



## Economic Development & Workforce Council Newsletter

2026| February

### TOP STORY

## Register for Upcoming Business Trainings



The Estes Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the Small Business Development Center of Larimer County and HRX for a series of training opportunities.

Complete details and registration requirements may be found at [esteschamber.org](http://esteschamber.org), under the Events & Programs calendar tab.

Here are a few that may be of interest for you or your business leadership:  
HR /Compliance 101  
Monday Feb 23, 2026  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

An in-person HR/Compliance 101 training that offers straightforward, practical overview of key employment laws that shape everyday operations. Led by an HR Professional, this session is well-suited for owners, managers, and supervisors of all types of organizations seeking a solid foundation in HR legal best practices as it relates to compliance. This approximately two-hour, in-person training will include time for questions and discussion as time permits.

Topics presented will include:

- An overview of essential federal employment laws relevant to all employers.
- A detailed focus on Colorado-specific employment requirements and recent updates.
- Practical guidance on how these laws apply to daily HR practices, policies, and employee management.

Employment law is one of many management challenges shared across both for-profit and nonprofit corporations. This interactive session offers an opportunity to ask questions, explore real-world scenarios, and gain clarity on compliance responsibilities within Colorado. This workshop is co-hosted by the Estes Chamber of Commerce and Estes Nonprofit Network, organizations committed to delivering high-quality educational opportunities for local business and nonprofit leaders alike.

This training is in-person and will take place at the Expedition Lodge.

### Managing Through Seasonality

Thursday Feb 26, 2026

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Expedition Lodge

Many small businesses experience natural highs and lows throughout the year — busy seasons, slow seasons, and everything in between. Yet most financial advice assumes steady monthly income, which can leave seasonal business owners feeling confused, stressed, or unprepared. In this workshop, we'll explore how seasonality impacts cash flow, budgeting, owner pay, and financial decision-making. Attendees will learn how to think beyond monthly profit, plan for slow periods, manage deposits responsibly, and build financial systems that support stability year-round. This training is in-person and will take place at the Expedition Lodge. Registration will run through SBDC. Find details on [esteschamber.org](https://esteschamber.org) under the Events & Programs calendar tab.

### HR Interviewing Best Practices

Wednesday Mar 4, 2026

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Join us for an informative and practical HR training led by a professional HR Professional, with a focus on the unique seasonal hiring needs of Estes Park employers. This session is designed to help businesses navigate peak-season staffing challenges while staying compliant and competitive.

Topics will include:

- Interviewing best practices and compliance guardrails, including what questions can and cannot be asked and how to ensure a lawful and consistent interview process.
- Practical sourcing strategies for seasonal hiring beyond simply posting on Indeed, including the use of job distribution platforms that broadly syndicate postings and improve applicant tracking during high-volume hiring periods.
- Current Colorado hiring updates that impact job postings, applications, and hiring workflows, including required content and restrictions that are especially important for seasonal employers.

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.

### Performance Management

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 & Register](#)

**COFFEE & BOOKS**  
February 27, 8:30AM-10:00AM



Hosted at The Spice Rack  
Facilitated by Shannon Jones, General Manager of YMCA of the Rockies

**Learn More & Get the Book**



**Access the Tools**

## Q1 'Un-Book Club' Reading: *Red Shoes Living*

This winter, we are diving into the core ideas of the book and how they translate into leadership, culture, and accountability in real-life organizations. Do not worry if you have not read the book by our Feb 27th gathering. A summary will be provided, and the conversation focuses more on the themes and takeaways than the pages themselves. That is what makes it an 'Un' Book Club.

Come ready to connect, reflect, and engage in thoughtful discussion guided by a leader who brings the principles of Red Shoes Living to life every day.

## Bridging the Seasons: Financial Tools to Help Local Businesses Stay Resilient

Local businesses across the Estes Valley experience natural highs and lows throughout the year. Seasonal shifts can impact cash flow, staffing, and long-term planning, making access to the right financial tools especially important. To support our business community, we have compiled a list of trusted local, regional, and state resources designed to help businesses stay resilient, plan ahead, and navigate changing economic conditions with confidence.

# Colorado State Updates



### Connect with your Industry Partners in 2026

Industry sector partnerships are a wonderful place to connect with other professionals in your industry. If your goal is to connect more locally in 2026, these meetings are a great place to start. Here you will:

- Identify challenges facing your specific industry
- Workshop solutions with public and private partners
- Connect with other partners in your industry

**2026 VIRTUAL MIDWEST MATCHMAKER**  
February 11-12

This multi-state, virtual event, matches small businesses with government agencies and prime contractors.

**Registration is now open!**

**APEX ACCELERATORS**  
Find your local office at [APEXaccelerators.us](https://APEXaccelerators.us)

### Join the 2026 Midwest Matchmaker: Connecting Small Businesses with Government Buyers

Are you a small business looking to expand your reach and connect with government buyers? The 2026 Midwest Matchmaker is your chance to meet federal, state, and local government procurement officials. This unique opportunity will bring together businesses and buyers in one of the largest online procurement events in the region.

Who: Hosted by APEX Accelerators from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri,

Current industry sector partnership groups include:

- Finance**
- Healthcare**
- Construction**
- Manufacturing**
- Non-Profit**
- Hospitality**

If you own a business in, work in, or directly support one of the industries above, you are encouraged to attend the meetings coming in Q1

[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 you qualify today!

**LOCAL INDUSTRY GRANT HIRE, TRAIN, RETAIN**

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY LARIMER COUNTY EXTENSION**

### Free CFPM Food Safety Training English & Spanish

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

Why Apply?

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- Earn an industry-recognized credential accepted across the U.S.
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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.

Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming, along with NADC APEX in Billings, MT.

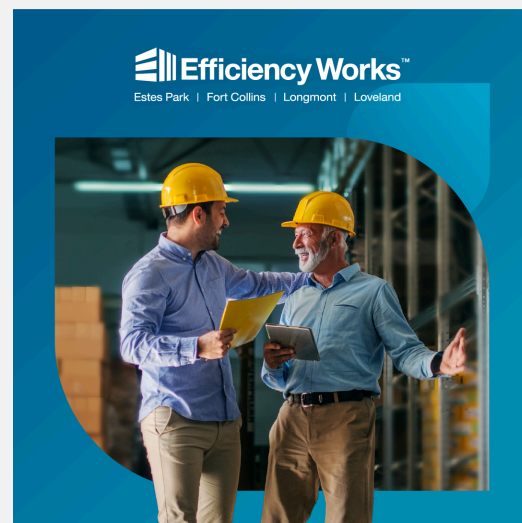
What: An online matchmaking event that allows businesses to:

- Schedule pre-arranged appointments with government buyers, prime contractors and resource partners
- Explore procurement opportunities at all levels.

When: February 11-12, 2026.

Where: Online – accessible to all businesses, nationwide! FREE – no registration fees.

[Learn More](#)



### Kick off 2026 by identifying ways to boost efficiency

Efficiency Works Business offers free support to help you:

- Explore upgrade options
- Confirm rebate eligibility
- Build a roadmap for success

Whether you're replacing outdated equipment or improving building performance, we'll help you make the most of your investment.

Learn more and schedule your free assessment.

[Learn More](#)

[Learn More](#)



### Registration open for 2026 Caregiver Support Classes!

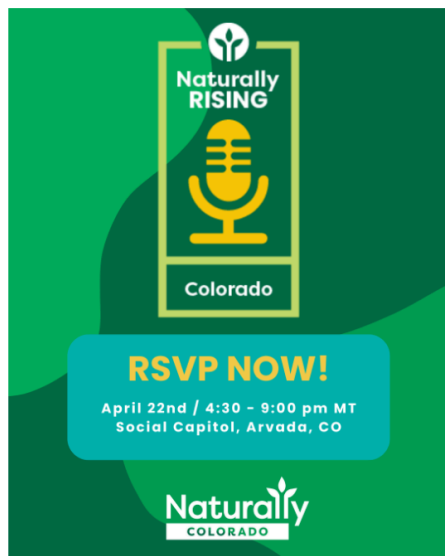
The Larimer County Office on Aging provides free evidence-based classes that offer tools, education, and connection for adults who are:

1. Caring for someone who is over 60 years old and/or who has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or related neurocognitive disorder; OR
2. 55+ years old and providing informal in-home care to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption who is 17-years-old or younger.

For all classes, registration is required. Participants should plan to attend each session.

For questions, call 970-498-7758 or email [aging@larimer.gov](mailto:aging@larimer.gov)

[Learn More](#)



### Secure Your Spot for FOUNDED in FoCo 2026!

Founded in FoCo is our community-driven business conference for small-business owners, solopreneurs, creatives, nonprofit leaders, and founders across Northern Colorado. It's built for people who want to learn from peers, share real-world experience, and build practical skills they can put to work right away.

This event centers on peer-to-peer education and open knowledge-sharing. Every session is led by members of our community, creating an accessible space where we exchange tools, insights, and resources to grow our work and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem together.

When: March 10-12, 2026

[Learn More](#)



### OEDIT Upcoming Grant Deadlines

- Early Stage Capital and Retention Grant

## Naturally Rising “The Conscious Business Pitch Competition”

Naturally Rising: The Conscious Business Pitch Competition is a groundbreaking pitch event celebrating innovation, sustainability, and conscious business practices. Over the last five years, it has evolved into a competition that not only showcases emerging, purpose-driven brands but also celebrates conscious leaders in the natural products industry.

### What to Expect:

- Inspiring pitches from visionary Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) entrepreneurs
- A showcase featuring brands tabling, selling products, and sharing samples
- Thought-provoking discussions about conscious business in the modern world
- A community of like-minded individuals dedicated to creating positive impact

Join us as we support these amazing changemakers as they pitch their sustainable businesses and ideas. It's an opportunity to connect, learn, and be part of the movement toward a more sustainable future.

Date: April 22, 2026

Time: 4:30-9 p.m.

Location: 6543 Wadsworth Blvd, Arvada, CO, 80003

[Learn More](#)



**B:Side University**

Small business owners often wear multiple hats and require a knowledge of all aspects

- Application Period: Closes Feb. 26, 2026
- **Proof of Concept Grant**
  - Application Period: Closes Feb. 26, 2026

[Early Stage Grant](#)

[POC Grant](#)



## SBDC Upcoming Trainings

### Smarter Workflows with AI

Wednesday, Feb 18 | 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

\*\$30

This event is for small business owners and solo-preneurs who are looking for practical, low-risk ways to use AI to reclaim time and focus on high-value work.

### Boots to Business Reboot

Tuesday, Feb 24 | 8:00 AM - 04:00 PM

\$No Cost

During Reboot, participants are introduced to the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to launch a business

[Register: Smarter Workflow](#)

[Register: Boots to Business](#)



## Project Management Courses through Aims Continuing Education

Whether you're looking to level up at work or finally get that side project off the

of business from operations to financing management to marketing and more to effectively manage their operations. B:Side University for Small Business Owners helps entrepreneurs develop a well-rounded skill set necessary for the challenges and opportunities they may encounter in managing their businesses. These free, monthly webinars are presented by both B:Side Fund and partners with extensive expertise in their field.

Monthly virtual courses

4-week session begins 2/25

Funding Opportunities

ground, Aims Continuing Education offers flexible, remote Project Management courses designed to fit your busy schedule.

### **Project Management for Non-Project Managers**

Feb. 12 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | Zoom | \$215  
Start your project management journey with this interactive, instructor-led workshop designed for non-project managers.

### **Streamlining Resource Management**

Feb. 25 from 1-3 p.m. | Zoom | \$99  
Learn how to set your team up for success by mastering the art of tracking team member assignments and planning headcount.

### **Project Management Professional (PMP) Prep Series**

March 11-April 8 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Zoom | \$750  
The Project Management Professional Series combines Essentials of Project Management, Advanced Project Management, and PMP® Exam Prep into one comprehensive program. Participants gain a strong foundation in project management principles, develop advanced skills to manage complex projects, and prepare for the PMP® or CAPM® certification exams.

[Learn More](#)



**COLORADO**  
Energy Office

[Learn More](#)

### **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.

## **EDWC Council Members**

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  
**Rebecca D. Gelsing**, Visit Estes Park, Director of Operations  
**Nick Smith**, Lumpy Ridge Brewing, Owner  
**Val Thompson**, Your Swag Squad  
**Kevin Benes**, Running Wild Events  
**Peter Levine**, Estes Park Housing Authority



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