

# 2021 Airport Business Top 40 Under 40: Jeff Kadlec, C.M.

Jeff Kadlec fell in love with aviation as a child. Growing up in the Chicago area, he would go to the annual air and water show downtown where he became fascinated with planes and aviation.

He eventually landed a job with Mesa Airlines and then took a job in airside operations as Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) where he fell in love with airport management.

Kadlec is the manager Yellowstone Airport (WYS), a position he has held since 2013. He's a noted advocate for the airport and prides himself on looking for the next opportunity. In 2016, he led his team in receiving the airport's first-ever "zero discrepancy" inspection report.



"My kids grew up around here so they call it 'daddy's airport,'" he said. "It's a cool thing to hear them say that because we all do look at this airport as our airport. You take ownership of that and our operations staff, it's their airport too. We all show up to back one another up and take care of business."

Under Kadlec's leadership, the airport has transformed from a financial liability to a self-sustaining business enterprise. He always has an eye on entrepreneurial opportunities at the airport and constantly looks to the future.

Kadlec is proactive in attracting advertisers and businesses and was instrumental in fostering the airport's first hangar development in its 66-year history. The hangar is now home to the area's first medical air ambulance transportation service that provides emergency air medical transport to the Greater Yellowstone Region and Yellowstone National Park.

After many previous attempts by the state of Montana, Kadlec led the charge in 2018 to work through the federal processes to lift deed restrictions that prohibited non-aeronautical development at the WYS. This resulted in the long-term self-sustainability of the airport.

"This isn't a job where you just punch the clock," Kadlec said. "It's something that if you're not here and not taking care of business, then things aren't getting done."

He also led the charge for Congress to recognize the unique challenges of seasonal, commercial-service airport operations like WYS. Kadlec's efforts resulted in legislation to include seasonal commercial-service airports with 8,000 or more enplanements as primary airports.

Kadlec is focused on constructing a new terminal complex after securing \$20 million in federal and state funding for the project. He's also currently president of the Montana Airport Management Association (MAMA).

"We have a very tight knit group of aviation professionals in Montana. Because we're so small, we're always getting in touch with one another and learn from one another," he said.

- **Age:** 38
- **Hometown:** Woodridge, IL
- **Alma Mater:** Arizona State University
- **Fun fact about yourself:** I enjoy is painting when I have the time. I'm no Bob Ross, but I like doing it.
- **Someone I look up to in the industry:** Debbie Alke
- **My favorite thing about aviation is:** I'm a pilot so getting up in the air!