



GATEWAY AND
NATURAL AMENITY
REGION INITIATIVE

Extension

UtahStateUniversity.



The GNAR Academy: Online Education Tailored for Rural Gateway Communities

*What do rural community leaders want to know, what do they need to know,
and how do we get it to them?*

2025 NACDEP Conference
Charleston, WV



INSTITUTE OF
OUTDOOR
RECREATION
AND TOURISM
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
**S.J. QUINNEY
COLLEGE OF LAW**

Wallace Stegner Center for Land,
Resources, and the Environment

Environmental Dispute Resolution Program

Session Overview

01

What is a GNAR?

02

The GNAR Initiative
and Our Work

03

The GNAR
Academy

04

Gateway Community
Leadership 101



GATEWAY AND
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01

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What is a GNAR?



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.....

GNAR?



What is a GNAR?

Gateway

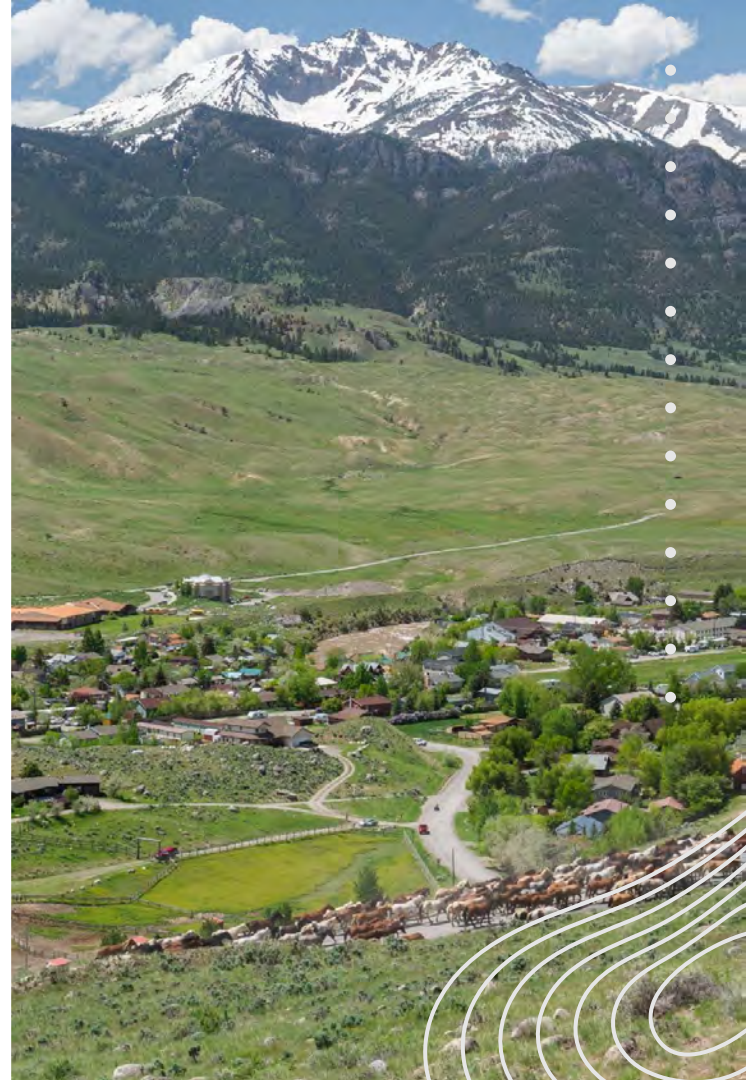
...to a state or national park, national forest, recreational area, protected cultural heritage site, or other prominent public lands

Natural Amenity

...community and economic development is closely tied to landscape and natural assets utilized for recreation, tourism, and outdoor-based leisure

Region

...part of a larger region with similar attributes AND/OR a region surrounding a resort-like community



What is a GNAR Community?



Small Town

150-25,000 people



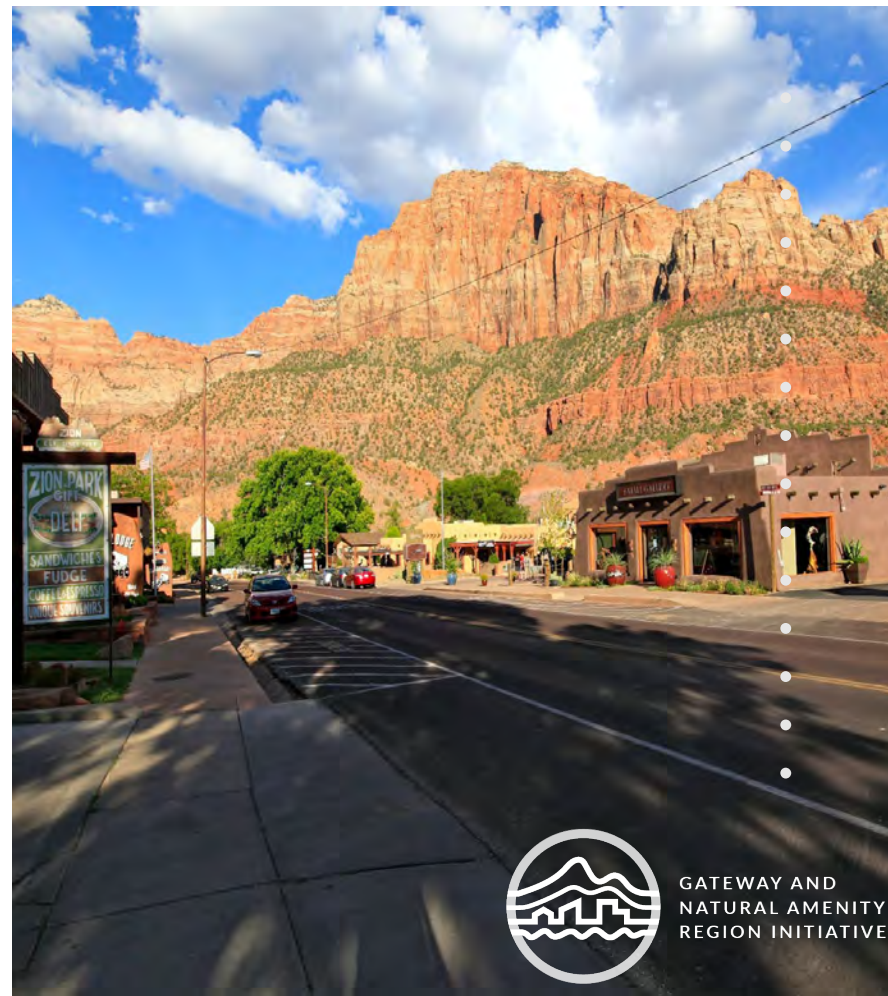
Close proximity to natural amenities

Within 10 miles of a national park, national monument, state park, national forest, lake, or wild and scenic river



Not in an urbanized area

Further than 15 miles from a census designated urbanized area



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Who is a GNAR Community? (2018)

1522

Western GNAR Communities

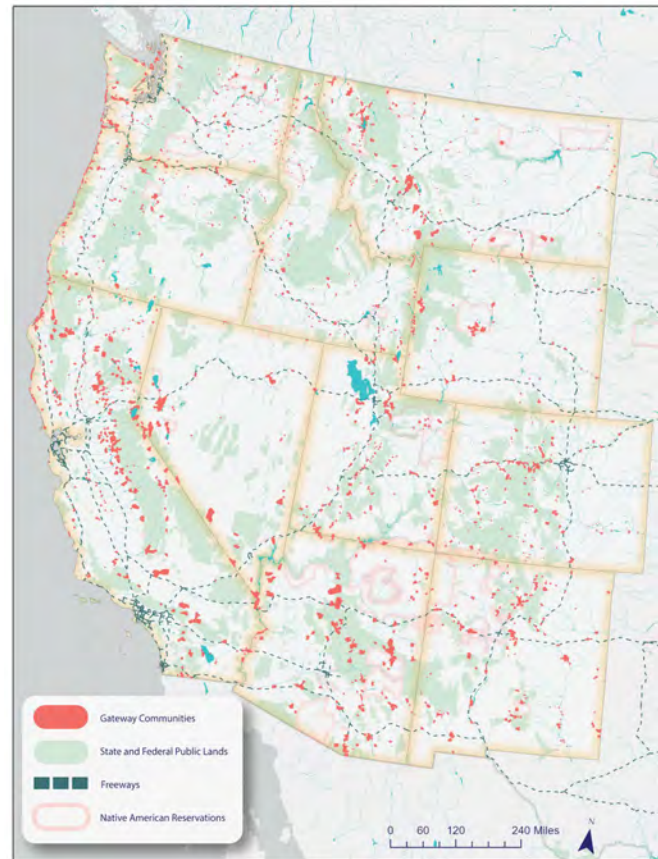
821 incorporated cities, 701 Census designated places

30.6%

of Mountain West communities

61.1%

of “small” Mountain West communities



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Big City Problems in Small Rural Towns.....

- Affordability and availability of housing
 - Traffic/congestion/parking
 - Short term/Long term rentals
- Climate change vulnerability/adaptation



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02

.....

The GNAR Initiative's Work



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“The GNAR Initiative exists to help western GNAR communities thrive and preserve the things that make them special.”





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Our Team



Elizabeth Sodja
GNAR Coordinator



Jordan Katcher
GNAR Facilitator



Danya Rumore
GNAR Co-Director



Jordan Smith
GNAR Co-Director



Jake Powell
GNAR Co-Director



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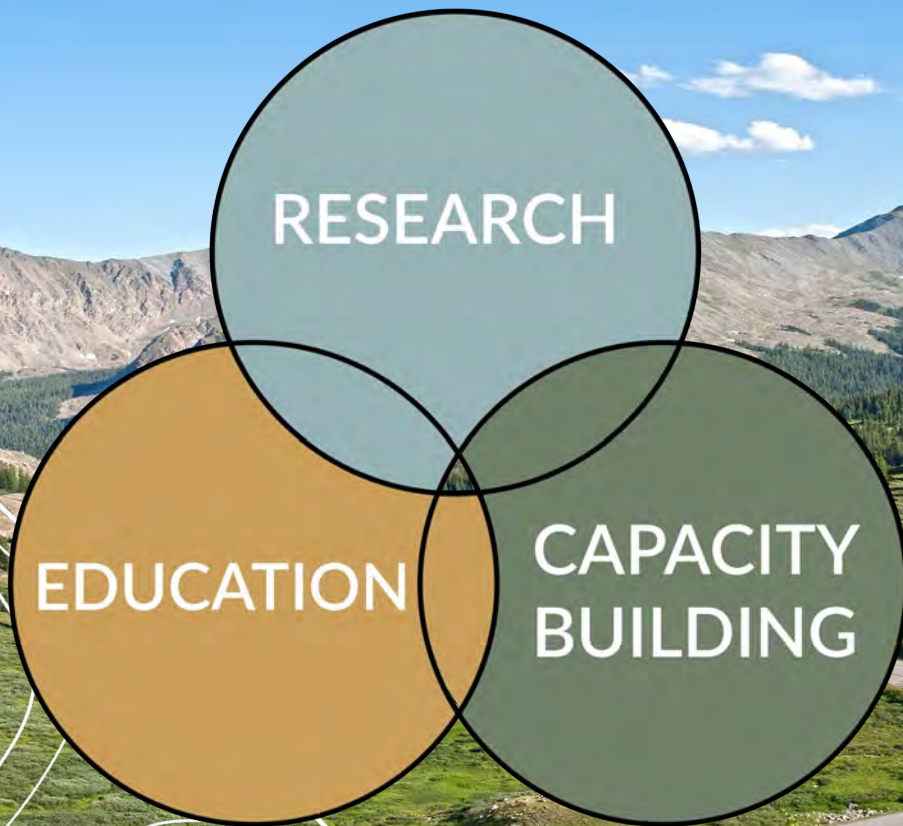
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COLLEGE OF LAW**
Wallace Stegner Center for Land,
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Environmental Dispute Resolution Program

Our Three Pillars



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RESEARCH - 2018 & 2021 NITC Community Surveys

GNAR COMMUNITY GENTRIFICATION & SPILLOVER EFFECTS:

Integrated Housing, Transportation, Land Use Challenges and Strategies in Gateway Communities

- Funded by the National Institute for Transportation and Communities,
- Community survey sent out to 1,500+ Communities, 235 responses

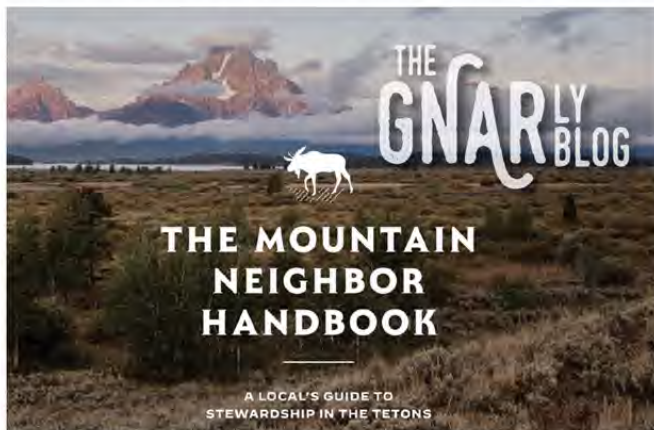
EDUCATION - The GNARly Blog



RECREATION AND
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INITIATIVE

EDUCATION - GNARly Blog Example

By Phoebe Coburn & the Teton Conservation District | January 31, 2023



The Mountain Neighbor Handbook: A Local's Guide to Stewardship in the Tetons

By: Phoebe Coburn & the [Teton Conservation District](#)

Almost every winter in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, a moose drowns in an artificial pond in someone's backyard when it breaks through a soft spot in the ice above an aerator. If the moose is lucky, [Wyoming Game & Fish Department arrives in time](#) to lasso it around the neck and winch it out. Throughout, those witnessing this spectacle are traumatized, as is the moose. Add a calf moose to this equation, and the hysteria, regret, and blame are compounded.

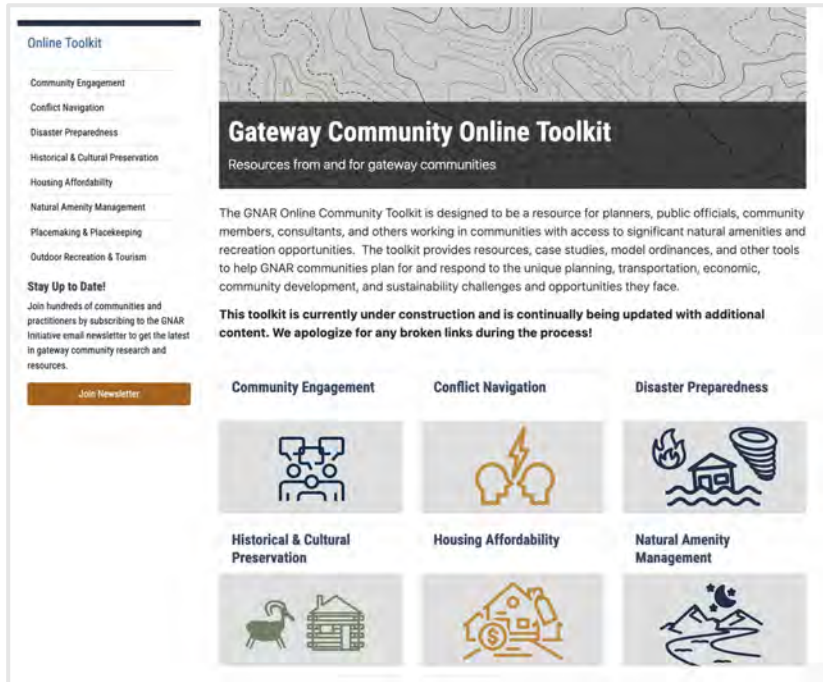
While county regulations exist that stipulate how aerators can be used in ponds, the new owner of a dream home in Jackson is not going to predict this scenario until it literally falls into their backyard.

Teton County is surrounded by some of the most remote and intact wilderness in the lower 48 states, but conservation is at risk of being outpaced by development. Drowning moose are not the only challenge we face. Wildlife conflict, invasive species, stormwater runoff, busy trailheads, energy use, and more—all present similar, sometimes daunting challenges in our community. And, like many rural communities, demands on natural resources intensified during the pandemic with an influx of new residents and increased visitation on public lands.

"Most people mean well and want to lighten their impact on the environment," says Phoebe Coburn, Communications Specialist for Teton Conservation District, "but there's a lack of accessible information and many just aren't aware of regulations and common practices that protect wildlife and the ecosystem."

The need for engaging and action-oriented information about natural resource conservation practices specific to the area—especially on private land—inspired the creation of [The Mountain Neighbor Handbook: A Local's Guide to Stewardship in Teton County](#). The 52-page booklet covers everything from wildlife and habitat to energy and

CAPACITY BUILDING - Online Toolkit



- 11 focus areas
- Continually building new pages as critical topics and resources come up.
- Currently being overhauled!

THE GNAR ACADEMY



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Purpose



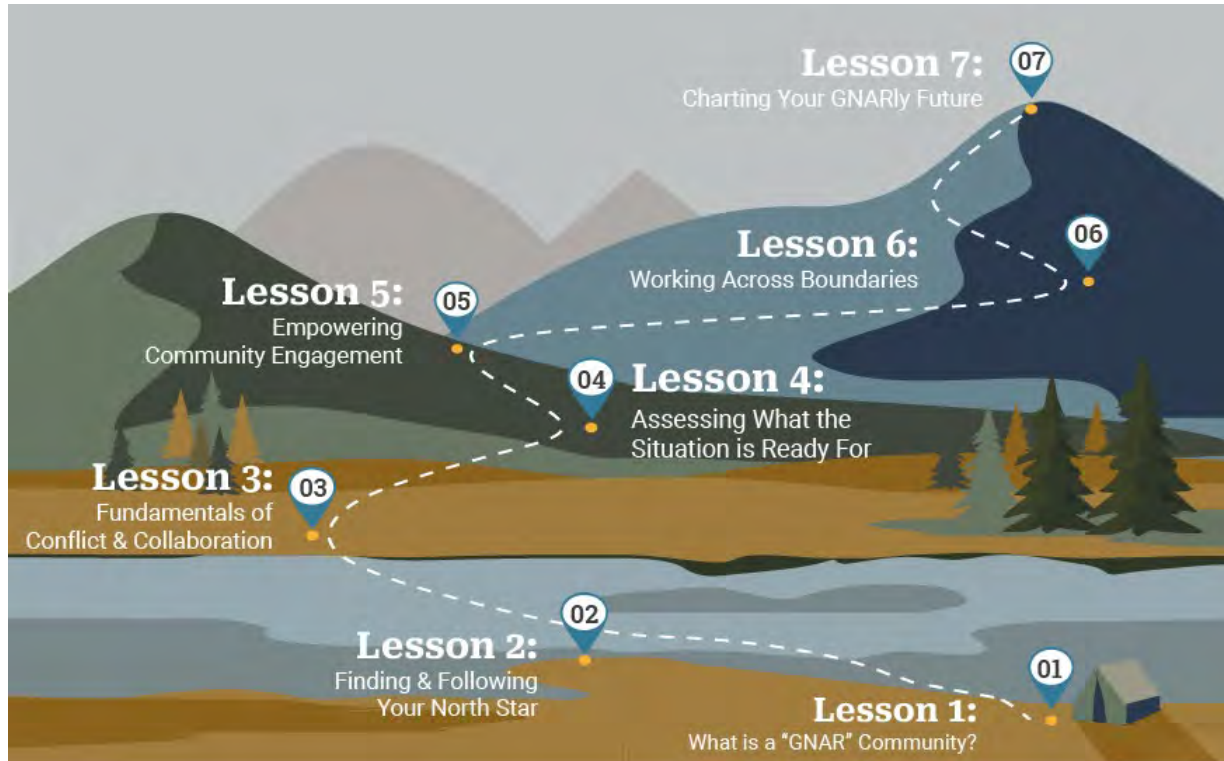
The GNAR Academy is an online course library that seeks to fill in the gap between what community leaders and practitioners have the capacity for, and what their communities need, by providing accessible training around critical topic areas to help communities better understand and advocate for their own needs.

Goals



1. Create low-barrier training that is accessible for gateway community leaders
2. Covers planning topics and challenges from a small, rural, gateway-specific lens
3. Provide opportunities for communities to network and meet with others working on similar projects
4. Increase community capacity to become more self-sustaining and resilient to their unique challenges

GNAR Academy: Gateway Community Leadership 101



GNAR Academy: Gateway Community Leadership 101

[Home](#) [Lessons](#) Lesson 1: What is a "GNAR" Community? >



GNAR Academy Fundamentals

Foundations for planning and collaboration in gateway communities and regions



Welcome!

Welcome to the GNAR Academy Fundamentals Course! We're excited that you're here. Gateway and natural amenity regions (GNARs) and the communities in them are special places. We hope this course empowers you to help these places thrive by enhancing and protecting the things that make them special.

Course Overview & What to Expect

This course consists of seven lessons, each of which introduces key concepts and principles that are important for helping GNAR communities thrive and effectively navigate challenges and change. The lessons in this course stem from our research on GNAR communities, as well as our experience living in and working with these places. They also highlight experiences and resources from specific GNAR communities.



[Home](#) Lesson 1.2: What is a GNAR and what is a GNAR Community? >

PAGES:

- 1.1 - Lesson Introduction
- 1.2 - What is a GNAR and What is a GNAR Community?
- 1.3 - Why GNAR Communities Need Special Attention
- 1.4 - The GNAR Initiative and Our Resources
- 1.5 - Lesson References and Additional Resources
- 1.6 - Wrap Up and Personal Check-In



LESSON 1: What is a GNAR Community?

1.1 - Lesson Introduction

So what is a GNAR, and what is a GNAR community? To set the scene for the rest of this course, this lesson will explain what a GNAR is, what a GNAR community is, and why these places merit special attention. We'll also dive into the background of the GNAR Initiative and GNAR Academy, and how we hope they can empower you to help your community protect the things that make it special.



What You Will Learn in This Lesson

By the end of this lesson, you'll have a basic understanding of:

- What a gateway and natural amenity region (GNAR) is
- What a GNAR community is
- How these places are different, and why they need special attention
- What the GNAR Initiative is and what resources it provides
- What the GNAR Academy is, and how we hope it will help GNAR communities across the West and elsewhere

GNAR Academy: Gateway Community Leadership 101



Upon completion, registrants receive the following:

- Digital **certificate** from USU Extension
- Digital **badge** for your LinkedIn profile
- Access to **facilitated peer-to-peer learning and networking** with other participants
- Access to an online **LinkedIn group** of other GNAR community leaders who have taken GNAR Academy courses
- 7 **Certified Maintenance** (CM) for AICP

04

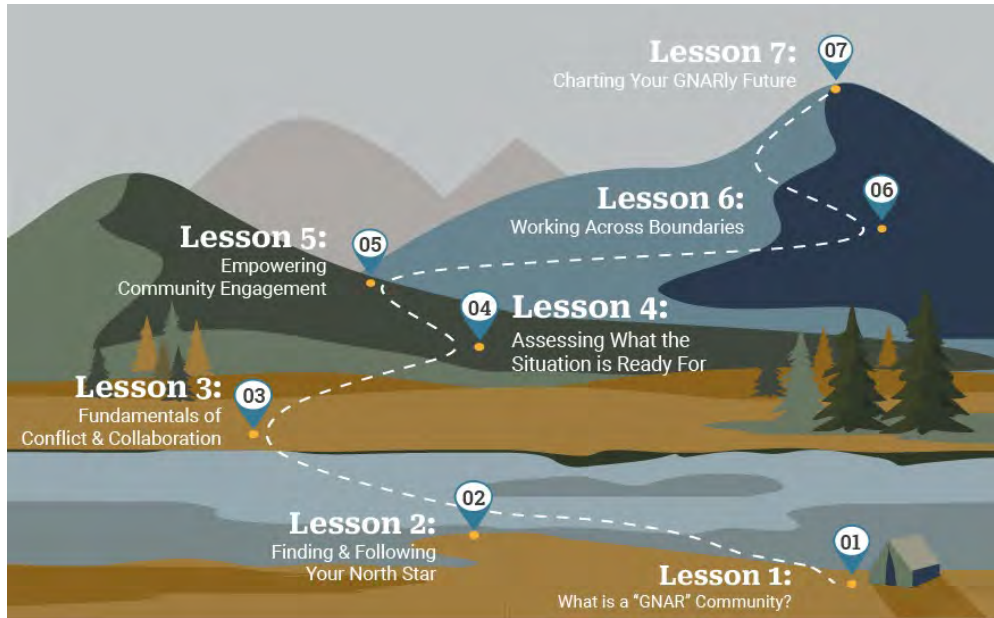
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GNAR Academy Fundamentals Walkthrough



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GNAR Academy: Gateway Community Leadership 101



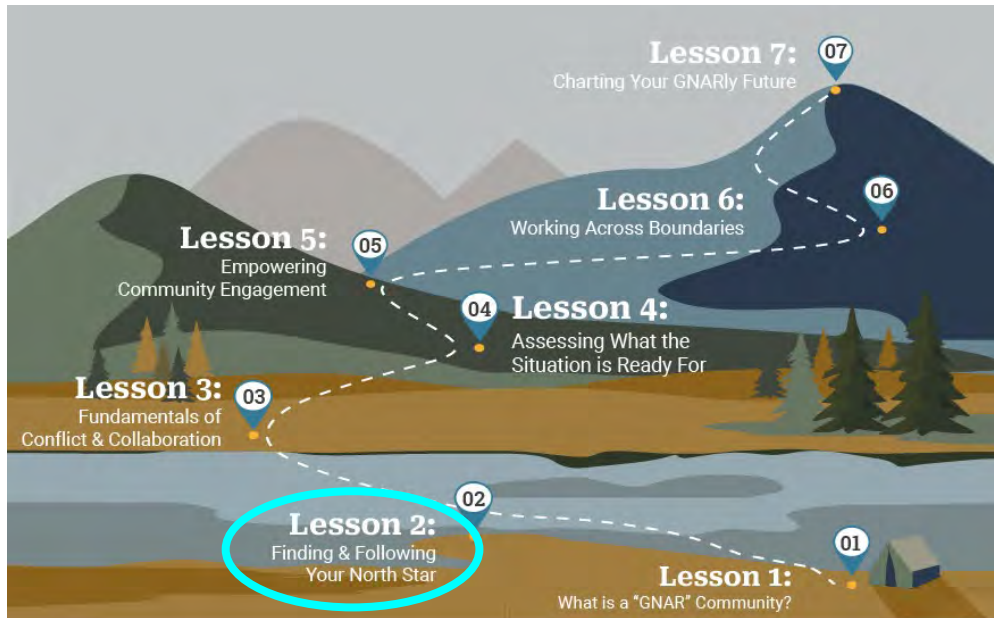
Lesson 1: What is a GNAR Community

Exploring research trends and attributes of GNAR communities.



Lesson 2: Finding & Following Your North Star

Define core community values and keep them front and center.



Lesson 2: Finding & Following Your North Star

Define core community values and keep them front and center.



Home

2.5 Step 1: Commit >

PAGES:

- 2.1 - Lesson Introduction
- 2.2 - What Are Core Community Values and Why Do They Matter?
- 2.3 - Values as Vision: Using Core Community Values as a North Star
- 2.4 - How to Find and Follow Your North Star
- 2.5 - Step 1: Commit
- 2.6 - Step 2: Co-create
- 2.7 - Step 3: Capture
- 2.8 - Step 4: Catalyze
- 2.9 - Step 5: Check
- 2.10 - Step 6: Cycle
- 2.11 - Community Trailblazers
- 2.12 - Lesson References and Additional Resources
- 2.13 - Wrap Up and Personal Check-in



LESSON 2: Finding and Following Your North Star Turning Values into Vision

2.4 - How to Find & Follow Your North Star

By now, we hope you're convinced that your community needs an effective North Star to guide its planning and development decisions. We also hope that you are excited to help your community clarify its core community values and to use these as a North Star to guide local planning and decision-making.



Lesson 2: Finding & Following Your North Star

Define core community values and keep them front and center.



Crested Butte, Colorado

"Rapid growth and economic investment in the Gunnison Valley is resulting in compounding challenges that have emerged at an unprecedented scale, including tourism growth, an affordable housing crisis, and a prolific workforce shortage . . . to name a few.

The challenges Crested Butte is facing are complex. For many years, the Town of Crested Butte has incrementally reacted to these challenges without an established vision for our community's future. These incremental reactions have set Crested Butte on a path to unintentionally take our community where we may not want to go.

Who really is Crested Butte's community and what do we want to become in the future? The Compass set out to answer these questions as navigating the inevitable change that the Town needs to work through, will be less daunting if the Crested Butte community has a collective vision to collaboratively work towards."

The Compass directly states that it was created to be Crested Butte's **North Star**, "...guiding the Crested Butte Town Council through uncertain moments and helping our decision makers negotiate the community's most pressing challenges."

Through an extremely robust community engagement process (which we will highlight more of in Lesson 5), Crested Butte settled on four core community values:

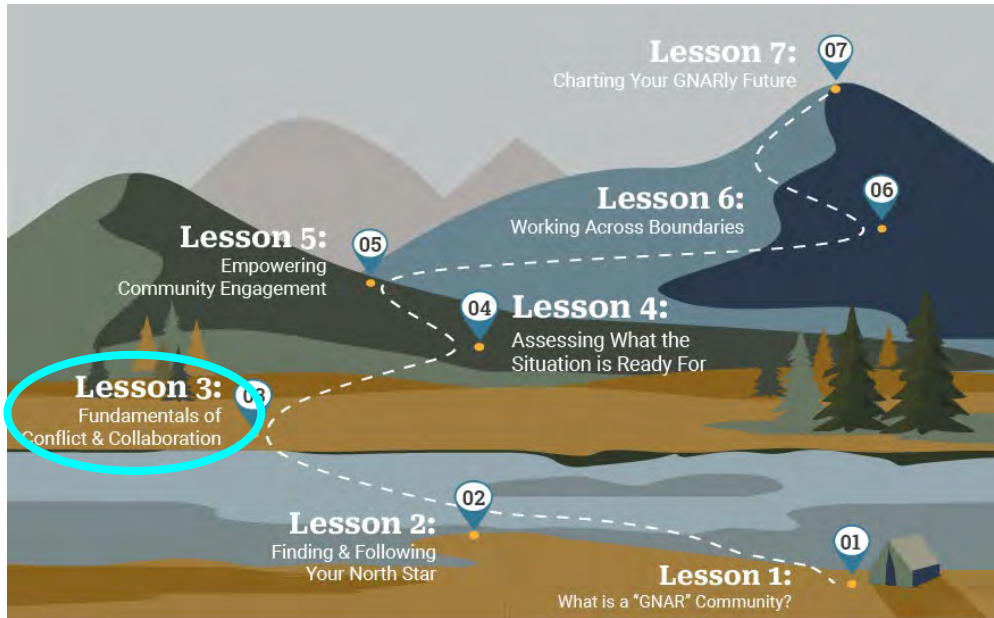
"Crested Butte expects to maintain and retain its community's identity by living intentionally with the community's core values:

- **We are an Authentic community**
- **We are Accountable for preserving our community**
- **Our community is Connected**
- **We are a Bold community.**



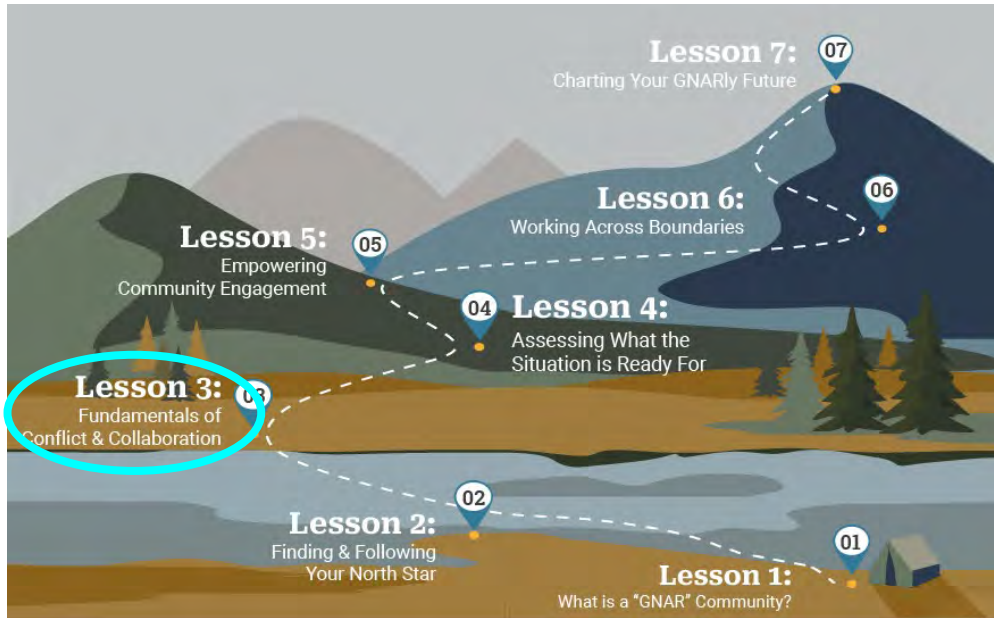
Lesson 3: Fundamentals of Conflict & Collaboration

Conflict is going to happen. Period. How can we make it productive?



Lesson 3: Fundamentals of Conflict & Collaboration

Conflict is going to happen. Period. How can we make it productive?



Home 3.4 Mini-lesson: Effective Listening >

PAGES:

- 3.1 - Lesson Introduction
- 3.2 - Conflict, Collaboration, and GNARs
- 3.3 - Mini-lesson: Fundamentals of Conflict and Collaboration**
- 3.4 - Mini-lesson: Effective Listening
- 3.5 - Mini-lesson: Effective Framing
- 3.6 - Additional Reading and Resources

LESSON 3: Navigating Conflict Part I
Fundamentals of Conflict & Collaboration

3.3 - Mini-lesson: Fundamentals of Conflict & Collaboration

This mini-lesson provides an introduction to the fundamentals of conflict and collaboration. Please complete all materials in the order they are provided.

First, watch this 25-minute video on the Fundamentals of Conflict and Collaboration.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAM

Fundamentals of Conflict and Collaboration

Danya Bismore, Ph.D.
University of Idaho

0:00 / 24:31

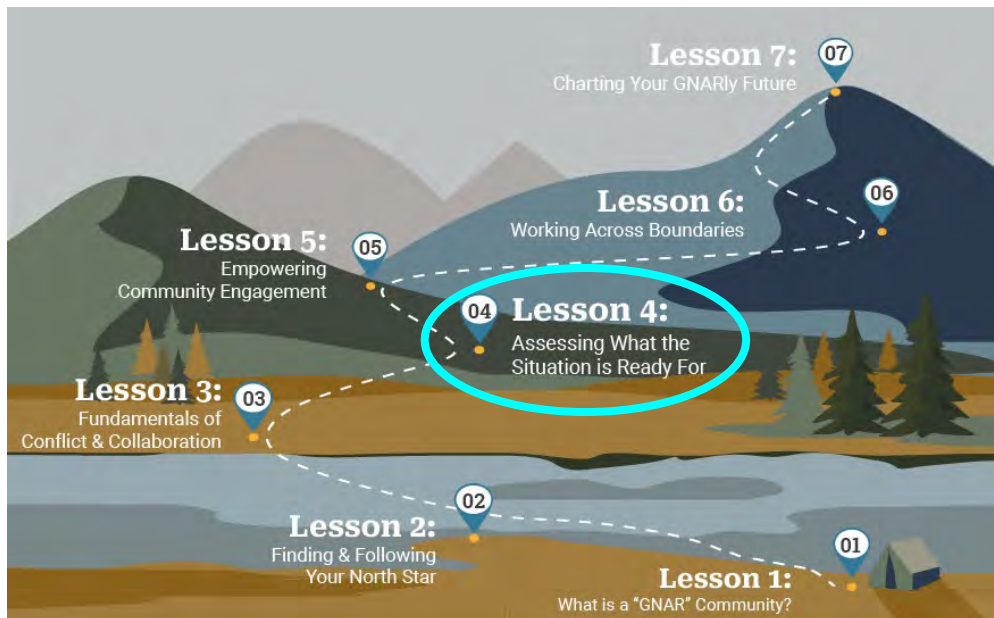
Next, review this collaboration key concepts handout.

Then, complete this collaboration key concepts worksheet using a GNAR or GNAR community related example you are currently part of or have experienced.

Conflict and Collaboration Key Concepts

Lesson 4: Assessing What the Situation is Ready For

Be efficient with time *and* resources – talk to people first.



Lesson 4: Assessing What the Situation is Ready For


Be efficient with time *and* resources – talk to people first.



[Home](#)4.2 - Assessing What the Situation is Ready For >

PAGES:

- 4.1 - Lesson Introduction
- 4.2 - Assessing What the Situation is Ready For
- 4.3 - Mini-lesson: Ways of Dealing with Conflict
- 4.4 - Mini-lesson: Situation Assessments
- 4.5 - Additional Reading and Resources




LESSON 4: Navigating Conflict Part II

Assessing What the Situation is Ready For

4.1 - Lesson Introduction

"A problem shared, is a problem halved."
- Old Proverb



This lesson explores ways of dealing with conflict and how to assess what conflict situations are ready for. It directly builds on the previous lesson Navigating Conflict (Part 1): Fundamentals of Conflict and Collaboration. Like the last lesson, this lesson consists of training materials prepared by Professor Danya Rumore at the [Wallace Stegner Center Environmental Dispute Resolution \(EDR\) Program](#).

We begin by explaining what we mean by "assessing what the situation is ready for." We then provide a mini-lesson on the following two topics:

- **Ways of Dealing with Conflict**
- **Situation Assessments**

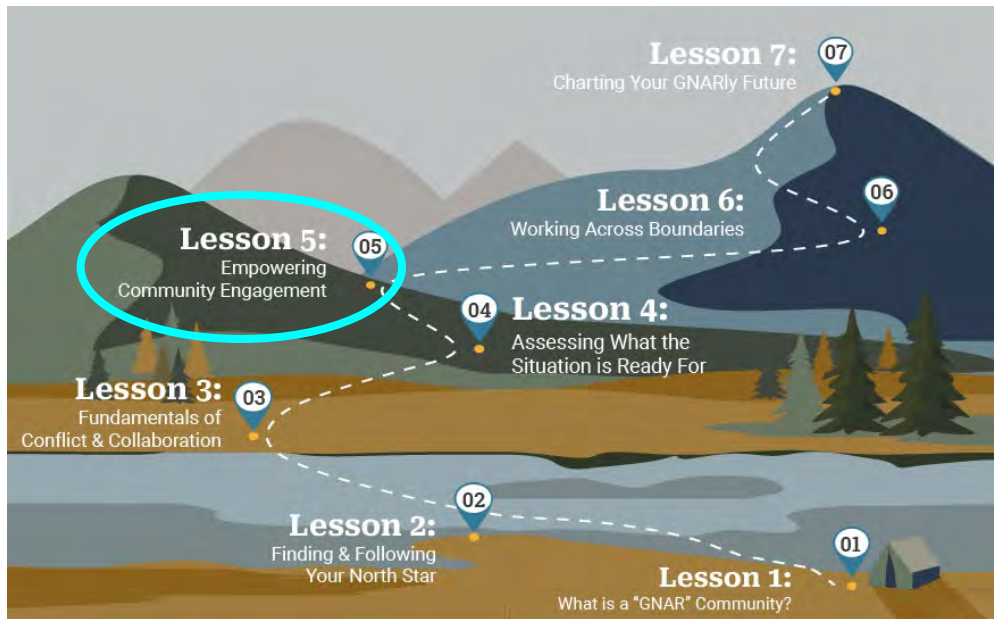
We encourage you to carefully listen to the videos and deeply engage with the complementary materials provided for each mini-lesson.

Additionally, many of the concepts and terms presented in this lesson are explained in Lesson 3, so make sure you have completed that lesson prior to beginning this lesson.

What You Will Learn in This Lesson

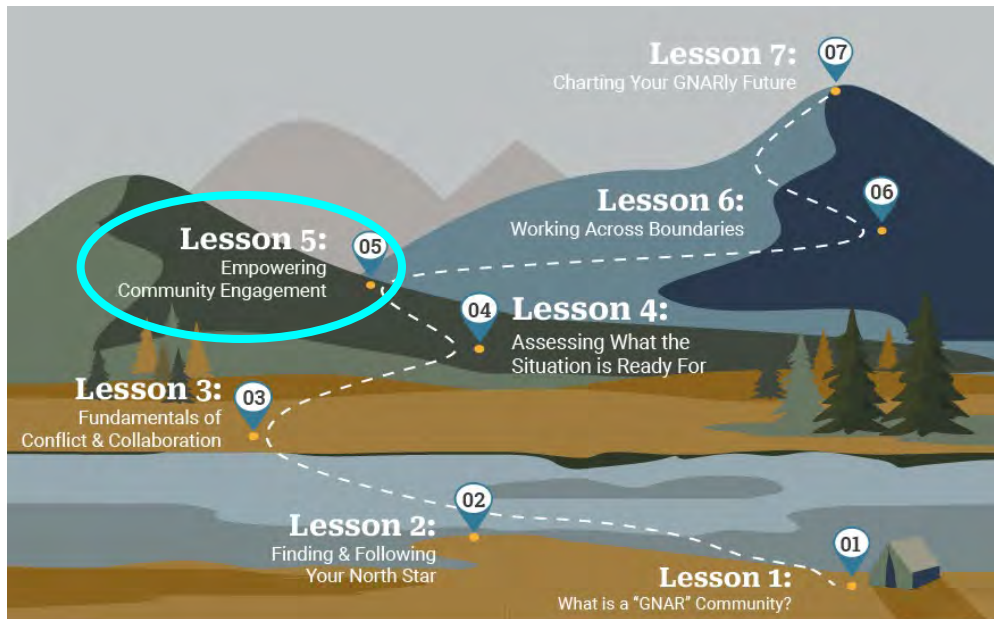
Lesson 5: Empowering Community Engagement

Empower your community so they can help address challenges!



Lesson 5: Empowering Community Engagement

Empower your community so they can help address challenges!



Home 5.6 - Principle 2: Set Yourself Up for Success >

PAGES:

- 5.1 - Lesson Overview
- 5.2 - What Is "Empowering" Community Engagement?
- 5.3 - Why Do Empowering Community Engagement?
- 5.4 - How Do You Do Empowering Community Engagement?
- 5.5 - Principle 1: Start with "Why?"**
- 5.6 - Principle 2: Set Yourself Up for Success
- 5.7 - Principle 3: Be Proactive
- 5.8 - Principle 4: Keep Your Core Community Values Front and Center
- 5.9 - Principle 5: Make It Inclusive
- 5.10 - Principle 6: Make It Collaborative
- 5.11 - Principle 7: Make It a Way of Being
- 5.12 - Community Trailblazers
- 5.13 - Lesson References and Additional Resources
- 5.14 - Lesson Wrap Up and Personal Check-In

LESSON 5: Empowering Community Engagement

5.5 - Principle 1: Start with "Why?"

PRINCIPLE 1:
Start with "Why?"

As we previously mentioned, a common place community engagement efforts (and efforts in general) go wrong is by not having a clear purpose, or "why."

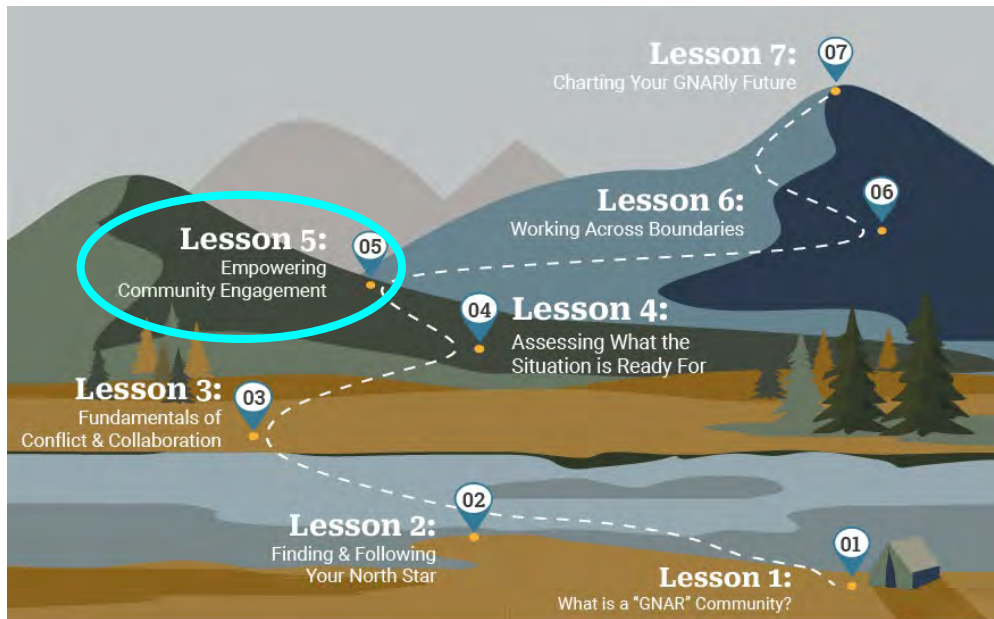
Side Trail: Simon Sinek's "Start with Why?" TED Talk

Lead With Purpose and Clarify Your "Why?"

There are many ways to do community engagement, but the intention behind the engagement is the "secret sauce" to making it work. The more you can put thought and intentionality into your engagement process, the more effective it can be.

Lesson 5: Empowering Community Engagement

Empower your community so they can help address challenges!



Jasper, Alberta, Canada: Age-based Outreach + Community Guide



The municipality of Jasper is located within Jasper National Park in Canada's Alberta province. Being an alpine town within a national park brings forth a unique set of challenges, and as such, Jasper staff have proactively designed resources to meet the specific needs of their residents.

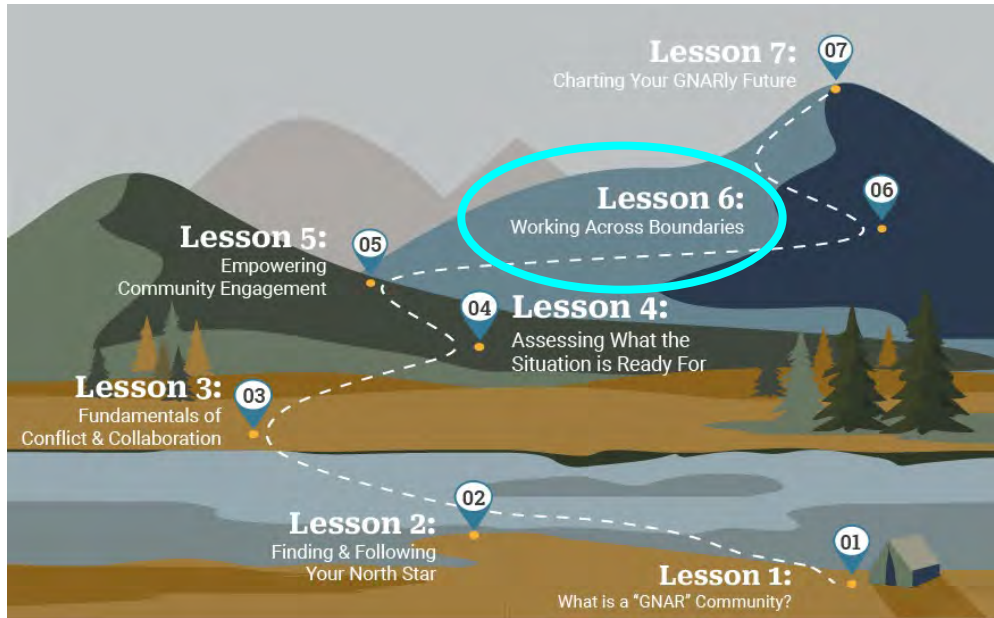
For current residents and newcomers, they've developed a [Jasper Community Guide](#), which is a handbook for living, working, and playing in Jasper. Their handbook starts out with several common questions and directs readers to their appropriate sections to ensure that all residents are aware of how to access services and proactively plug into the community. Here's a snapshot of what's included in their Table of Contents:

"Welcome to Jasper! You may be wondering:

- How do I find housing? (9)
- How do I send and receive mail? (11)
- What is Community Outreach Services? (12)
- How does my local government work? (22)
- What childcare options are available in Jasper? (25)

Lesson 6: Working Across Boundaries (of all kinds)

Engage everyone who could be – or *should* be – part of the conversation.



Lesson 6: Working Across Boundaries (of all kinds)

Engage everyone who could be – or *should* be – part of the conversation



[Home](#)6.12 - Making Working Across Boundaries a Way of Being >

PAGES:

- 6.1 - Lesson Overview
- 6.2 - The Need to Work Across Boundaries in GNARs
- 6.3 - Eight Principles for Working Across Boundaries
- 6.4 - Principle 1: Focus on the Issue of Mutual Concern
- 6.5 - Principle 2: Map the Problem-shed and Solution-shed
- 6.6 - Principle 3: Assess What the Situation is Ready For
- 6.7 - Principle 4: Collaborate Across Boundaries
- 6.8 - Principle 5: Embrace Differences
- 6.9 - Principle 6: Empower the Community to Help
- 6.10 - Principle 7: Jointly Implement Solutions
- 6.11 - Principle 8: Celebrate the Wins!**
- 6.12 - Making Working Across Boundaries a Way of Being
- 6.13 - Community Trailblazers
- 6.14 - Lesson References and Additional Resources
- 6.15 - Lesson Wrap Up and Personal Check-In

LESSON 6: Working Across Boundaries

6.11 - Principle 8: Celebrate the Wins!

PRINCIPLE 8: Celebrate the wins!

PRINCIPLE 7: Jointly implement solutions

PRINCIPLE 6: Empower the community to help

PRINCIPLE 5: Embrace differences

PRINCIPLE 4: Collaborate across boundaries

PRINCIPLE 3: Assess what the situation is ready for

PRINCIPLE 2: Map the problem-shed and solution-shed

PRINCIPLE 1: Focus on the issue of mutual concern

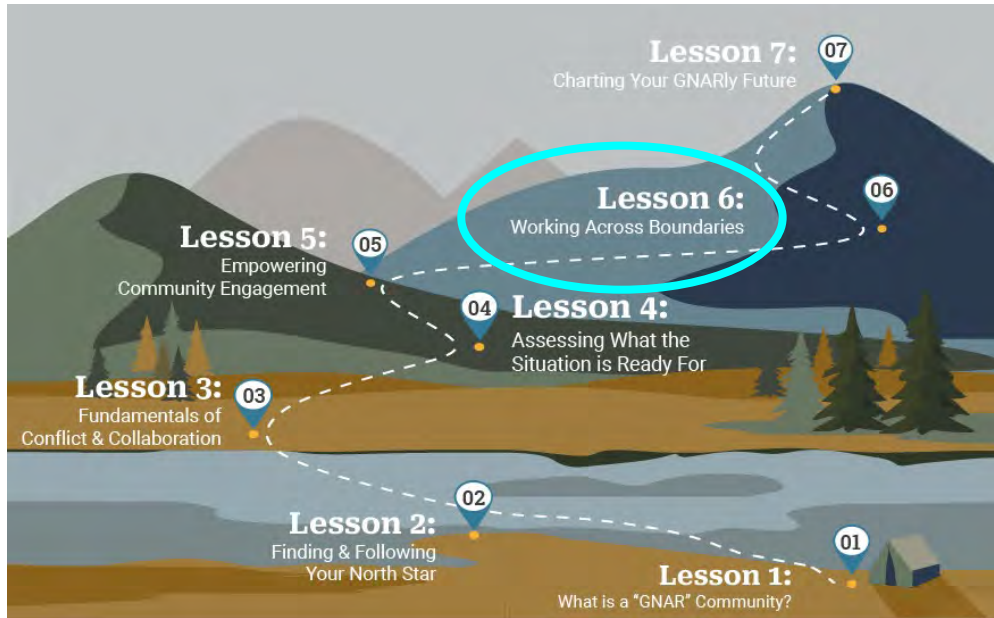
Working across boundaries can be hard work. That said, it doesn't always have to feel like it!

When working to address a challenge, there can be a tendency to discount small "victories" if the main challenge still looms large. However, we strongly encourage you not to discount the value of small victories – after all, *a small win is still a win!* While parties may not always agree on what the "right" solution is, small victories still signal progress along the path. It's important not to diminish that progress, especially if this is the first time parties have tried working together across boundaries.

Even if tangible solutions don't immediately arise from a collaborative effort, there is immense value in having parties learn together and from each other. It can even be a lot of fun! At the end of the day, working across boundaries isn't just about solving problems – it is also about building relationships.

Lesson 6: Working Across Boundaries (of all kinds)

Engage everyone who could be – or *should* be – part of the conversation.



The Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee, Gunnison Valley, Colorado



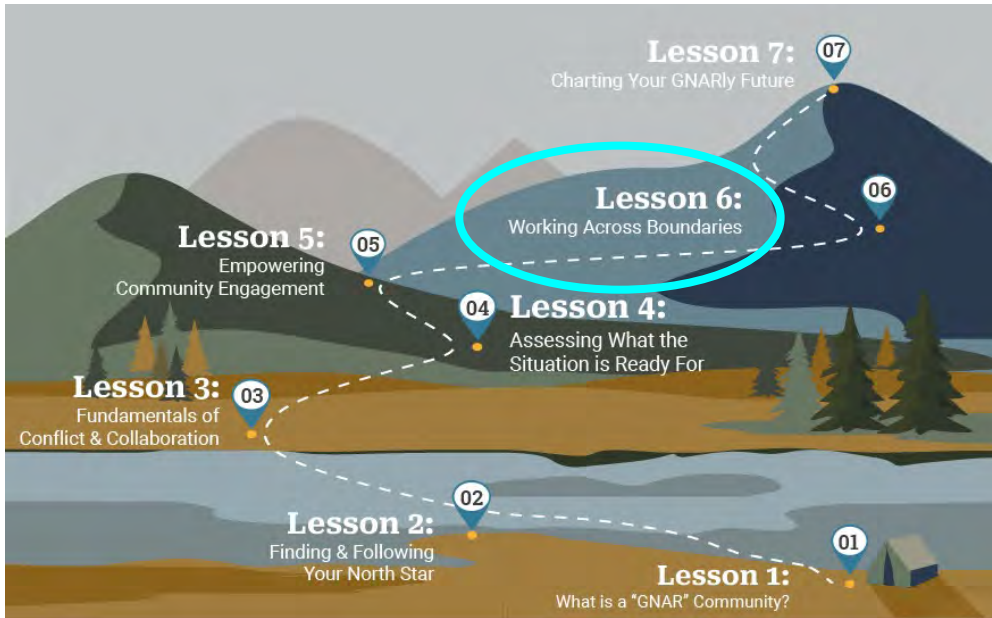
The Gunnison Valley Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee is an outcome from the One Valley Prosperity Project highlighted in Lesson 2. Within the valley, there was a desire to do more to help address the impacts on public lands and outdoor recreation stemming from the increasing tourism demand in the valley.

STOR is organized by the County Stewardship Coordinator, and is comprised of a wide range of agency and municipality appointees, including:

- Gunnison County
- City of Gunnison
- Town of Crested Butte
- Town of Mt. Crested Butte
- Town of Pitkin
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- Tourism and Prosperity Partnership Board
- Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association
- Crested Butte Mountain Resort

Lesson 6: Working Across Boundaries (of all kinds)

Engage everyone who could be – or *should* be – part of the conversation.



The Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee, Gunnison Valley, Colorado



“If you start in the middle, then after you develop relationships, then you can ‘explore’ the edges a little and talk about the hard things.”

- EX: Signal Peak Area behind Western Colorado University.

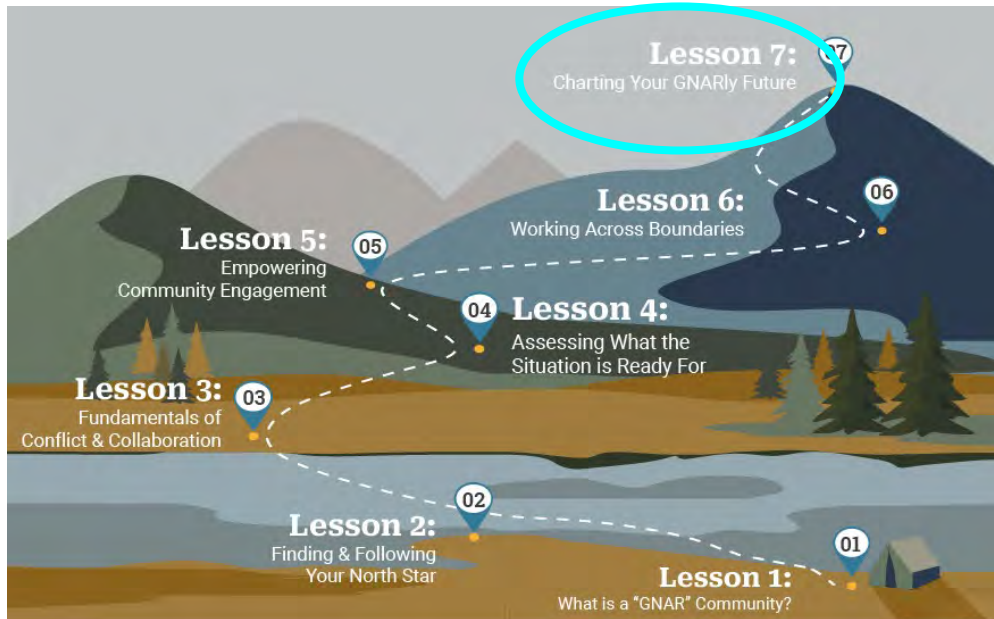
Lesson 7: Charting Your GNARly Future

Focus on planning, not plans.



Lesson 7: Charting Your GNARly Future

Focus on planning, not plans.



Home 7.7 - Lesson Recaps and Key Takeaways >

PAGES:

- 7.1 - Lesson Overview
- 7.2 - Planning For the Future, Not the Past
- 7.3 - Be Certain About Uncertainty
- 7.4 - Focus on planning rather than plans
- 7.5 - Don't Be a GNARcissist!
- 7.6 - Start NOW**
- 7.7 - Lesson Recaps and Key Takeaways

LESSON 7: Charting Your GNARly Future

7.6 - Start NOW

"The best time to start building housing was 20-years ago..."

The second best time is now."

- Thomas Eddington, former Park City Planning Director.

Our final –and perhaps most important– pieces of advice we can offer is that GNARs and GNAR communities need to plan ahead.

We often hear public officials say things such as, "we wish we had started planning for tourism 20 years ago," or "we wish we had been more proactive in managing short-term rentals." Even if your community is not actively courting growth or additional visitors, you may become the next best destination when someone posts something on Instagram, TikTok, their blog, or X.

It is a lot easier to manage growth and development when your community has prepared for it, rather than while it is happening.

GNAR Academy: Gateway Community Leadership 101

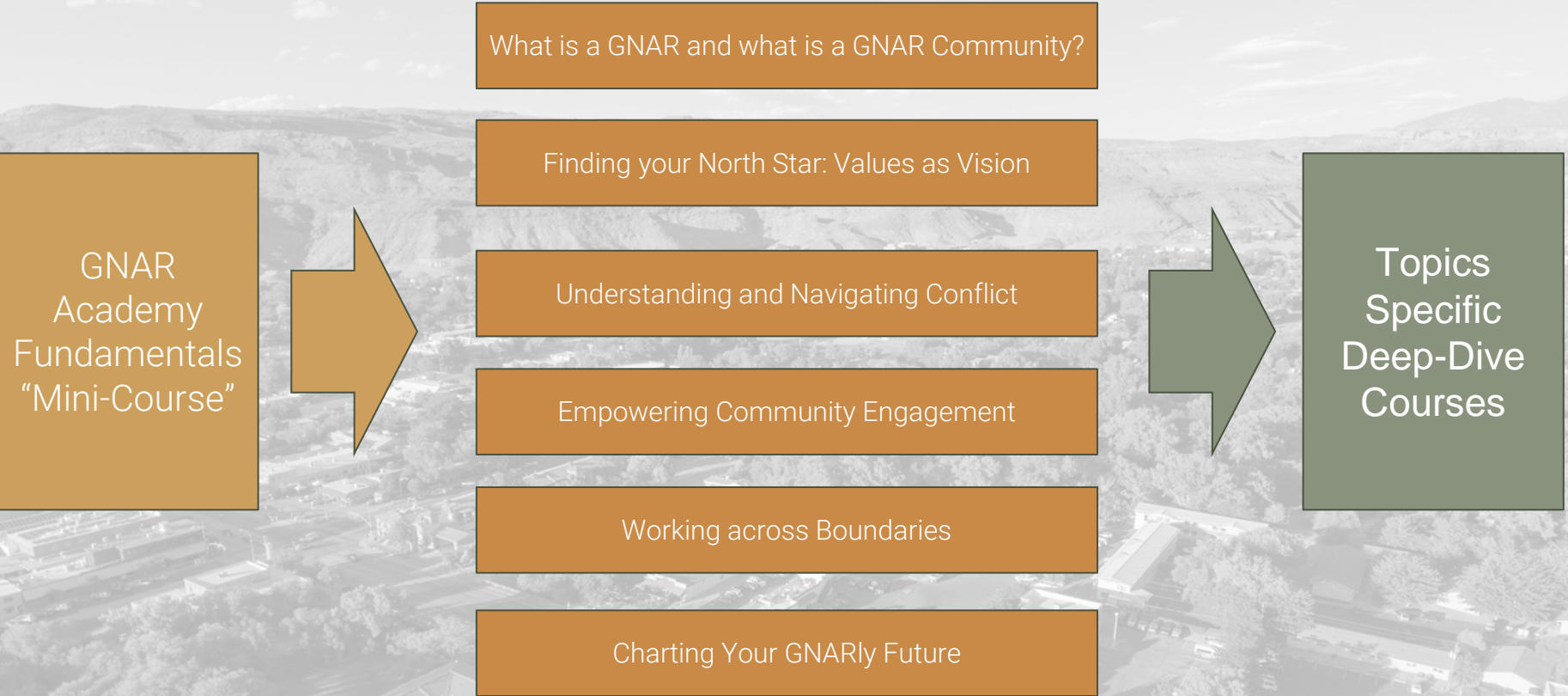


Available now!

Scan to learn more >>



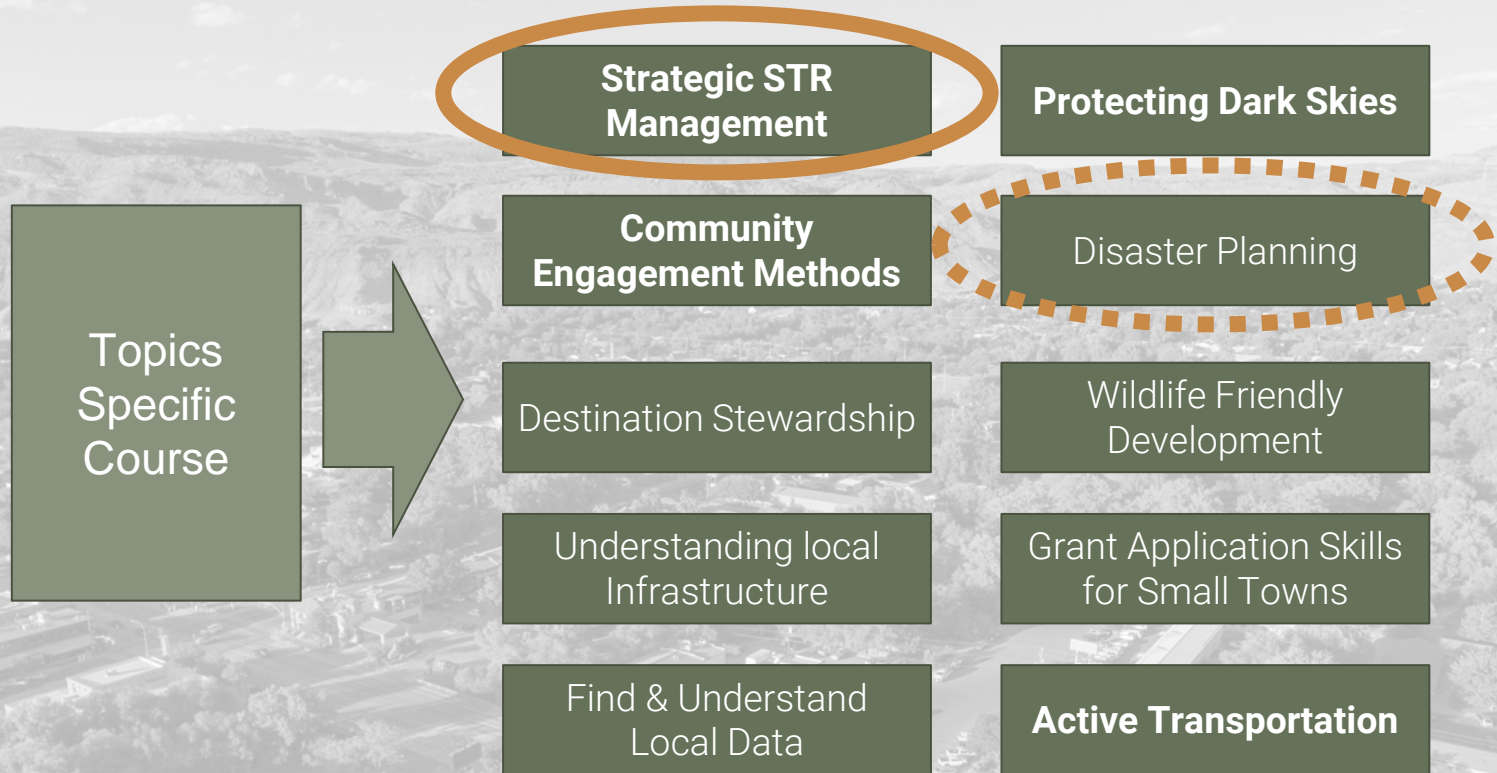
GNAR Academy Fundamentals Course



Potential Future “Deep Dive” Courses



Potential Future “Deep Dive” Courses



Short - Term Rental Deep Dive Course

- **LESSON 1:** Introduction to Short-Term Rentals
- **LESSON 2:** Start with Data: Finding, Understanding & Utilizing Local STR Data
- **LESSON 3:** Community-Driven Policy Development: The Groundwork for Success
- **LESSON 4:** Developing & Implementing Effective Regulations
- **LESSON 5:** Easing Compliance & Enforcement
- **LESSON 6:** Enhancing Benefits: Tax base, Economic Development and Tourism
- **LESSON 7:** How to Stay Engaged with Shifting Trends



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Thank You!

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