

*Colorado Water Conservation Board
Statewide Drought Conference
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Drought Assessment for Recreation & Tourism: Southwestern Colorado



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Project Team

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■ CWCB

- ❑ Taryn Hutchins-Cabibi & Veva Deheza (now at NOAA/NIDIS)

■ A big thank you to all participants in SW Colorado!

Presentation Overview

1. The need: linkages between drought, tourism, and recreation
 2. Pilot project overview
 3. Framework for approaching drought, tourism, and recreation
 4. Pilot highlights
 5. Overarching themes
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Presentation Outline

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Need – Why Tourism/Recreation & Drought?

“You can’t talk about it (drought-tourism-recreation) without realizing that it’s all interconnected. I don’t think you can say that if we mitigate for aspen colors, that we can save the world. It’s a combination of so many things. The way that I see people deal with drought, it’s always going to be part of the conversation. It needs to be figured into the equation.”

Background – Why Tourism/Recreation & Drought?

- Drought occurring somewhere within the state an estimated nine out of every ten years (CWCB, 2011)
- In 2010, direct travel industry spending in CO totaled over \$14.6 billion (Runyan, 2011)
- Environmental orientation of most Colorado recreation
- Drought affects all seasons, both directly and indirectly



2002 Drought Impacts on Tourism/Recreation

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Pilot Project Background

1. Evaluation of the metrics used in the State Drought Plan Vulnerability Assessment
 2. Recommendations for additional data and information to fill gap areas to refine the vulnerability assessment tool utilized in the 2010 Statewide Drought Plan specifically for tourism/recreation
 3. Identification of key stakeholders and development of a structure for stakeholder involvement
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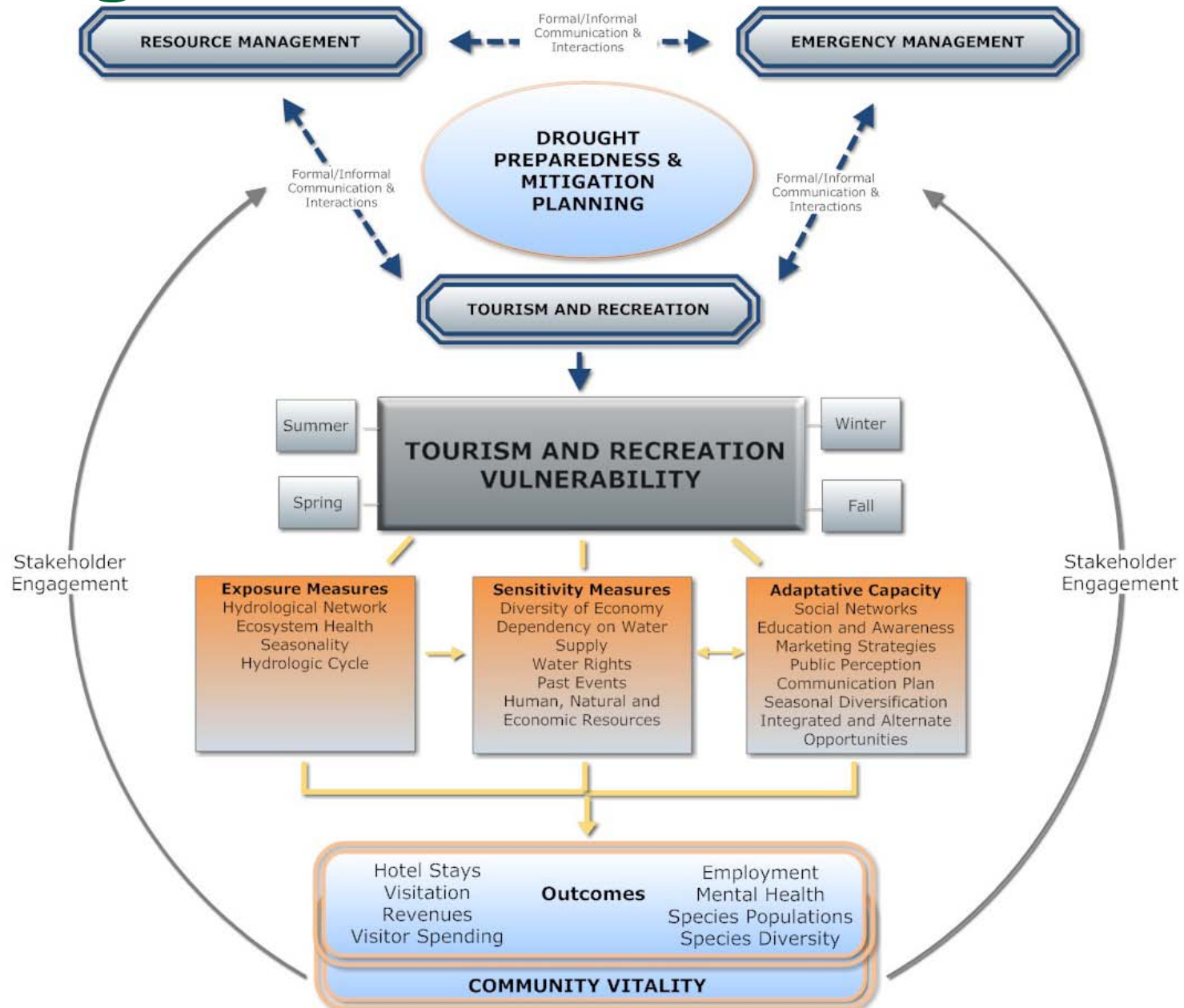
Pilot Project Design

- **Development of stakeholder list for SW Colorado**
 - Iterative and continual process
 - **Survey**
 - Administered via email from November 4, 2011, and February 1, 2012, to all on stakeholder list
 - Three follow-up reminders
 - 36% response rate (27 respondents)
 - **Focus Groups/Interviews**
 - Two focus groups (winter/summer), on December 1, 2011 in Durango
 - Follow-up interviews with winter resorts
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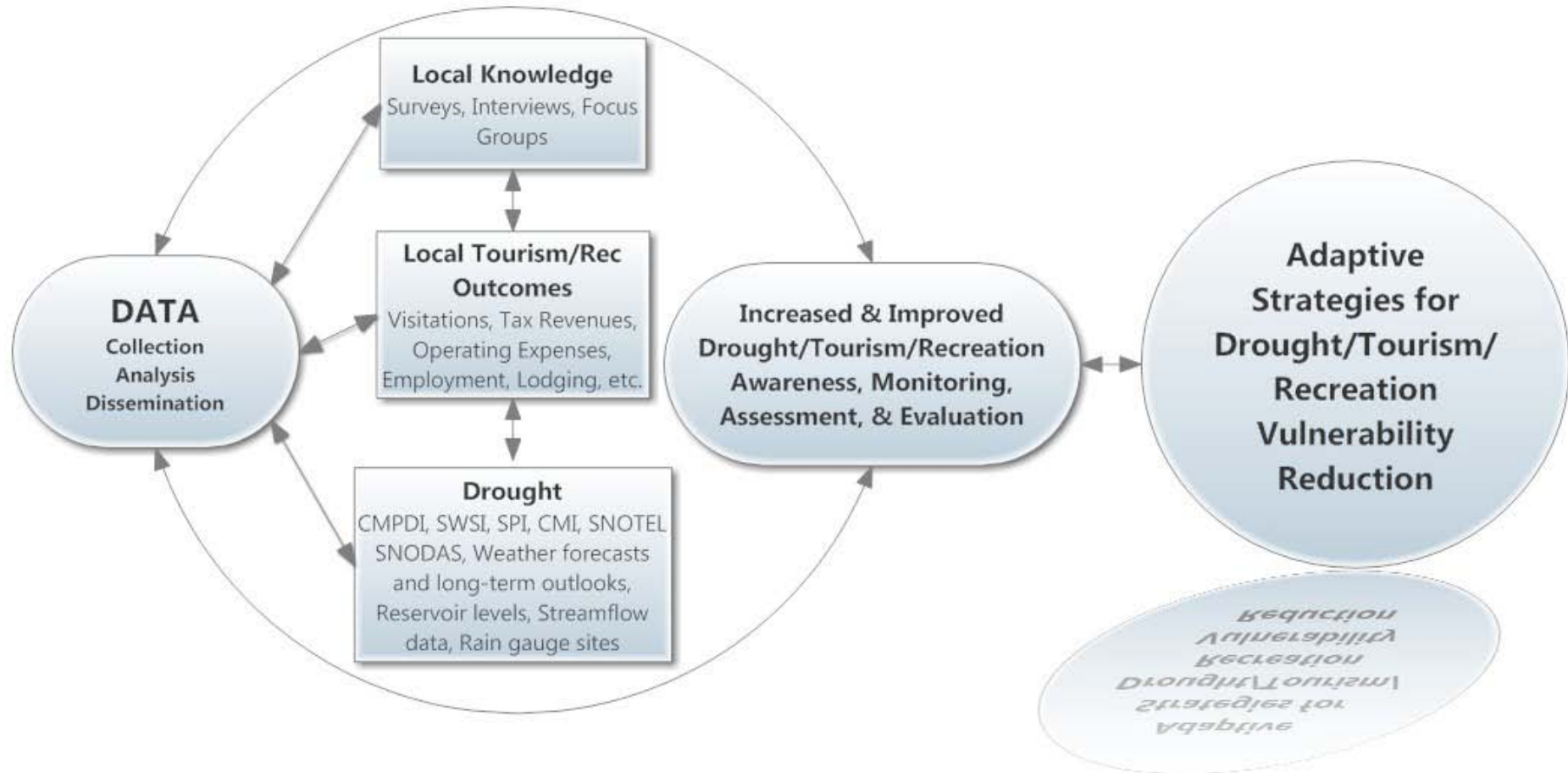
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Drought-Tourism-Recreation



Stakeholder Engagement Process



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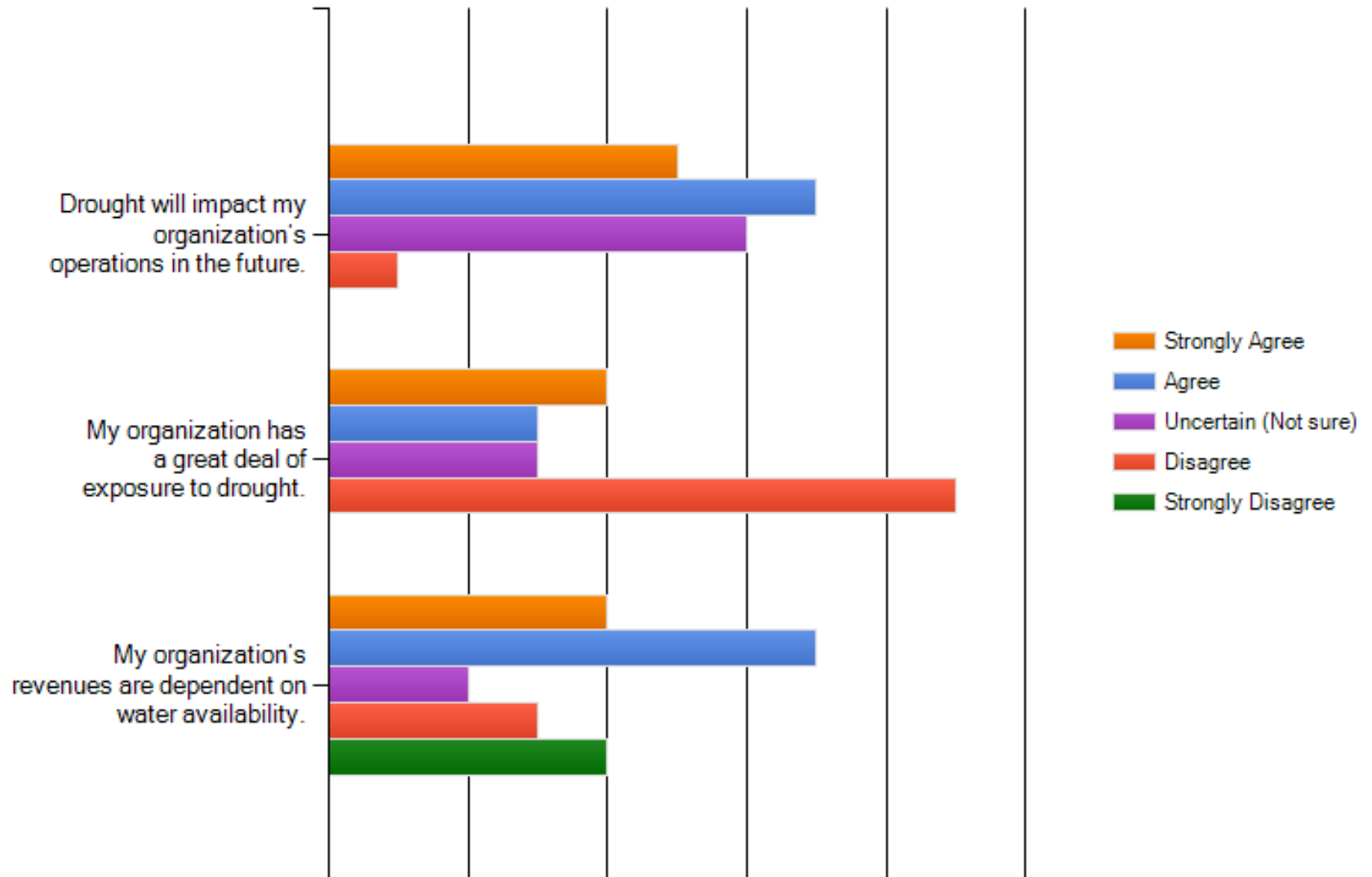
Pilot Survey Highlights

- Three obvious biases in respondents:
 1. more summer tourism/recreation represented
 2. few private for profit businesses participation (more public and non-profit entities)
 3. lack of representation from those who perceived a lack of connection to drought.
 - 13 non-profit, 3 private for profit business, and 9 government organizations (3 water authority/conservation districts)
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Pilot Survey Highlights

- High level of drought experience
 - 18 organizations had experience with a previous drought, many listing 2002
- Minimal drought planning
 - 5 organizations had a drought mitigation and/or response plan
 - 4 organizations participate in any local or regional drought planning
 - Nobody reported a drought plan synchronized with either the state's or the region's
 - Only 2 had actual written plans

Mixed Concern and Uncertainty



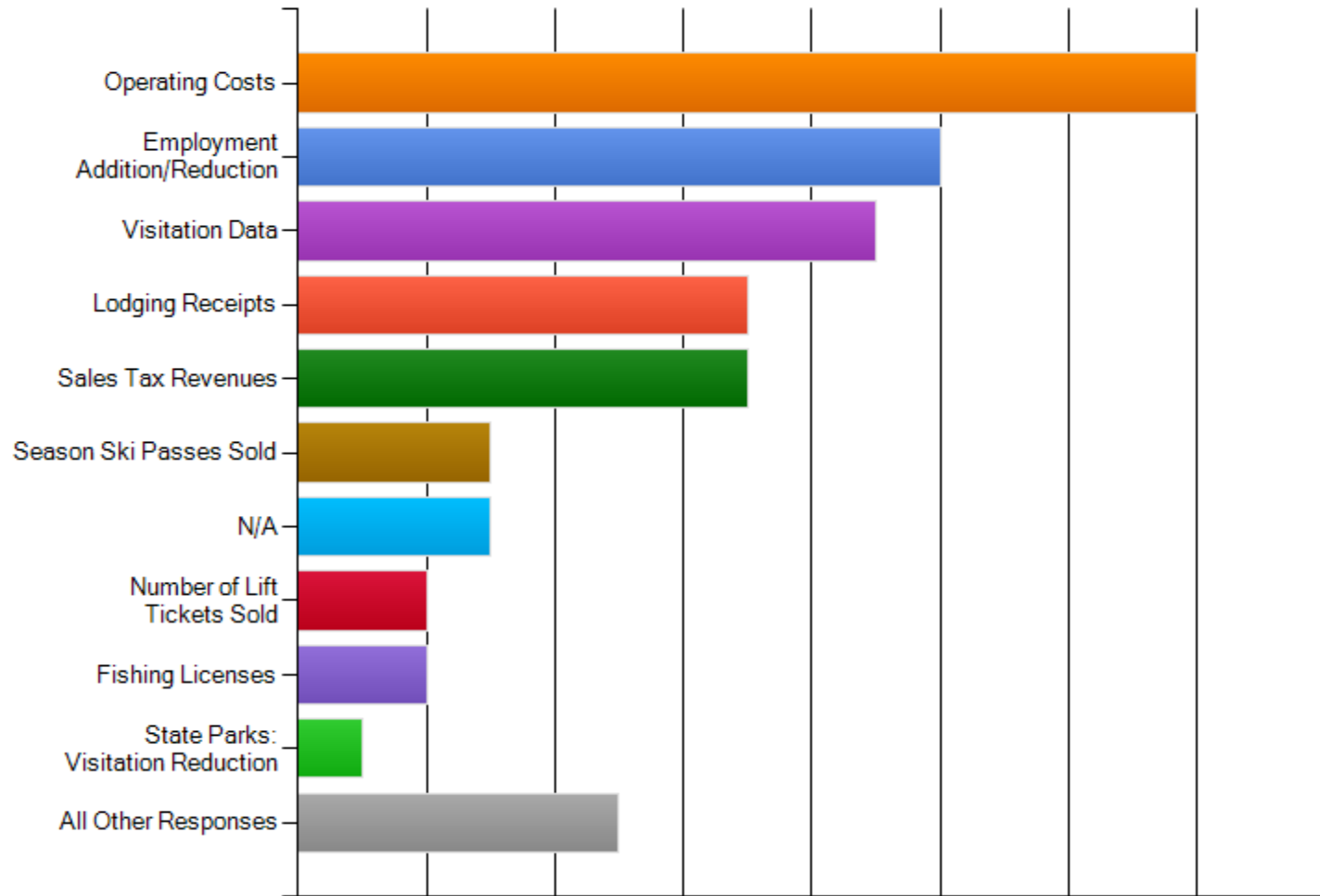
Exposure, Impacts, but only 2 plans.

Pilot Survey Highlights

- Limited awareness about and use of current drought monitoring and assessment data/tools
 - Out of all listed in Drought Mitigation Plan, those predominantly identified:
 - ❑ stream flow data
 - ❑ weather forecasts
 - ❑ long-term outlooks
 - ❑ NRCS Snow Telemetry Network (SNOTEL) sites
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Potential Tourism/Rec Data Sources

My organization has a system to track: [check all that apply]



Though, not necessarily willing to share.

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Survey, Focus Group & Interview Themes

- Impacts
 - Very diverse sector with varied direct relationship to water
 - Disconnect between drought/tourism/recreation
 - Indicators and trends
 - Coping strategies
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Impacts

- Direct and indirect impacts on the tourism/recreation sector, spanning all seasons
 - boating, rafting, canoeing, fishing, skiing, snowmobiling, or skiing
 - Intangible relationships are harder to quantify
 - Eg. decreased visitations and cancelations in hotel stays stemming from negative perceptions of dryness, never booked holidays because of wildfires (even far away from a vacation destination)
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- Links to fires

Diversity of Sector

- Water recreation activities, such as fishing or rafting seem to identify more closely with natural resource management, and by extension with water management
 - Many tourism activities are perhaps less directly tied to non-consumptive water use and so linkages less acknowledged
 - Yet, diversity also offers solutions
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Un-established Linkages

- Impacts need to be established
 - Need for increased awareness and education about connections
 - Establishing quantitatively and qualitatively the relevance of drought to tourism/recreation
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Indicators and Trends

- Lowered visitations, reduced tax revenues, operating expenses, employment, or hotel visits (the most commonly collected data from the survey)
 - Focus groups mentioned parks, trail logbooks, # people floating, train ticket sales, traffic data, or hunting tags
 - No single indicator, but combination
 - Though visitation prioritized
 - Collection and integration is a daunting task
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Coping Strategies

- PR & marketing campaigns that highlight diversity across the community
- Importance of conveying current and accurate data
- Economic diversification

Year-Round
FAMILY FUN

skiing+picnics+shopping+solitude
+tradition+fine dining+snowcat skiing
+snow+microbrews+alpenglow+moguls
+nordic skiing+après ski+winterfest
+snowboarding+friends+terrain parks
+snowbikes+purgatory plunge zipline
+snowshoeing+diversions+nastar
+music in the mountains+lodging
+bungee trampolines+holiday parties
+powder+mountain biking+massages
+telemark skiing+birthday parties
+sleigh rides+alpine slide+ski school
+torchlight parades+climbing walls
+reunions+fireworks+legends+family
+retreats+tubing+scenic chairlift rides

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*Includes a lift ticket, and lodging
in a select DMR property.
Restrictions may apply.

Purgatory

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SUMMER STAY & PLAY
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**Includes TOTAL ADVENTURE TICKET,
and lodging in a select DMR property.
Restrictions may apply.

For more information on Year-Round Fun at Durango Mountain Resort
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Building Community Vitality

“Now, it’s about all of the [tourism and] recreation opportunities; that diversity is important. When rafting goes down, mountain biking could go up.”

- Monitoring and assessment, development of metrics & mechanisms specific to this sector
- Diversification
- Effective PR and communication
- Innovative and integrative planning

Many opportunities in this sector for reducing vulnerability and building resilience.