



Economic Development & Workforce Council Newsletter

2026| July

TOP STORIES



Larimer County Commissioner to Present Budget Challenges on July 16

Larimer County is launching a community education campaign around a series of difficult budget decisions, and Estes Park will have a front-row seat.

Larimer County Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally will deliver a special presentation at the Visit Estes Park Board Meeting on Thursday, July 16, addressing rising operational costs and the tough choices ahead for county services. Topics will include infrastructure repair, support for families in crisis, and natural disaster preparedness — areas where funding pressures are increasingly being felt. The presentation is part of a broader countywide effort to share educational materials with community organizations and leaders and gather meaningful public feedback before decisions are made.

"This is an important conversation for our entire region, and we want as many voices at the table as possible," said Chamber President Colleen DePasquale. "We're glad to partner with Visit Estes Park to make sure our members have a chance to hear directly from the Commissioner and weigh in."

The board meeting runs from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., with the Commissioner's presentation tentatively scheduled for 2:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Estes Park in the Lumpy Ridge Room. Attendees can also join virtually via Zoom; the meeting link will be distributed with the agenda, which is expected to go out next week from both the Chamber and Visit Estes Park.

Chamber members are encouraged to attend in person or virtually.

Event Details

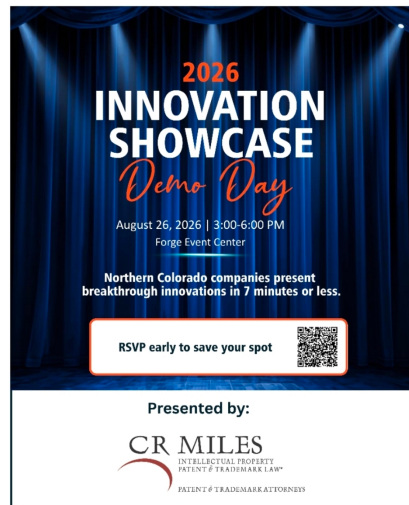
Date: Thursday, July 16

Time: 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Location: Holiday Inn Estes Park, Lumpy Ridge Room

Join Virtually

Local, Regional, & State Opportunities



Warehouse Innovation Showcase Demo Day 2026

Wednesday, August 26 • 3 PM - 6 PM
Forge Event Center Loveland, CO

Get ready for the 4th Annual Warehouse Innovation Showcase Demo Day, an exciting opportunity to experience Northern Colorado's growing innovation ecosystem in action. You'll have the opportunity to discover emerging technologies developed by Warehouse Business Accelerator community members and other select Northern Colorado companies. This engaging showcase brings together founders, investors, and community supporters for an afternoon of insight, connection, and inspiration.

At the event, you will:

- Watch a curated group of Northern Colorado startups pitch and demonstrate innovative technologies
- Participate in Q&A session with pitch participants, gaining deeper insight into each company's vision and traction
- Vote for the People's Choice Award, recognizing the most innovative company of the day
- Connect with entrepreneurs, investors, industry leaders, and community members during a post-event happy hour



Certify Colorado

Certify Colorado is a new program led by the Minority Business Office (MBO) that helps small and diverse business owners in Colorado cover the cost of obtaining nationally recognized business certifications. These certifications are crucial for accessing government and corporate contracting opportunities. Initial certification costs typically range between \$250–\$5,000 (some being free), with annual recertification fees based on gross revenue. These costs are a barrier for many small businesses, and the Certify Colorado sponsorship helps offset that burden.

Certification helps your business qualify for government contracts, supplier diversity programs, and procurement opportunities that prioritize certified small and diverse businesses. These certifications can boost your visibility, credibility, and growth potential in both public and private sectors.

List of current certifiers in Certify Colorado. (Current as of April 2026)

- WBENC – Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)
- City & County of Denver Certifications - (e.g., M/WBE, SBE, EBE, SBEC)

Whether you're:

- an investor looking to meet promising early-stage companies,
 - a community member curious about local innovation, or
 - a supporter of entrepreneurship in Northern Colorado,
- This event offers a front-row seat to the ideas shaping what's next.

[Learn More](#)



Advanced Industries Accelerator Grant Programs

Applications now open for the Advanced Industries Accelerator Grant Programs

The Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) is accepting Advanced Industries Accelerator Program applications for the first grant cycle of fiscal year 2027. Online applications are being accepted for the [Proof of Concept Grant](#) and [Early Stage Capital and Retention Grant](#).

Applications are due by 5:00 pm MST on August 27, 2026.

The Advanced Industries Accelerator Programs were created in 2013 to promote growth and sustainability in Colorado's advanced industries by helping drive innovation, accelerating commercialization, encouraging public-private partnerships, increasing access to early stage capital and creating Colorado's advanced industries are:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Bioscience
- Electronics
- Energy and natural resources
- Infrastructure engineering
- Technology and information

- Regional Transportation District (RTD) - (SBE)
- Small Business Administration (SBA) - (8a 8(a) Business Development, Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB), Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB), and HUBZone programs)

Please note that costs are set by the participating certifiers not by Certify Colorado, MBO, or OEDIT.

[Learn More](#)



English Classes for Career, College, and Opportunity

English Language Learning (ESL) Classes are offered at our three campuses - Westminster, Fort Collins, and Longmont. Classes are offered in the mornings and evenings and are offered in 8-week sessions. All our classes develop academic skills through real-life tasks by focusing on speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Classes are organized by level and time; please read the class description.

Currently we offer three levels:

- **Level 1: High-Beginner:** For beginner students who have taken 1-3 English classes and would like grammar review, speaking, and listening practice. (most students start here)
- **Level 2: Intermediate:** For students who have experience speaking and writing in English and would like grow their skills by writing paragraphs and giving longer speeches.
- **Level 3: Advanced-Intermediate:** For students who already have advanced experience writing and speaking in work and school

The **Proof of Concept Grant** is open to approved Colorado research universities and federal labs located in Colorado. These grants are for pre-commercialization research and commercialization preparation of innovative technologies. Grants up to \$150,000 will be awarded.

The **Early-Stage Capital and Retention Grant** funds companies commercializing innovative technologies to create viable products that meet a market need and can be created or manufactured in Colorado and exported globally. Grants up to \$250,000 will be awarded.

PoC Grant

Early-Stage Capital &
Retention Grant

situations or have taken at least 2-3 FRCC Intermediate courses. If you have any questions, please email: shane.saddisonbradford@frontrange.edu
Si tiene preguntas, envía un correo electrónico a shane.saddisonbradford@frontrange.edu

Learn More



HR Compliance Updates for 2026

Learn the "latest and greatest" regarding important compliance updates for employers in 2026.

Learn More

Business Quick Start

Saturday, Aug 08, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM | \$*40 | Fort Collins

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.

**Partial scholarships available for Loveland based businesses due to support from The City of Loveland and all others due to support from the Colorado Finance & Housing Authority*

How to Choose a Business Attorney

Wednesday, Jul 15, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

This is designed for any entrepreneur—whether just starting out or running an established business—who wants specific guidance on the key considerations to keep in mind when looking for a business attorney.

Learn More

Why your years in business are actually your biggest social media advantage

Tuesday, Jun 16, 2026 | 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM

\$0

Learn how to transform your business's deep roots and proven expertise into a powerful social media presence without spreading yourself thin.

(CHFA.) [Contact info@larimersbc.org](mailto:info@larimersbc.org)
for more information.

Learn More

Summer is in full swing, and it's the perfect time to refocus, prepare, and position your business for continued success. This month, we're sharing key tips to help you thrive and exciting upcoming opportunities to connect and grow.

Make the most of the season with these quick wins:

- ✓ Refresh your marketing — update messaging with seasonal promotions
- ✓ Review your financials and adjust mid-year goals
- ✓ Strengthen customer engagement through email and social media
- ✓ Plan ahead for Q4 (it arrives faster than you think!)
- ✓ Invest in professional development for you and your team

Whether you're planning for growth or preparing for the unexpected, the Larimer SBDC is your partner in success. Schedule a no-cost business advising session this summer!

Schedule a Session



AI Day Complimentary Tickets

Join the ASBDC for a national virtual celebration of AI adoption across America's

Learn More



Morning Mugs

Friday, July 31, 2026 - 8:00 AM 9:30 PM

Visit Fort Collins Colorado - 7 Old Town Square, Suite 100 Fort Collins, CO 80524

Join Morning Mugs



Tariff Navigation Program

Helping Colorado companies navigate tariffs, reduce risk, and protect competitiveness



Tariff Navigation Program

OEDIT is partnering with the **World Trade Center** (WTC) to assist businesses with trade navigation and optimization.

One-on-One Tariff Navigation Support: Customized Strategies for Your Business

Eligible companies can receive personalized, expert consulting support to evaluate and implement tariff navigation strategies, including:

- Supply chain optimization

small business community. AI Day brings together SBDC advisors, small business owners, and partners from across the country to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping the future of entrepreneurship. A special note - our Executive Director is part of this year's lineup!

[Learn More](#)

- Tariff classification review
- Trade compliance assessments
- Global operations and sourcing strategies

Cost Support Available:

Through support from OEDIT, eligible Colorado companies may receive up to \$1,000 in consulting support, available on a first-come, first-served basis until \$20,000 in program funding is allocated.

This makes high-quality trade expertise accessible and affordable for businesses that need real solutions, not just information.

[Learn More](#)



Free CFPM Food Safety Training for Small Businesses

Strengthen your team and meet state requirements in just one day with free Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) training & certification.

Why Apply?

- Train up to 5 employees to meet CFPM requirements
- Earn an industry-recognized credential accepted across the U.S.
- Strengthen food safety leadership and regulatory compliance
- Improve retention and professional growth at no cost to you

Who Qualifies?

Small food-related businesses in Larimer County with fewer than 50 employees. Classes must be completed by March 31.

 Reserve your team's free CFPM certification.

← See you if qualify today!

 LOCAL INDUSTRY GRANT
HIRE, TRAIN, RETAIN

 COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
LARIMER COUNTY EXTENSION

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Capacitación Gratuita CFPM para Pequeñas Empresas

Fortalezca a su equipo y cumpla los requisitos estatales en un solo día con

la certificación gratuita de Certified Food Protection Manager.

¿Por qué participar?

- Capacite hasta 5 empleados
- Obtenga una credencial reconocida en EE.UU.
- Mejore liderazgo en seguridad alimentaria y cumplimiento

- Improve retention and professional growth at no cost to you

Who Qualifies?
Small food-related businesses in Larimer County with fewer than 50 Employees.

[Learn More](#)

- Mejore la retención y crecimiento profesional, profesional, sin costo

¿Quién califica?
Pequeñas empresas de alimentos en el Condado de Larimer con menos de 50 empleados.

[Learn More](#)



Employer Invitation: Hiring Without Barriers Job Fair
Information provided by: Homeward Alliance, Larimer County Economic & Workforce Development, Weld County Workforce Center, and community partners

Tuesday, July 21

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

High Country Beverage | 4200 Ronald Reagan Blvd, Johnstown

You're invited to participate in the Hiring without Barriers Job Fair! Connect with motivated job seekers from Larimer and Weld Counties who are ready to work and contribute to your organization.

Topics Include:

- What Fair Chance Hiring is and how it works
- How to access a motivated and often overlooked talent pool
- Federal hiring incentives and tax credits available to employers
- Resources and support available through local workforce and community partners

Why Participate?

- Learn strategies for successful Fair Chance Hiring
- Meet qualified candidates across Northern Colorado
- Expand your talent pipeline
- Connect with community partners who provide ongoing support

USDOL AI Training

The U.S. Department of Labor is offering a free, one-week AI literacy course specifically designed for the American worker. The best part? You don't need a laptop, a high-speed internet connection, or an advanced degree to participate—the entire course is delivered via text message directly to your phone. This initiative levels the playing field, ensuring every Coloradan has the opportunity to understand and harness the power of Artificial Intelligence in their daily work. **Text READY to 20202 to register.**





**Wednesday
Sept 9th
8am - 3:30pm**

Save The Date

Aims Welcome Center
4901 W 20th St, Greeley, CO 80634

Join workforce and industry leaders from across Northern Colorado for the 2026 Workforce Symposium - an engaging day focused on hiring, retention, leadership, workforce innovation, and the future of talent.

Partnered with:



**WORKFORCE
COLORADO**
LARIMER



LARIMER
COUNTY

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT



**WORKFORCE
COLORADO**
WELD



WELD
COUNTY, CO

EDWC Council Members

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

Kevin Benes, Running Wild Events, EDWC Vice-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

EDWC Investors



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