



# GROUND GROWTH



Insights, Challenges, & Opportunities  
Shaping New Hampshire's Outdoor  
Economy.

JUNE 2026



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For the past five years, Granite Outdoor Alliance has advanced a simple idea: New Hampshire's outdoor assets are more than a quality-of-life benefit. They are core to the state's economic foundation.

That perspective is gaining traction. Business leaders increasingly recognize that outdoor access, community, and quality of place are central to workforce attraction, retention, health, and long-term competitiveness.

Grounded Growth was created to better understand the forces shaping New Hampshire's outdoor economy directly from the people operating within it. Across three roundtables, 62 industry stakeholders shared candid perspectives on workforce, economic positioning, business adaptation, and the systems needed to support long-term resilience.

A consistent theme emerged: the outdoor economy is active and evolving, but the systems that support it have not kept pace. This report is not a final strategy, but a synthesis intended to clarify where stronger connections across industry, workforce, and policy can unlock progress.

What comes next is how we build on it.

**The foundation is in place.**

*Tyler T. Ray*

**TYLER T. RAY**

Director, Granite Outdoor Alliance

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Support for this report provided by:

The Nature Conservancy 

# ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

**Grounded Growth** was designed as a structured engagement process to gather industry insight and inform strategic direction for New Hampshire’s outdoor economy.

Across three roundtables, GOA convened 62 leaders from business, manufacturing, conservation, workforce, and the public sector. Each session focused on a distinct theme while surfacing shared system-level challenges and opportunities.

Facilitated discussions, participant surveys, and response input helped translate real-time business experiences into broader insights about how the outdoor economy is functioning and where stronger connections are needed.



## WINTER 2026 ROUNDTABLE LOCATIONS



**Adventure Ready Brands**  
LITTLETON, NH



*Manufacturer of outdoor recreation, safety, and preparedness products*



**BADGER**  
GILSUM, NH



*Manufacturer of certified organic and cruelty-free body care products*



**LIFE IS GOOD**  
HUDSON, NH



*Spreading the power of optimism through apparel and storytelling.*

“ *There’s a lot happening — but not always together. When things connect, that’s where progress really starts.* ”

~ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

# OBSERVATIONS

Industry insights shared highlighted both momentum and missed opportunities. These observations reflect what is working, what is at risk, and where focused action could make the biggest difference.



## MOMENTUM IS REAL

There is strong energy, innovation, and investment in the outdoor economy across the state.



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING FALL SHORT

Gaps in infrastructure and housing limit growth, strain communities, and restrain opportunity.



## WORKFORCE IS THE GROWTH ENGINE

Attracting, developing, and retaining talent is fundamental to sustaining and scaling the outdoor economy.



## A STRONGER VOICE IS NEEDED

The outdoor economy needs stronger recognition and more coordinated efforts to communicate its value and advance shared priorities.



## NATURE IS OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Outdoor access, landscapes, and quality of life set New Hampshire apart and are central to its future.



## COLLABORATION MAKES US STRONGER

Cross-sector partnerships and local leadership are essential to advancing solutions that last.

“ *We see so much potential. The key is turning shared insights into coordinated action that strengthens communities and grows opportunity across New Hampshire.* ”

~ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

# FIELD MOMENTS

Grounded Growth Winter 2026 Roundtables

Leaders gathered across New Hampshire to surface shared challenges, system gaps, and opportunities for stronger alignment across business, workforce, and public systems.



# KEY INSIGHTS

Four themes emerged consistently across roundtable discussions. Together, they point to both the challenges we must address and the strengths we can build upon.

## 1 Fragmentation is the central constraint

New Hampshire's outdoor economy is active, but the systems around it are not consistently connected. Workforce, education, economic development, and policy efforts often operate in parallel, leaving businesses to navigate resources on their own.

The opportunity is not simply more activity. It is stronger alignment across the systems already in motion.



### where stronger connections are needed

% of respondents selecting each connection area: multiple selections allowed



Business <-> CTE **62.5%**



Business <-> Higher Education **50%**



Coordination across government & economic development **50%**

## 2 Workforce reveals where the system breaks down

Workforce challenges extend beyond hiring. Housing, childcare, transportation, seasonality, and unclear career pathways all shape whether people can enter, stay, and advance in outdoor careers.

Participants pointed to advancement as the clearest breakdown point. Interest exists, but the path from entry-level work to long-term opportunity is not always visible or supported.



### where the workforce pipeline breaks down

% of respondents identifying the most common breakdown point



Advancement **75%**



Retention **15%**



Awareness **10%**

### 3 BUSINESSES ARE ADAPTING, BUT THE SYSTEM IS NOT KEEPING PACE

Outdoor businesses are already adjusting to changing markets, workforce pressures, supply-chain realities, and new technologies. But the support systems around them often move more slowly than business conditions require.

This gap is felt most by small and mid-sized businesses, where limited time, capital, and access make it harder to engage with available resources or invest ahead of change.



We're adapting every day, figuring out workforce, supply chain, and operations in real time. The challenge isn't effort, it's navigating systems that don't always connect.

- ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

### 4 THE NH ADVANTAGE HAS UNTAPPED STRATEGIC VALUE

New Hampshire's outdoor access, quality of life, environment, and sense of community are more than lifestyle assets. They are economic strengths that influence workforce attraction, business development, health, and long-term competitiveness.

The opportunity is to more fully integrate the outdoor economy into the state's broader economic strategy and position these assets as core infrastructure for future growth.



These assets are not peripheral. They function as core economic infrastructure.

- ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

# TENSIONS

Conversations across the roundtable sessions surfaced four recurring tensions shaping New Hampshire's outdoor economy.



## Awareness

Strong interest in the outdoor economy as a career and its benefits.

VS.

## Advancement

Limited pathways, career visibility, and support to move people forward.



## Place as Asset

New Hampshire's landscapes, recreation, and quality of life drive our economy.

VS.

## Place as Friction

Housing, infrastructure, and access challenges limit growth and inclusion.



## Innovation

Businesses are testing, adapting, and leading in products, services, and operations.

VS.

## Access

Capital, talent, and resources are out of reach for businesses and communities.



## Resilience

A strong culture of collaboration, adaptability, and stewardship builds long-term strength.

VS.

## Volatility

Economic uncertainty, climate impacts, and market shifts create ongoing instability.





# FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION



Grounded Growth does not define a final strategy, but it makes clear where alignment can unlock meaningful progress. The opportunity is not to build entirely new systems, but to better connect the ones that already exist.

GOA is positioned to support this work by operating at the intersection of industry, workforce, and public systems, serving as a connector across sectors, a translator of business and community needs, and a convener of partners working toward shared priorities.



## 1. Build Alignment Infrastructure

Create repeatable mechanisms for employer input, cross-sector communication, and stronger translation between business needs and public systems.



**GOA role:** Convene stakeholders, facilitate dialogue, and strengthen system connections.



## 2. Reframe the Outdoor Economy as Economic Infrastructure

Position outdoor access, quality of life, and community as core assets tied to workforce attraction, business development, and long-term competitiveness.



**GOA role:** Elevate the outdoor economy in policy and investment conversations as a driver of economic vitality.





# AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS



### 3. Strengthen Workforce Pathway Clarity

Improve career visibility, non-degree pathways, certifications, apprenticeships, and employer-connected training.



**GOA role:** Champion clear pathways and promote connections between education, training, and industry.



### 4. Support Adaptive Business Resilience

Reduce friction around supply chains, technical assistance, innovation, and public-private coordination so businesses can adapt more effectively.



**GOA role:** Strengthen connectivity across businesses and partners and identify opportunities to improve coordination.



### 5. Use Coalition-Building Strategically

Bring industry, government, and partners together around targeted priorities where shared action is the strategy, not the exception.



**GOA role:** Help align stakeholders around shared priorities and outcomes.

# LOOKING AHEAD

Grounded Growth was designed to listen. What we heard points to a clear direction: **New Hampshire's outdoor economy is evolving, and the systems around it need to better connect to support growth.**

GOA will carry these insights into strategic planning, focusing on where stronger connections across industry, workforce, and public systems can create the most impact.

“**The next phase is execution.**”



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**SUPPORTING PARTNER**



**MEDIA PARTNER**



**REPORT PREPARED BY**



**ABOUT GRANITE OUTDOOR ALLIANCE**

Granite Outdoor Alliance strengthens New Hampshire's outdoor economy by connecting businesses, partners, and public systems to support business growth, workforce opportunity, and long-term resilience.