category is Asian or Pacific Islander at 0.15% (rounded to 0.2% in the table).

Table B.3: Race and ethnicity of NOLS students

	FY23		FY24		FY25		Total	
Race/Ethnicity	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.2%	9	2.0%	2	0.5%	12	0.9%
Asian	20	4.5%	30	6.8%	16	3.9%	66	5.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	2	0.5%	0	0.0%	2	0.2%
Black or African American	7	1.6%	9	2.0%	6	1.4%	22	1.7%
Hispanic/Latino	36	8.1%	27	6.1%	40	9.7%	103	7.9%
Multiracial	6	1.3%	13	2.9%	17	4.1%	36	2.8%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.2%	2	0.5%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%
Other	2	0.4%	18	4.1%	6	1.4%	26	2.0%
White	374	83.7%	332	75.1%	327	79.0%	1,033	79.3%
Total	447	100.0%	442	100.0%	414	100.0%	1,303	100.0%

Although not the focus of this report, it is worth mentioning that NOLS might receive more accurate information about race/ethnicity if this question is redesigned. For example, NOLS includes categories for both Asian and Asian or Pacific Islander, which can cause confusion for respondents in making a selection and leads to ambiguity about which respondents identify as Asian and which identify as Pacific Islanders. Additionally, NOLS may wish to reframe this question to mitigate underreporting by Hispanic or Latino individuals. Many people who identify as Hispanic or Latino also identify as White. This can lead to underreporting of Hispanic or Latino individuals as many individuals will choose White when only allowed to choose one option. Allowing respondents to select multiple categories or asking if respondents identify as Hispanic or Latino in a separate question can mitigate this issue.

Appendix C NOLS wilderness medicine students

NOLS offers wilderness medicine courses for a variety of skill levels and needs, from initial training for outdoor enthusiasts up to recertifications for outdoor professionals. NOLS wilderness medicine students develop wilderness medicine skills like how to assess and respond to injuries, illnesses, and accidents in the wild, emphasizing improvisation with limited resources. Key topics include wilderness first aid, CPR, wound management, splinting, and patient evacuation techniques. NOLS wilderness medicine courses emphasize teamwork, critical thinking, and decision-making, ensuring that students are prepared to provide effective medical care when conventional help is distant or unavailable, fostering confidence in outdoor adventures.

Many NOLS wilderness medicine courses run in Wyoming each year, attracting visitors just like the expedition courses offered by NOLS. Table C.1 and Table C.2 show the number of students enrolled in wilderness courses in Wyoming and the number of days spent on wilderness medicine courses in Wyoming. Over the last three years more than 2,700 students have taken a NOLS wilderness medicine course in WY. These 2,700 students were in Wyoming for more than 19,000 student days.

Table C.1: Wilderness medicine course enrollment in Wyoming

Course	FY23	FY24	FY25
Hybrid Wilderness First Responder	53	88	86
Wilderness EMT	363	487	579
Wilderness First Aid	66	65	29
Wilderness Advanced First Aid	70	106	48
Wilderness First Responder	158	150	98
Wilderness First Responder Recertification	27	26	0
Wilderness Medicine Expeditions	10	11	0
Wilderness Medicine for the Professional Practitioner	14	14	0
Total	849	996	879

Table C.2: Wilderness Medicine Course Days in Wyoming

		Total Course Days		
Course	**Days Per Course**	**FY23**	**FY24**	**FY25**
Hybrid Wilderness First Responder	10	530	880	860
Wilderness EMT	26	9,438	12,662	15,054
Wilderness First Aid	2	132	130	58
Wilderness Advanced First Aid	3	175	265	120
Wilderness First Responder	10	1,580	1,500	980
Wilderness First Responder Recertification	3	81	78	0
Wilderness Medicine Expeditions	9	90	99	0
Wilderness Medicine for the Professional Practitioner	2	28	28	0
Total		14,077	17,666	19,097

Appendix D Spending classification

This section gives a detailed table of how expenses by NOLS were classified into IMPLAN industries. Most spending categories are classified into a single IMPLAN industry. Some categories are classified into multiple IMPLAN industries. Some categories are classified as taxes rather than an IMPLAN industry.

Table D.1: Spending classification of NOLS expense categories

NOLS expense category	IMPLAN industry	IMPLAN description
Advertising	447	Advertising, public relations, and related services
Audit Expense	438	Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services
Computer Supplies	376	Wholesale - Professional and commercial equipment and supplies
Equipment Maintenance	497	Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment repair and maintenance
Food - Kitchen	381	Wholesale - Grocery and related product wholesalers
Gas	391	Retail - Gasoline stores
Group Gear	393	Retail - Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores
Horse Expense, Rmb, Ranch	14	Animal production, except cattle and poultry and eggs
Insurance	426	Insurance carriers, except direct life
Land Use Fees	Taxes	N/A
Laundry	501	Dry-cleaning and laundry services
Legal Expense	437	Legal services
Merchandise Expense	383	Wholesale - Other nondurable goods merchant wholesalers
Minor Furnishing	376	Wholesale - Professional and commercial equipment and supplies
Operating Supplies	376	Wholesale - Professional and commercial equipment and supplies
Outfitting Supplies	365	Sporting and athletic goods manufacturing
Plant Maintenance	55	Maintenance and repair construction of nonresidential structures
Printing	144	Printing
Professional Service	450	All other miscellaneous professional, scientific, and technical services

Property Tax Expense	Taxes	N/A
Rations	381	Wholesale - Grocery and related product wholesalers
Rent	429	Other real estate
Staff Food	381	Wholesale - Grocery and related product wholesalers
Staff Seminars & Training	450	All other miscellaneous professional, scientific, and technical services
Vehicle Maintenance	494	Automotive repair and maintenance, except car washes
Board Meetings, Hq, Trustees	Multiple industries	
Entertainment	Multiple industries	
Faculty Travel	Multiple industries	
Intown Travel	Multiple industries	
Office Expense	Multiple industries	
Pending Expenses	Multiple industries	
Private Services	Multiple industries	
Telephone	Multiple industries	
Utilities	Multiple industries	