



Economic Development & Workforce Council Newsletter

2026| April

TOP STORY

Grant Program Helps Local Businesses Attract, Retain, and Develop Employee Talent



LOCAL INDUSTRY GRANT Hire, Train, Retain



Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins are launching a new initiative for local businesses called the Local Industry Grant Hire, Train, Retain (LIGHTR) program.

LIGHTR helps small businesses to remain competitive by offsetting the cost of training and certifications for current employees. The mission of the program is to support business growth, employee upward mobility and workforce development by providing financial assistance for employee professional development and upskilling including tuition, certifications and testing costs. For a small business with 2-50 employees, that equates to up to \$3,000 in grant funding to assist with employee training, certification and development.

"We're excited to partner with the City of Fort Collins to offer employee training grants to Larimer County businesses. It's clear that training has a positive impact on business growth, employee retention and overall upward mobility, so we launched LIGHTR to spread these benefits to more small businesses," said Adam Crowe, Economic Development Manager, Economic and Workforce Development Department of Larimer County

Interested businesses should confirm their eligibility and identify their desired training provider and program, ensuring such training will lead to measurable results. The application period opened March 5, 2026 and applications will be reviewed on a first-come first-serve basis.

Local, Regional, & State Opportunities



Unstoppable Business Conference

In celebration of Small Business Week, we're excited to bring back the Unstoppable Business Conference. Join us for a full day of educational sessions designed to move your business forward. With expert-led sessions tailored to real-world challenges, you won't just hear about growth—you'll define what it looks like for you and walk away with the tools to make it happen. Are you ready? Wednesday | May 6, 2026
8:30am – 4:30pm - Check In opens at 7:30am
Embassy Suites by Hilton Loveland Conference Center
4705 Clydesdale Pkwy, Loveland, CO 80538

[Learn More](#)

Wyoming Colorado Regional Job Fair - Spring 2026

The Wyoming and Colorado Regional Job Fair is a multi-regional event designed to connect businesses with candidates in Colorado and Wyoming.



Cut Costs & Save Resources

Information provided by: NOCOBiz Connect

Thursday, April 30

8:30 am - 10:00 am

Energy Engagement Center | 2000 E Horsetooth Road, Fort Collins

Looking to make your business more efficient and cost-effective? Join NOCOBiz Connect for Smart Savings: Energy & Water Rebates for Your Business.

This free, in-person session brings together experts from Efficiency Works, Xcel Energy, and Fort Collins Utilities to guide you through energy and water rebates, financing tools, and real-world case studies. Whether you're a building owner, facility manager, or local business operator, you'll walk away with practical steps and resources to reduce costs and upgrade your operations sustainably. Limited spots available – RSVP by April 28. Don't miss this chance to learn, connect, and save!

[Learn More](#)

April 30th, 2026

This event will be held virtually and in-person.

Please note, in-person events will be held simultaneously in multiple locations: Adams County, CO; Arapahoe-Douglas County, CO; Jefferson County, CO; Weld County, CO; Pueblo, CO; Larimer County, CO; Denver, CO; and Boulder County, CO.

Virtual Registration

In-person Registration



Tuesday Talent Series: Building a Flexible Workforce Without Legal Risk: Employees vs. Contractors

Tuesday, April 28 | 11:00 am - 12:00 pm -- Virtual

As businesses look for creative ways to attract and retain talent, many turn to independent contractors, freelancers, and flexible work arrangements. But misclassifying workers can lead to significant legal, financial, and reputational risk. This session will break down the key legal distinctions between employees and independent contractors under Colorado law, common misclassification pitfalls, and how recent enforcement trends impact employers. Attendees will gain practical guidance on how to structure and document working relationships correctly, reduce risk, and build a compliant workforce that supports long-term growth.



**Cut Costs & Save Resources –
Join Us April 30!**

Looking to make your business more efficient and cost-effective? Join



**Recursos para reducir costos y
ahorrar: ¡Únase a nosotros el 30
de abril!**

NOCOBiz Connect for Smart Savings: Energy & Water Rebates for Your Business on April 30 at 8:30 AM at the Energy Engagement Center in Fort Collins.

This free, in-person session brings together experts from Efficiency Works, Xcel Energy, and Fort Collins Utilities to guide you through energy and water rebates, financing tools, and real-world case studies. Whether you're a building owner, facility manager, or local business operator, you'll walk away with practical steps and resources to reduce costs and upgrade your operations sustainably.

Limited spots available – (RSVP by April 28, 2026)

[Learn More](#)

¿Quieres que tu negocio sea más eficiente y rentable? Únete a NOCOBiz Connect para Ahorros Inteligentes: Reembolsos de Energía y Agua para tu Negocio el 30 de abril a las 8:30 a. m. en el Energy Engagement Center de Fort Collins.

Esta sesión presencial y gratuita reúne a expertos de Efficiency Works, Xcel Energy y Fort Collins Utilities para guiarte en el proceso de reembolsos de energía y agua, herramientas de financiamiento y casos prácticos. Ya seas propietario de un edificio, administrador de instalaciones o empresario local, te llevarás pasos prácticos y recursos para reducir costos y optimizar tus operaciones de forma sostenible.

Cupos limitados – (Confirma tu asistencia antes del 28 de abril de 2026)

[aprender más](#)



Performance Management Training

Monday April 20, 2026
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Join us for a virtual Performance Management training designed for employers managing a full-time, seasonal and part-time workforce. Led by a professional HR Professional, this session will focus on practical strategies for managing performance, accountability, and engagement in fast-paced, short-tenure roles common in Estes Park.

Topics will include:

- Managing employee performance and accountability in seasonal and part-time roles.
- Addressing attendance and scheduling challenges, including availability changes during peak seasons.
- Setting clear expectations quickly for short-term roles, including positions with 60–90 day tenures.
- Maintaining engagement and consistency when onboarding and managing a high-turnover workforce.

This training will be held virtually. A meeting link will be sent to all registered participants prior to the session. Registration details may be found on the Chamber's website.

[Learn More](#)



Smooth Operations for a Busy Summer: Onboarding & SOPs with AI

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 |
08:30 AM - 10:30 AM
\$No cost

This session is perfect for business owners and managers who hire seasonal staff and want to automate their training and operations before the summer rush

[Learn More](#)

Business Startup Bootcamp

Saturday, May 30, 2026 |
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
*\$40

This event is perfectly suited for aspiring entrepreneurs in the idea stage and early-stage startup founders looking for a clear, hands-on roadmap to formalize and budget for their new business venture

[Learn More](#)

Colorado Small Business Recovery and Resiliency Guide

The Business Recovery and Resiliency Guide is a comprehensive roadmap designed to identify vulnerabilities today so businesses remain open tomorrow.

How this guide supports our business community:

- **Risk Mitigation:** Owners can identify vulnerabilities and build a 13-topic Business Continuity Plan (BCP).
- **Comprehensive Asset Protection:** The curriculum provides actionable strategies to secure digital assets and ensure staff safety.
- **Self-Paced Learning:** The expert-led courses allow entrepreneurs to start at any point in the preparedness cycle.
- **Flexible Access:** This guide is available in both English and Spanish.

[Learn More](#)



COLORADO Energy Office

Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) For Single-Family Homes Are Now Available!

HEAR rebates are available to income-qualified homeowners and renters living in existing single-family homes. Eligible equipment upgrades include heat pumps; heat pump water heaters; electric stoves, cooktops, ranges, and ovens; electrical panels; air sealing; insulation; ventilation; and electric wiring.

Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley

Open Applications **ESTES PARK**

Make Owning a Home Your Reality!
Apply for consideration to **PURCHASE** a Habitat Home!

Applications open year round

Don't miss this new and exciting opportunity to apply for Habitat for Humanity in Estes Park. Whether you're looking for a counseling session or just apply for a new home, now is the time to start! For more information and to get started, contact us or get more information at the Housing Authority in Estes Park.

- 3 Bedroom Homes
- Two Story Homes
- 1,760 Sq. ft.
- Built by volunteers alongside Future Homeowners
- First time Home Buyers

Program Guidelines
Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley provides the opportunity to purchase a home through an affordable mortgage in the St. Vrain School District and Estes Park for qualifying households.

Affordable Housing
Built with Volunteers & Future Homeowners - reducing construction cost
No Profit Added - homes are sold at cost
Truly Affordable Payments - monthly payments are based on 30% your income

Free counseling meeting
We offer a free counseling session to review your application and guide you through the process, considering your income, credit, residency, and first-time homebuyer status.

Willingness to Partner
Watch the Orientation class online
Turn in all paperwork and documents
Contribute 250-500 hours of "Sweat Equity" the able to save \$1,000 for closing cost
Must be US Citizen or Legal Permanent Resident

Contact: Fabiola Carmichael
(Hablo Español) (303) 682-2485 x 2

363 E. Elkhorn Ave Ste. 101, Estes Park | www.stvrainhabitat.org | info@stvrainhabitat.org

[Learn More](#)

[Learn More](#)



Career Day Speakers Needed

We are so excited to have our **THIRD** annual Career Day on **Wednesday, April 29th!** The purpose of Career Day is to expose students to a variety of careers in order to jumpstart their thinking about the future. By preparing early, students will be more likely to be college, technical, or career ready

after high school graduation. All students, from Pre-K through 5th grade, will participate in Career Day. However, we can't do it without you!

We need volunteers to speak to kids as they walk around the gymnasium with a "Career Day Passport" with specific questions they need to ask. Career Day activities will **start at 9:00am and end at 3:00pm** with an hour and a half lunch break from 12:00-1:30. You have three options to choose from:

- A morning option from 9:00-12:00 (we are anticipating 5 grade levels attending)
- An afternoon option from 1:30-3:00 (we are anticipating 2 grade levels attending)
- The full day (9:00-3:00)

We will provide lunch for all volunteers! If you are interested in volunteering to speak about your career, **please complete the Google form below by Monday, April 6th.** Bringing any posters to show, equipment to show/handle, etc is encouraged. We will provide bags for students to hold any work-related freebies you may give, so please feel free to bring any swag! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at ashley_silva@psdr3.k12.co.us or korinna_light@psdr3.k12.co.us or give us a call at 970-577-5505. With your help, we look forward to having a wonderful and engaging Career Day! More specific information to come!

[Register](#)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Aims Nonprofit Leadership Academy

The Aims Nonprofit Leadership Academy (NLA) offers a dynamic series of courses designed for those working in the nonprofit sector.

Explore a wide range of topics from fundraising, finance, strategic planning and executive leadership.

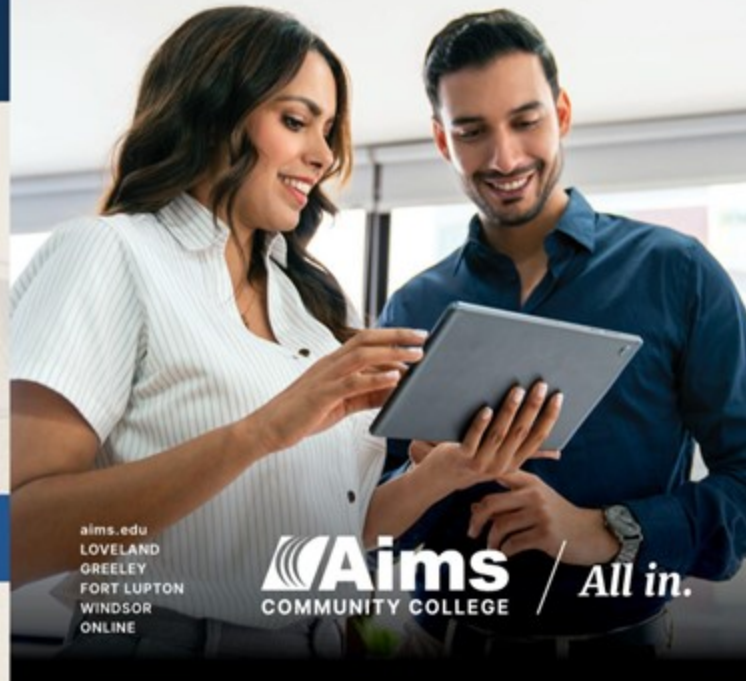
Each class offers practical tools you can apply right away and the chance to connect with other nonprofit professionals.

Take the courses that fit your goals or work toward a Nonprofit Leadership Certificate. Classes are available in Loveland and online.

Start today at aims.co/nonprofit-academy.

Scholarships available
Apply at aims.co/npla-weldtrust

CONTACT
continuingeducation@aims.edu
970-667-4611



aims.edu
LOVELAND
GREELEY
FORT LUPTON
WINDSOR
ONLINE

Aims / All in.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

Bill Brown, Estes Park Town Trustee

Jason Damweber, Estes Park, Deputy Town Administrator

Adam Crowe, Larimer County, Economic Development Manager

Sarah Leonard, Visit Estes Park, CEO

Nick Smith, Lumpy Ridge Brewing, Owner

Val Thompson, Your Swag Squad

Kevin Benes, Running Wild Events

Peter Levine, Estes Park Housing Authority



Estes Chamber of Commerce | 533 Big Thompson Ave, Ste. 103 | info@esteschamber.org | [Privacy Policy](#)

Estes Chamber of Commerce | 533 Big Thompson Ave, Ste. 103 mail to: PO Box 2376 | ESTES PARK, CO 80517 US

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