



Economic Development & Workforce Council Newsletter

2025| August

Our Top Story: Applications Open for BASE 2.0



BASE 2.0 is a locally-driven business accelerator program produced by the Estes Chamber of Commerce and its Economic Development & Workforce Council. The program is focused on helping Estes Park entrepreneurs build stronger, more sustainable businesses.

“This program is hands-on, in-person, and designed to produce practical outcomes—including an Operating Plan, goals and a community presentation,” said Chamber President Colleen DePasquale.

The 2005/2026 program will be facilitated by Kevin Benes, a graduate of the original BASE program. Kevin brings a practical, entrepreneurial, and Estes-focused approach to BASE 2.0. His goal is to help local businesses set clear goals, build meaningful relationships, and tackle the unique challenges of running a business in a seasonal mountain town.

“We’re continuing to refine the program so it can be run by future facilitators; allowing each to add their own touch and personality, and we are especially excited to have a Kevin bringing his experience and knowledge to guide this year’s cohort,” DePasquale added.

“After working in government and large corporations, I found my passion for entrepreneurship,” Benes said. “Over the past 15 years, I have started businesses, acquired existing ones, sold a couple, and consulted for mountain entrepreneurs across Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah,” Benes continued.

“His background in mergers, business sales, and startups, along with his BASE experience, will be a tremendous benefit to those who participate in the BASE 2.0 program this year,” said DePasquale. “Once applications are received, Kevin will conduct a one-hour intake interview with each applicant to understand their goals, challenges, wants and needs, so we can tailor the program to ensure we meet the

needs of our participants and assess whether the application needs to take a Business Financials pre-requisite course ahead of the BASE 2.0," she concluded.

BASE 2.0 is a 10-session commitment. Each session begins with a morning Community Coffee Roundtable followed by a strategic working period and guest presentations. The afternoon portion of each session includes working time to build Operating Plan components, work through issues, run thought experiments as a group, and discuss best practices and learnings.

Over the 10-sessions, participants will deep-dive into topics including: Focus, Tools & Time; Mission, Vision & Exit strategy; Goals, Deadlines & Milestones; Core Activities & Key People; Financial Foundations; Marketing that Matters; Local Ecosystem & Strategic Connections; Finance II – Forecasting & Capital Planning; and Strategy & Growth Planning. The last session will pull all of this together to finalize an Operating Plan and Pitch Presentation, held in May.

[Apply Here](#)

Upcoming Events



Join our book club discussions!

Thursday Aug 14
8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Morning Book Club Discussion @ Inwell & Brew

Wednesday Aug 20
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Evening Book Club Discussion @ Lumpy Ridge Brewing Co. Publixx House

This is part of the EDWC and Estes Chamber of Commerce's Business Book Club that will meet quarterly. Join other business owners in the community to discuss *The Infinite Game* by Simon Sinek. **Even if you don't make it through the book - it's good discussion and a great time to hang out as well! A synopsis of the book will be provided to all attendees.**



[Apply Now](#)

RFP Open: EDWC BASE 2.0

The Estes Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development & Workforce Council invites your business to submit a proposal for weekly lunch catering during our upcoming BASE 2.0 (Business Accelerator Services of Estes) educational program.

We are seeking a reliable and creative food service partner to provide fresh, ready-to-serve lunches each Tuesday beginning February 10, 2026. Meals should accommodate approximately 20 attendees and meet basic dietary needs, including vegetarian and gluten-free options.

Larimer County & Northern Colorado Latest



Upskill with Cybersecurity or Data Analytics

Are you looking to switch fields or level up in your current one? We've partnered with IBM SkillsBuild to bring you online training in two of today's most in-demand areas: cybersecurity and data analytics.

Each course takes about 60 hours to complete and leads to an IBM certificate and digital badges that are employer-recognized.

Designed for busy people, these programs are perfect whether you're exploring new options or just want to sharpen your skills.

Use promo code ENCORE300 at checkout to enroll for just \$50—now through August 31!

**IBM SkillsBuild:
Cybersecurity**

**IBM SkillsBuild: Data
Analytics**



Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) 101 Info Session

Is your business looking for a way to build a skilled workforce?

Join us for Registered Apprenticeship 101 - a monthly info session designed to help businesses explore the benefits of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) and the steps to get started.

What you'll learn:

The benefits of apprenticeship for businesses

- How to determine if a RAP is right for your organization
- Steps to develop or connect to a RAP
- Resources available to support your success

Apprenticeships are workforce development tools, used across industries including manufacturing, healthcare, skilled trades, business, and more. They're flexible, proven, and built for today's workforce needs.

The Colorado Apprenticeship Hub works in partnership with the Colorado Workforce System and The State Apprenticeship Agency to support the development and implementation of registered apprenticeships across the state, at no cost!

**Register for a Session (2nd
Tuesday of the month)**



Up-skill with English and Spanish Contractor Courses

From sharpening Excel skills and mastering blueprint reading to optimizing every aspect of your contracting business, our Contractor Academy offers practical, hands-on classes designed exclusively for contractors. With expert instructors and focused sessions, you'll gain the tools to enhance your projects, improve efficiency, and grow your business. Classes are offered online and in person, in both English and Spanish, to meet your needs.

See the full list of courses & register



Free coffee and community, every Wednesday at the Visit Fort Collins Welcome Center

A poster for the 1 Million Cups event. It features a large orange coffee cup icon on the left. The text on the right reads: 'Calling Entrepreneurs and Small Business Owners', 'Join us at 1 Million Cups every Wednesday morning from 9-10am!', 'This free business group is one of the best ways to access and engage the local entrepreneurial and business support systems in Northern Colorado.', 'We connect aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners to the resources they need to start or grow their business.', 'Each week, two business owners give 6 minute presentations on funding, new product concepts, or business challenges they are currently facing.', 'The TMC Community provides knowledgeable feedback that is clear, actionable, and empathetic.', 'Starting and running a company can be a lonely endeavor. TMC is here to help!', 'Free coffee and community every Wednesday @ 9am at the Visit Fort Collins Welcome Center 7 Old Town Square - Suite 100, Fort Collins'. At the bottom, there are four QR codes with labels: 'Apply to Present', 'RSVP on MeetUp', 'Join on Facebook', and 'Follow on LinkedIn'. The footer includes the 'NORTHERN COLORADO COMMUNITY' logo and the '1 MILLION CUPS' logo.

Use the QR codes to apply to present, RSVP, or join a community Facebook or LinkedIn group

Colorado State Updates



Colorado First and Existing Industry Job Training Grants

Starting July 1, 2025, Colorado companies can apply for the **Skill Advance Colorado First and Existing Industry Job Training Grants**. These grants can provide up to \$3,800 per learner for workforce training for both new hires and current employees.

Jointly administered by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade and the Colorado Community College System, these grants support workforce training for both new hires and current employees.

Businesses interested in applying for funding work directly with a local college representative, who assists with eligibility determination, training needs assessment,

and grant application development. Training topics are customized to the individual business needs. Areas may include continuous improvement and quality, essential skills, leadership and management, manufacturing and computer/business skills.

[Learn More](#)

EDWC Council Members

Christina Kraft, Bank of Colorado, Market President Estes Park, EDWC Chair

Diane Muno, White Orchid, Owner, EDWC Secretary

Bill Brown, Estes Park Town Trustee

Jason Damweber, Estes Park, Deputy Town Administrator

Adam Crowe, Larimer County, Economic Development Manager

Rebecca D. Gelsinger, Visit Estes Park, Director of Operations

Nick Smith, Lumpy Ridge Brewing, Owner

Ingrid Bush, The Barrel, Owner



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