

# Building Resilient Communities: Mitigating Impacts and Retaining Long Run Benefits from Industrial Development

Emerging Issues Forum Workshop  
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## Resource Packet



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*Please email Grete for a digital version of this packet with hyperlinks*



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## Links and Resources on Retaining Community Benefits

- a) **Headwaters Economics, August 4 2025. “How rural communities can ensure development projects deliver local benefits.”**  
<https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/how-rural-communities-can-ensure-development-projects-deliver-local-benefits/>  
*This article offers a primer on securing benefits from industrial development in rural contexts, ideas for what benefits might look like and tools to do so. Learn more about Headwaters Economics at [headwaterseconomics.org](https://headwaterseconomics.org).*
- b) **Tallgrass Institute and Lepwe Consulting, July 2025. “Tribal Benefit Agreements: Designing for Sovereignty.”**  
[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/67228f0f7192a401a75ff94a/t/68a4c3e841c33a30f30a6e31/1755628520809/Tribal+Benefit+Agreements\\_Tallgrass+Institute\\_FINAL.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/67228f0f7192a401a75ff94a/t/68a4c3e841c33a30f30a6e31/1755628520809/Tribal+Benefit+Agreements_Tallgrass+Institute_FINAL.pdf)  
*This report provides comprehensive resources for negotiating community benefits from industrial development in Tribal contexts. It also provides helpful resources for non-Tribal contexts and planning for socially-inclusive community benefits, generally. Learn more about Tallgrass Institute at [tallgrassinstitute.org](https://tallgrassinstitute.org).*
- c) **Wyoming DEQ Industrial Siting Division:** <https://deq.wyoming.gov/industrial-siting-2/>  
*The Wyoming Industrial Siting Division manages the permitting process and ensures regulatory compliance for major industrial projects to minimize environmental and social impacts.*
- d) **Resources & Communities Research & Consulting, updated 2026. Full List of Community Benefit Agreements Resources Database:** <https://tinyurl.com/3adv2zww>  
*This is a living-list of 40+ resources compiled by Resources & Communities Research Consulting ([rcrcgroup.org](https://rcrcgroup.org)). It includes toolkits, FAQs, explainers, examples, and other articles on Community Benefit Agreements from multiple sources (government, think tank, community examples, etc.).*
- e) **Clean Energy New Hampshire, 2021. “PILOT Agreements & Solar Energy Facilities.”**  
<https://warnernh.gov/tow/meetings/mtgdocs/sel/20250624/2025.06.24SBAgendaEncorePILOTAgreementsSolarFacilities.pdf>  
*This resources offers a primer on Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT or PILT) models of securing public revenues from industrial development. PILOT revenue models can provide a work-around to increase public revenues when mil-levies are capped. This resource is focused on utility-scale solar projects but can be applied to other industrial or energy contexts.*

## Example Community Benefits Agreements

A note on definitions: Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are legally binding contracts between community groups/public institutions and the developer. Community Benefit Plans (CBPs) are shared documents which are *not* legally binding. Even in the absence of a written contract or plan, the CBA model can provide an example for advocating for benefits, and potential benefits/impact mitigation actions communities to incorporate into your own community.

A note on collaboration: Each of these successful CBA examples grew out of multi-stakeholder collaboration across multiple citizen organizations, civic groups, nonprofits, and local governments to represent community interests in negotiations with the developer.

- a) **Example of mitigating impacts in a CBA:** The Good Neighbor Agreement, Northern Plains Resource Council and Stillwater Mining Company.  
*This CBA was signed in 2000 between community coalitions in Stillwater County and Sweet Grass County, Montana and Stillwater Mining Company, which owns platinum and palladium mines there. The CBA includes long-term water quality monitoring, adaptive water management, community rights to information, and traffic plans to protect public safety and minimize nuisance.*  
Learn more & read the full CBA at: [northernplains.org/good-neighbor-agreement/](http://northernplains.org/good-neighbor-agreement/)
  
- b) **Example of securing long run benefits in a CBA:** Bold Alliance Nebraska and the Tallgrass Trailblazer CO2 Pipeline.  
*This CBA (finalized 2024) provides an excellent example of retaining long-run benefits, it also provides an example of the creation of a community fund, a commitment to supporting local nonprofit organizations, funding for emergency mitigation to train first responders, and a pipeline decommissioning plan to protect landowners.*  
Learn more at: [tallgrass.com/CBA/](http://tallgrass.com/CBA/)
  
- c) **Example of securing long run benefits in a CBA:** Meagher County Stewardship Council and Sandfire Resources.  
*This CBA (finalized March 2026) represents a negotiation to secure benefits from a new copper mine in Meagher County, MT. It establishes a \$10M Community Investment Fund, supports educational initiatives for students, supports environmental quality monitoring, and creates an Economic Development Revolving Loan fund to support the community in diversifying its economy through local entrepreneurship.*  
Learn more at: [meaghercountystewardshipcouncil.org/news](http://meaghercountystewardshipcouncil.org/news)

# Community Benefits Agreements

Kristin K. Smith, PhD. Headwaters Economics. kris@headwaterseconomics.org  
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A community benefits agreement is initiated by a community or region when it anticipates a development project with long-term socio-economic, environmental, or cultural implications.

## What is a community benefits agreement?

**Community benefits agreements are negotiated legal agreements** between a local coalition (stakeholders from community organizations, individuals directly impacted by the project, local businesses, faith groups, regional groups, etc.) and developers to ensure tangible, long-term benefits from projects. Successful community benefits agreements build local wealth, community assets, and capacity.

**Community benefits agreements have mutual benefits.** For the developer, the community benefits agreement can proactively address local concerns, avoid costly opposition, and streamline community engagement. By demonstrating community buy-in for proposed projects, an agreement can expedite permitting processes and decrease the risk of lawsuits for the developer. For communities, the public-private partnership enables direct lines of communication with the developer and creates a more equitable distribution of financial and community benefits.

**Community benefits agreements go beyond impact mitigation.** Community benefits agreements can address impacts from projects (e.g., increased traffic or reclamation expenses). However, these should be considered project costs, not long-term community benefits. The goal of the community benefits agreement is to create new community and economic development benefits that would otherwise not be gained.<sup>1</sup>

**Community benefits agreements are a flexible tool that can be used in different types of development projects,** from renewable energy to proposed mines, housing projects, airport redevelopments, tourism investments, data centers, and industrial development.

## Tips for negotiating an agreement

- Invest in networking, stakeholder mapping, and engagement.
  - Build relationships with other communities that have negotiated community benefits agreements.
  - Be upfront about power imbalances and identify solutions, such as engaging a third party or technical assistance provider to help with negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> Haggerty M, J Rose, & T Ruth. (2023). A Framework for Federal Mining Reform: Impact Planning, Benefits Sharing, and Asset-Based Revenue Management. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/a-framework-for-federal-mining-reform-impact-planning-benefits-sharing-and-asset-based-revenue-management/>

- Engage the community – including targeted outreach to marginalized groups – to inform residents of the plan’s goals.

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- Be transparent and accessible.
  - Develop a holistic vision and build capacity.
    - Identify concrete actions for the developer.
    - Consider benefits beyond workforce development.
    - Build upon what is already successful in your community.
    - Leverage the process to build local capacity, such as securing funding for staff.
  - Develop clear roles and communication commitments.
    - Clearly outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of stakeholders who sign the agreement.
    - Include expectations for communication frequency and platforms.
    - Develop a mechanism for addressing grievances.
  - Address all phases of project development (planning, construction, operations, closure).
    - Create a monitoring plan to track that the plan is creating the intended results.
    - Include a plan for the project’s end of life, such as who will be responsible for deconstruction (or site redevelopment) costs.
    - If a fund is proposed, develop criteria for management and allocation of funds.

## Examples of community benefits

### Jobs & Labor

- Workforce training programs
- Local hiring and living wage requirements
- Local purchasing/ procurement requirements

### Affordable Housing & Transit

- New housing projects and renovations to existing homes
- Energy efficiency improvements
- Expanding public transportation
- Road investment & maintenance

### Disaster Resilience

- Disaster mitigation projects (such as for flooding or wildfire)
- Resilience hubs or cooling centers
- Emergency services (equipment, training)
- Micro-grids (renewable energy & battery storage), back-up generators

### Public Health & Education

- Infrastructure upgrades (water, wastewater, stormwater, etc.)
- Ongoing air, soil or water quality monitoring
- Childcare/Senior services; Youth education

### Quality of Life

- Parks, green spaces, and recreation opportunities
- Biking trails and sidewalks
- Public art, local museums, and cultural centers

### Community Funding

- Community benefits fund, endowment fund, community foundation support
- Revenue sharing with developer; impact fees
- Funding for staff, expanded capacity, legal
- Funding for special community programs/projects

## What is a community benefits fund?

Community benefits agreements can be used to establish endowment funds and/or funding sources that provide long-term benefits. Community benefits funds can be created with one-time seed funding and can be funded through ongoing revenue sharing with the developer.

## What is a community benefits ordinance?

A community benefits ordinance is a local law requiring developers to proactively engage with the community to develop a community benefits agreement for development projects that meet certain criteria. Example ordinances can be found in [Richmond, CA](#) and [Detroit, MI](#).

## What is the Department of Energy's requirement for community benefits plans?

The Department of Energy (DOE) is tasked with investing hundreds of billions of dollars through grants and loans in clean energy sectors (critical mineral mining, EV battery manufacturing, clean energy generation and storage, etc.). DOE requires recipients of federal funding to develop community benefits plans to ensure communities receive tangible benefits from projects subsidized by taxpayer money.

A community benefits plan outlines the process that will result in a community benefits agreement. To meet DOE requirements, the plan must address four priorities: (1) community engagement, (2) quality jobs, (3) diversity, equity, and inclusion, and (4) the Justice40 Initiative. To date, most community benefits plans have focused on workforce development; however, communities can take a more holistic approach resulting in investments in workforce housing, childcare services, infrastructure, public health, and parks, recreation, and trails, for example.<sup>2</sup>

## Terms and related concepts

- **Community benefits agreement.** A legal contract between a community coalition and developer that ensures measurable, tangible benefits for the community.
- **Community benefits agreement ordinance.** Local law requiring community benefits agreements for any development project that meets a community-defined threshold.
- **Community benefits plan.** A non-binding agreement that outlines community priorities and can lead to a community benefits agreement. Required for many DOE funding applications.
- **Community coalition.** Local stakeholders impacted by the project who help negotiate the community benefits agreement on behalf of the community or region. Typically includes representatives from community organizations, individuals directly impacted by the project, local businesses, etc.
- **Development, host, or labor agreement.** Legal contract between a municipality and developer, often used to address project impacts and/or secure community benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> Haggerty M & A Chryssicopoulos. (2023). Leveraging Renewable Energy Investments for Rural Development: The DOE Community Benefits Plan. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/leveraging-renewable-energy-investments-for-rural-development/>

- **Good neighbor agreement.** An agreement or legal contract between an existing business and a community coalition, often used to address development project impacts or secure community benefits.

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## RESOURCES

[Reimagine Appalachia](https://reimagineappalachia.org/community-benefits/) has user-friendly information on community benefits agreements and an extensive library of guides, example agreements, and resources for rural places. This is a great starting place!

<https://reimagineappalachia.org/community-benefits/>

Other organizations offering community benefits resources & technical assistance:

- [Headwaters Economics](#) • [Jobs to Move America](#)
- [Rural Organizing](#) • [Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services](#)
- [World Resources Institute](#) • [Sabin Center for Climate Change Law](#),
- [Data for Progress](#) Columbia University (including [Renewable](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Institute \(RMI\)](#) [Energy Legal Defense Initiative](#) for legal
- [BlueGreen Alliance](#) assistance)

### Overviews

- [What small towns and rural leaders need to know about community benefits agreements](#). 2024. Rural Organizing.
- [Action Link's CBA Toolkit](#). *Includes advice for coalition building and community engagement.*
- [Common challenges in negotiating community benefits agreements & how to avoid them](#). 2016. Partnership for Working Families \* Community Benefits Law Center.

### Examples

- [Community Benefits Agreements Database](#). Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. Columbia Law School. *Includes examples of community benefits agreements by project type.*

### Deeper Dives

- [Community benefits agreements and funds: A summary of key literature and case studies](#). 2018. Jackson Rose and Julia Haggerty, Montana State University.
- [Community benefits planning toolbox for energy development with US Department of Energy: Resources and guidance for Wyoming](#). University of Wyoming. *Some information is specific to Wyoming projects but provides user-friendly information about requirements for DOE community benefits plans.*
- [Community benefits agreements: Making development projects accountable](#). 2005. Julian Gross, Greg LeRoy, and Madeline Janis-Aparicio. Good Jobs First.
- [Leveraging community benefits frameworks: Empowering communities to benefits from federally-funded energy projects](#). 2-day National Academies of Science webinar. *Scroll down to see the web recordings. For rural communities starting the process, recommend watching the Day 1 recording (minutes 3:10:15 - 3:37:28) about Montana's Black Butte Copper Project.*

**Building Resilient Communities: Mitigating Impacts and Securing Long Run Benefits from Industrial Development**

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**I. Building Resilient Communities**



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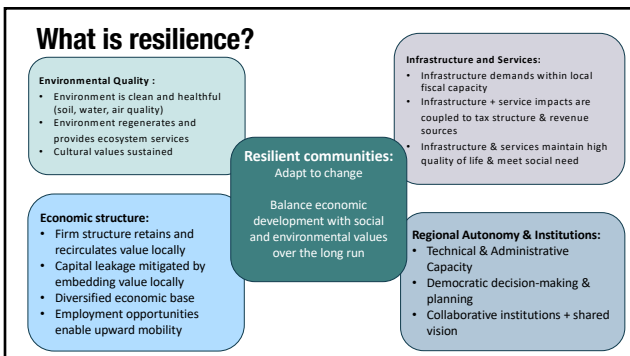
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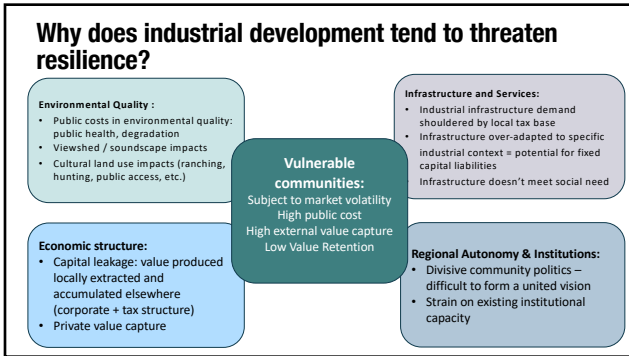
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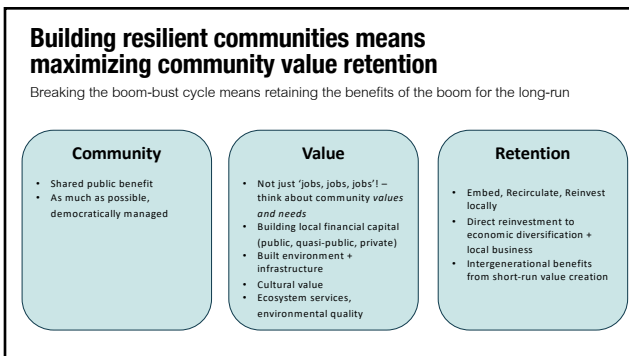
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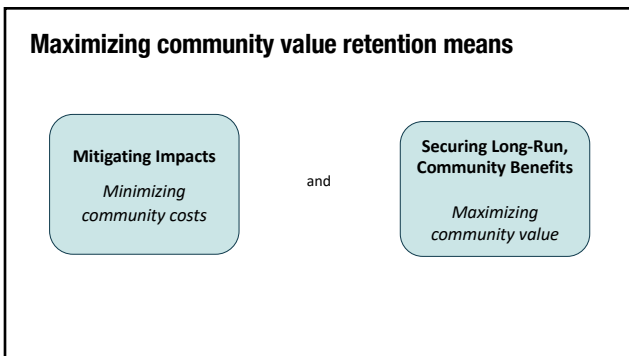
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Impact Mitigation	VS	Community Benefits
<p>Strategies to avoid or minimize negative impacts from a development project.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise barriers</li> <li>• Dust control</li> <li>• Stormwater runoff measures</li> <li>• Road reconstruction</li> </ul>		<p>Social and economic measures designed to improve community wellbeing. They do not have to directly address direct project impacts.</p>

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Tools to do this	
<p>Community Benefits Agreements (legally binding)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal contract between a community coalition &amp; developer that ensures measurable, long-run benefits to the community. (Often an MOU.)</li> </ul> <p>Community Benefits Plans (not legally binding)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often, a plan of action to negotiate a community benefit agreement.</li> <li>• Or, may be a non-binding agreement between developer and community about general expectations, governance and benefits.</li> </ul>	

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II. Mitigating Impacts	
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## Mitigating Impacts

Mitigating impacts is not a "benefit" – this should be the bare minimum!

- Ideally negotiating benefits goes beyond impact mitigation.

Think long-term and throughout the life of the project. Costs can be short and long-run

- Adaptive planning should account for both
- Project decommissioning is also an impact! Planning for this at the outset is important for mitigating economic impacts to the community, protecting private property rights, & leveraging investment to diversify



Wind energy co-located with agriculture in Central Montana. Photo: Kestral Aerial Photography

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## Mitigating Impacts Examples

Potential Community Costs & Impacts	Example Strategies to Mitigate
<b>Short run:</b> Capacity (technical, time) limitations on local institutions and community leaders during development	Technical assistance and advisory support; Regional, intergovernmental coordination to pool capacities
<b>Short run:</b> Construction boom impacts to infrastructure & local workforce	Local hiring and pipeline pathways to sustained employment; Impact fees
<b>Long run:</b> Over-adapted infrastructure to specific industry = blighted fixed capital liabilities	Infrastructure finance/ownership structures to balance risk profile; Retrofit existing industrial facilities
<b>Long run:</b> Degraded environmental quality, public health concerns	Environmental monitoring requirements/funding; clear remediation responsibility

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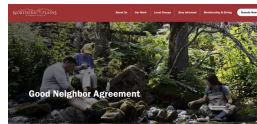
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## Real World Example: The Good Neighbor Agreement

- Signed in 2000 between a community coalition in Stillwater & Sweetgrass Counties (MT) and Stillwater Mine
- Focus on mitigating environmental impacts:
  - Water Quality Monitoring
  - Adaptive Management Planning for riparian ecosystems
  - Traffic plans to protect public safety and minimize road impacts of mine production



"See Page 2 in the handout"  
More information at: [northernplains.org/good-neighbor-agreement/](http://northernplains.org/good-neighbor-agreement/)

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### Securing Long Run Benefits

- Industry is good at creating short-run benefits. Here, focus on creating lasting benefits 'beyond the boom'
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration and coalition building in developer negotiations
  - Not only local governments
  - Think beyond what is required in the permitting process
- How can the value of this development be embedded locally?
  - ...to meet current needs?
  - ...for future generations?
  - ...to provide high quality services while relieving individual taxpayer burdens?

Photo: Grete Gansbauer, Harlowton, M.I., October 2023

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### Potential long-run benefits, maximizing community value

Potential Long-run benefits	Strategies to capture long-run community value
<b>Long run:</b> Improve quality of life and local amenities (e.g., outdoor recreation; leisure facilities; child/senior/healthcare)	Industry partnerships to fund improvements to local services and built capital + facilities for working families
<b>Long run:</b> Improve local access to capital and financial capital for community benefit	Industry partnerships to fund non-profits, a community foundation (endowment), local economic development fund, etc.
<b>Long run:</b> Develop infrastructure which meets community/social, not only industrial, need (e.g., emergency services, water/sewer, transportation & mobility)	Tax structures and impact fees to fund maintenance of high-impact infrastructures; also to distribute investment toward social need

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### Real World Example: Tallgrass C02 pipeline, Nebraska

- Signed in 2024 between a community coalition and pipeline developers.
- Focus on long run benefits & securing value within the community:
  - Community fund: \$500K for local nonprofits
  - Emergency management: \$600K for emergency response training, equipment, information management
  - Protecting landowners: easements returned to landowners at decommissioning + decide on removal process



*\*See Page 2 in the handout\**  
More information at: [tallgrass.com/CBA](http://tallgrass.com/CBA)

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### Real World Example: Meagher County Stewardship Council + Sandfire Resources (Montana)

- Signed in 2026 between a community coalition and mining company.
- Focus on long run benefits & economic diversification beyond mine life:
  - Establishes Long-Term Community Investment Fund (\$100K/yr. contribution) + Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund
  - Capacity: supports operating expenses of community council (\$120K/yr.)
  - Supports School District educational programs and youth initiatives (\$30K/yr.)
  - Environmental quality monitoring and management (water quality, weeds, erosion). (\$120K+/yr.)



*Sandfire Resources and Meagher County Stewardship Council sign MOU*  
*\*See Page 2 in the handout\**  
More information at: [meaghercountystewardshipcouncil.org](http://meaghercountystewardshipcouncil.org)

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## Key takeaways

Building economic resilience is more than attracting projects that bring "jobs jobs jobs"

Negotiating and economic planning to build resilience should address both:

1. Mitigating Impacts
  2. Securing long-run, community benefit
- ...with a focus on:
- Value retention & economic diversification
  - Environmental Quality
  - Quality of Life & wellbeing
  - Meeting need in the community
  - Collaborative development of community priorities



Colstrip, Montana. Photo by David T. Hanson

CBAAs offer a roadmap for negotiating community benefits with industrial developers of all kinds

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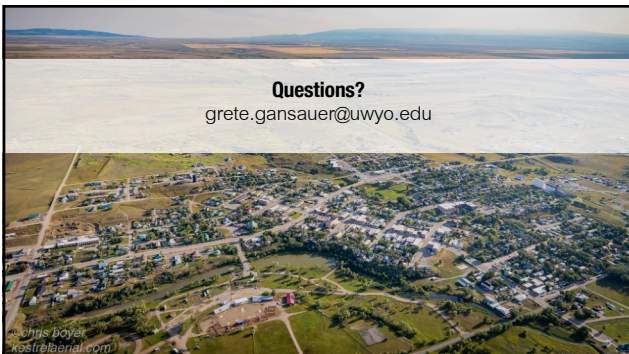
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## Questions?

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