

Katharina Papenbrock, Executive Director, Ouray Chamber Resort Association

After a graduate degree and initial career in Art History, Museum Studies in Denver, a lifestyle-change and business opportunity lead Kat to shift gears to opening a locally-sourced restaurant on Main Street in Ouray. Due to economic and partnership pressures, typical to small businesses in this region, this original plan only lasted two years but opened the door to get involved with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association, where she was offered the Operations Manager position during their restructuring in 2011. Over the past five years, she and her team at the Chamber have restructured the City of Ouray's marketing contract into a high-performing program and started working more closely with local and regional destination marketing and economic development organizations and projects. She is committed to projects that connect small businesses and organizations to resources and efficiencies that will help them grow and make a living in this challenging economic landscape, and to eventually help diversity that landscape as well.

During her time with the Ouray Chamber she has participated in successful collaborative marketing grants and projects with the Southwest Colorado Travel Region, Ouray County, and now the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop. In 2015, she was able to launch a biennial region-wise research study with Hillsdale College in Michigan to offer a low-cost demographic and conversion study to small Western Slope destinations. She currently sits on the Board of the Region 10 League for Economic Assistance and Planning, is the Chair of the Region 10 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee, sits on the Ouray Community Development Committee and is a Board member of the Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organizations.

More than that, though, as a former climbing, orienteering and kayaking instructor, she is passionate about the quality of life and recreational opportunities in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado and aims to find sustainable ways to maintain the unique charm and personalities of Ouray, Ridgway and Ouray County, and access to and quality of those outdoor resources that make living and doing business here so attractive.