



Economic Development & Workforce Council Newsletter

2026 | June

TOP STORIES



Building the Vision for the Future of Colorado Workforce

The Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) held their annual conference at the YMCA of the Rockies, in Estes Park, with the support of Chamber

President Colleen DePasquale and Mark Johnston, Director, Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development and Workforce Colorado- Larimer.

"The CWDC Board's visit to Estes Park reinforced the importance of engaging directly with local communities," said Johnston. "Hearing firsthand from employers, community leaders, and elected officials provides invaluable perspective as Workforce Colorado works to support a thriving economy throughout the state," he added.

"It was a great opportunity for the CWDC to not only spend time in beautiful Estes Park, but to learn more about local workforce and business needs," said Chris Romer, President, CWDC Board Chair, President & CEO Vail Valley Partnership. "The panel discussion hosted by the Estes Park Chamber allowed us to learn more about the local business community and the unique challenges that exist in resort environments," he continued.

As the host "city" the Estes Chamber was offered the opportunity to address the CWDC and invited local stakeholders to speak to the group, including Estes Park Mayor Pro Tem Kirby Hazelton, Estes Park Economic Development Council Chair Christina Kraft, Stanley Hotel General Manager Christian Henny, Visit Estes Park CEO Sarah Leonard, Country Market Owner Laura Kate Webermeier Bishop, and Rocky Mountain National Park Management Specialist / Public Affairs Officer Kyle Patterson.

The event included many poignant moments, from Laura Kate discussing the benefits of shopping local and encouraging others to support local to Mark Johnston sharing details of the Economic & Workforce Development Engine supporting public lands and career pathways.

"Estes Park is grateful to have hosted a gathering of economic development and workforce professionals from across Colorado," said Christina Kraft, Market President, Bank of Colorado, EDWC Chair. "In rural communities like ours, strong economic development and a supported workforce are essential to long-term vitality, and the opportunity to share our experiences, challenges, and ideas while learning from others was truly meaningful. We are especially proud to highlight the important work of the Estes

Chamber and the Economic Development & Workforce Council, where community leaders come together to strengthen our workforce, support local businesses, and build a more resilient future,” she concluded.



Estes Chamber Graduates BASE 2.0 Cohort

After 10 engaging, intensive, and educational weeks, 16 Estes Valley entrepreneurs, representing 13 businesses, are ready to create stronger, more sustainable businesses.

The graduates include: Angela Bryant of Animal Media Center of Estes Park, Alex Shaughnessy & Christian Newendorp of Avant Garde Aleworks, Bonnie Nutt of Backbone Adventures, Mike &

Tracey Stein of Colorado Games Company, Jordan McMahon of Estes Park Provisions, Trent Abbott of Estes Valley Vacation Rentals, Ulfzislau Vouk of Glacier Gorge Property Management, Kathleen Kelly & Dawin Bodin of Jubilations Catering and The Bristlecone, Jennifer Newhouse of Newhouse Group, Molly McGee of Omnibus, Chance Carner of Park Supply, Evan Eykel of Space Coyote Tattoo, and Claire Molle of Twin Owls Productions

The course was facilitated by BASE graduate and Estes business owner Kevin Benes of Running Wild Events. “The BASE program gave me the tools, structure, and confidence to grow my business in a more intentional way that leveraged local business partnerships,” said Benes. “As a graduate and now facilitator of BASE 2.0, I’ve seen firsthand how it helps local entrepreneurs clarify their vision, build financial literacy, and plug into a supportive business ecosystem. It’s one of the most valuable resources available to the Estes Valley business community,” he added.

Economic Development & Workforce Council investors made the BASE 2.0 program possible, including generous support from: Town of Estes Park, Bank of Colorado, Visit Estes Park, Larimer County, YMCA of the Rockies, UC Health - Estes Valley Medical Center, Benbrook Plaza, Holiday Inn Estes Park by IHG / Delaware North, Estes Park Housing Authority, and the Estes Valley Library. Additional support is provided by sponsors, including: Expedition Lodge, Poppy’s Pizza & Grill, Mountain Berry Bakery and Claires

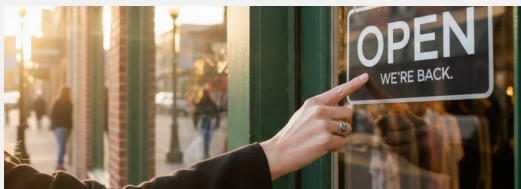
The graduation event was hosted by Jubilations Catering at The Bristlecone Inn and included business plan presentations from the graduates who included key takeaways from the program, saying: “BASE has allowed us the space and time to think critically about our business priorities and how to best achieve our goals. It has also been great to connect with other small business owners and have a sounding board for new ideas.”

Some also credited BASE for helping them to “Build strong connections and partnerships” and give them “a desire to challenge myself more”.

Others said the “Learned how to plan with purpose, manage my time, stay accountable and finish strong” and “Learned that community relationships are huge, the importance of time management and setting 3 goals and follow through with S.M.A.R.T.”

The Estes Chamber will continue to develop resources to support local businesses. Keep an eye out for future BASE programs and events.

Local, Regional, & State Opportunities



Colorado Small Business Recovery and Resiliency Guide

Developed by SBDC

Disasters can strike unexpectedly, but proactive planning is the best way to protect a business and its employees. We are pleased to share a new resource from the Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) intended to help our local entrepreneurs and small businesses build a "disaster-proof" foundation. 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.

[Download the Guide](#)



2026 Rocky Mountain Advanced Manufacturing Expo

Grow. Connect. Manufacture the Future.



Small Business Resources

Growth by Design

Wednesday, Jun 17, 2026 - Wednesday, Sep 16, 2026 | 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
*\$100

This four-part series is designed for business owners who are ready to grow with purpose. Each session dives into a critical pillar of sustainable growth—strategy, people, operations, and long-term value—while creating space for meaningful reflection, peer learning, and practical action. Walk away each month with clarity, a focused action step, and stronger connections with fellow business leaders.

[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.

[Learn More](#)



**WORKFORCE
COLORADO**

Skills-first Stakeholder Survey

Skills-first approaches focus on recognizing and valuing a person's skills and capabilities, whether those were gained through work, education, training, or other experiences.

The Longest-Running Manufacturing
Trade Show in the Region

Friday, September 18, 2026
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
AIMS Event Center
5401 W. 20th Street

What's New This Year?

The 2026 Rocky Mountain Advanced Manufacturing Expo brings together manufacturers, suppliers, buyers, engineers, executives, procurement teams, operations leaders, workforce partners, and job seekers for a full day of connections, solutions, and opportunity. Explore local and national manufacturing capabilities, meet suppliers that offer custom and non-standard parts, strengthen your local supply chain, discover responsive manufacturing partners, and connect with companies that help advance manufacturing. The Expo features exhibitors from across the United States, with strong representation from Colorado manufacturers and regional supply chain partners. Exhibitor capabilities include 3D printing, assemblies, bending, coatings, cutting, engineering and design, fabricating, finishing, grinding, machinery, molding, packaging, production parts, screen printing, software, stamping, testing, tooling, welding, and more. Whether you are sourcing suppliers, solving production challenges, seeking workforce talent, exploring career opportunities, or building relationships within the manufacturing community, this is the place to start.

[Learn More](#)

This short survey will help us understand how organizations across the ecosystem are thinking about and engaging with skills-first practices so we can better support employers, job seekers, and partners.

[Take the Survey](#)



Skill Advance Colorado

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](#)



NOCO Construction Sector Partnership Presents: The Power of Mattering

We invite you to join us for an engaging session with Zach Mercurio, author of *The Power of Mattering*, as we explore what changes when “mattering” becomes central to how we lead, work, and connect.

This conversation will explore how shifting focus toward the person behind the profession can lead to:

- Stronger engagement
- Improved retention
- More resilient teams and organizations

We are certain you'll find immense value in attending this event and joining the conversation!

Date: Tuesday, June 9, 2026

Time: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Location: 815 14th Street SW, Suite C250, Loveland, CO 80537

Cost: \$75. Your ticket includes a complimentary drink

First 50 registrants receive a FREE copy of *The Power of Mattering* (Additional books available for purchase onsite)

[Learn More](#)



Essential Business Skills for Child Care Administrators

The Essential Business Skills for Child Care Administrators program provides no-cost, confidential one-on-one business advising and no- or low-cost training designed specifically for child care businesses. Whether you are starting, growing, or planning to exit your child care business, this program offers essential skills in business planning, financial management, marketing, and more.

[Learn More](#)

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.**



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

A woman and a man looking at a tablet together. The woman is pointing at the screen while the man looks on. They are both smiling and appear to be in a professional setting.

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Aims / All in.
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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



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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