



**ENGAGEMENT
AND EXTENSION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Community



Economic Development

Quarterly Newsletter

Team Spotlight



Dr. Tim Komarek **Associate Professor, Department of Economics**

Tim joined CSU in January of 2023 and holds a joint appointment in the Economics department and the Office of Engagement and Extension. Tim is a co-director of the Regional Economic Development Institute and Principal Investigator for CSU's Economic Development Administration University Center. Tim specializes in using applied empirical methods to inform a broad set of local economic development questions and challenges. Tim's academic work has spanned topics ranging from the local effects of fiscal austerity to place-based policies, housing policy and regional entrepreneurship.



Alice Dong Extension Eastern Regional Specialist- Vibrant Communities and Thriving Economies

Alice joined CSU Extension in May 2023 as a Eastern Regional Specialist, where she helps increase community leadership training opportunities and support civic capacity building across 10 counties in the Eastern Region. Alice brings a professional background as a researcher, program manager, and Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT) of the National Association for Interpretation. Throughout her career, she has worked to inspire others and foster meaningful engagement within diverse communities. Alice has overseen a variety of educational programs, created and evaluated place-based interdisciplinary initiatives, and contributed to regional leadership and community engagement efforts.

Mark Your Calendar

You're Invited: Downtown Colorado Inc In the Game

Downtown Colorado Inc invites you to participate in our four-day interactive IN THE GAME experience happening **April 2-5 in Durango**. The first half is a deep dive into problem solving for communities, and the second half will feature cutting edge ideas around what is coming next for downtowns and our state.

Gain valuable educational opportunities and peer-to-peer exchange for the leaders of Colorado's communities who are responsible for economic and community development.

[More information and register.](#)

Upcoming Trainings

Colorado Food System Advisory Council Informational Webinar

Informative and interactive webinar for anyone interested in learning more about the Colorado Food System Advisory Council (COFSAC).

Participants will:

- Learn about COFSAC, the working groups, and how to get involved
- Develop connections with members and other coalition and council members to more easily reach out for future questions or support.

February 14, 2024, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. MST

[Register](#)



**COLORADO
FOOD SYSTEMS
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals Webinar Series

Leading off this year's webinar series is NACDEP newsletter editor, Dr. Thomas Blaine of Ohio State University Extension. The presentation topic is about how to engage the public on controversial public issues. Almost all of us, if we stay in Extension long enough, will have to undertake programs on topics that are controversial.

February webinar: "Engaging Extension Audiences in Controversial Topics"

- Feb 21, 2024 10:00 a.m.

April's webinar will feature CSU's Ag Statewide Specialist, Libby Christensen - "Colorado Food Summits"

- April 17th 10am – 11am

To Register go to: [Register for NACDEP Free Webinar Series](#)

National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

June 17 - 20, Houston, TX

Final Call - Request for Proposals Due January 26

Share your work and learn from colleagues during our upcoming in-person 2024 NACDEP Conference in Houston, Texas. This is a great way to share what you learned from a project or program and discuss how other states may work together. Consider submitting a proposal for a presentation, workshop, or poster.

Subject areas of Community Development include:

- Economic development
- Diversity and inclusion
- Human capacity building
- Community resilience and sustainability
- Infrastructure
- Natural environment
- Building capacity within government and organizations

Selected proposals are peer-reviewed by other NACDEP members. For more information [2024 NACDEP Conference](#).



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**INSTITUTE FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Need Support in Starting Your Small Business? Sign Up for the FREE Venture Validator!

Are you ready to turn your entrepreneurial dreams into reality? Secure your spot today for the spring cohort of [Venture Validator 1.0](#), a FREE program designed to help entrepreneurs kickstart their business ventures. Through this program, you will receive the necessary guidance, resources, and support to help you navigate the early stages of your entrepreneurial journey.

When: February 9, 16, and 23

Time: 9 - 11 a.m.

Where: CSU College of Business, Rockwell West, [Room 220 \(501 W Laurel Street Fort Collins, CO 80523\)](#) with a virtual option

Sessions will be recorded. If you can't be present during the designated time you will still have access to the content. [Reserve your spot today!](#)

Funding Opportunities

Rural Business Development Grant Available: USDA Seeks Applications to Advance Economic Development and Create Jobs for People in Rural America

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications to advance economic development and create jobs for people in rural America through the [Rural Business Development Grant](#) program. The program supports business opportunities or business enterprise projects in rural communities.

Organizations eligible to receive funding include:

- Rural towns
- Communities
- State agencies
- Authorities
- Nonprofits
- Federally recognized Tribes
- Public colleges
- Non-profit cooperatives

Applications must be submitted to the nearest USDA Rural Development state office where the project is located by 4:30 p.m. ET on Feb. 28, 2024. Please reach out to RBCS team (Bill Chester, william.chester@usda.gov or Robert McElroy, robert.mcelroy@usda.gov) with questions regarding application completion and submission.

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Funding Available

USDA Rural Development has grant funding available to help agricultural producers with renewable energy or energy efficiency improvements through our Rural Energy for America Program.

Grant funds for up to 50% of the total project costs are currently available for installation of renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements for agricultural producers and rural small businesses.

Applications for the [Rural Energy for America](#) are accepted anytime, with quarterly funding competition deadlines through September 30, 2024.

Upcoming deadlines are:

- March 31, 2024
- June 30, 2024
- September 30, 2024

Agricultural producers with at least 50% of their gross income coming from agricultural operations can apply for REAP; they can be located in rural or nonrural areas. Small businesses that are located in an eligible rural area are also eligible to apply.

REAP Renewable Energy System (RES) funds can be used for systems such as:

- Small and large solar or wind generation
- Geothermal for electric generation or direct use
- Hydropower below 30 megawatts
- Biomass (for example: biodiesel and ethanol, anaerobic digesters, and solid fuels)

REAP Energy Efficiency Improvement (EEI) funds can be used to buy, build, and install EEI such as:

- Electric, solar, or gravity pumps for sprinkler pivots
- Switching from a diesel to an electric irrigation motor
- Lighting, Insulation, Doors, Windows, Cooling or Refrigeration units
- High-efficiency heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC)

In Colorado, send applications, inquiries and other requests to SM.CO.REAP@usda.gov

Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grants Available to Create High-Wage Jobs and New Businesses in Underserved Rural Communities

The Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) program encourages regional, innovation-driven approaches to economic development by funding job accelerator partnerships in low-income and underserved rural communities.

For fiscal year 2024, the program is making approximately \$2 million available to partnerships of local governments, investors, industry, institutions of higher education, and other public and private entities in rural areas. The funding may be used to support innovation centers and job accelerator programs that improve the ability of distressed rural communities to create high-wage jobs, form new businesses, and identify and maximize local assets.

The deadline to submit applications is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, April 1, 2024. Applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Potential applicants may submit a concept proposal for review by the agency to Grants.gov no later than 4:30 p.m. local time Feb. 1, 2024.

The minimum award amount per grant is \$500,000. The maximum award amount per grant is \$2 million. [For additional information, see page 43 of the Jan. 2, 2024, Federal Register.](#)

Interested applicants in Colorado should contact [Robert McElroy](#).

Community Facilities Loan & Grant Program

The USDA Community Facilities program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.

This infrastructure funding will expand access to health care, education, and public safety while spurring community development and building sound infrastructure for people living in rural communities.

More than 100 types of projects are eligible for Community Facilities funding. Eligible applicants include municipalities, public bodies, nonprofit organizations, and federally recognized Native American tribes. Projects must be in rural areas with a population of 20,000 or less.

For more information on this program in Colorado visit [here](#).

Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI@CSU) Reports

November 2023 REDI report

The Economic Contribution of River-Based Recreation in the Little Yampa Canyon, Colorado

Key Findings

- River-based recreation on the Yampa River contributes \$70,373.68 in estimated output to Craig, CO.
- A proposed 660-acre public land acquisition would provide an additional \$109,497.02 in output.
- Increasing recreational amenities and quality will provide a positive impact to visitation, increasing expenditures by up to 30.4% per quality improvement.

[Download PDF Report](#) to read more.

October 2023 REDI report

REDI@CSU Awarded EDA Grant to Establish University Center

Key Findings

- REDI and its partners were awarded a \$750,000 grant to support economic development in Colorado.
- The grant will establish an EDA University Center (UC) at Colorado State University (CSU).
- The UC will conduct research, provide technical assistance, and share data for equitable development.

[Download PDF Report](#) to read more.

September 2023 REDI report

How can a Tourism Support Fee facilitate Economic Diversification in Clear Creek County?

Key Findings

- Based on a 1% tax rate, a tourism support fee can potentially generate over \$1million in annual tax revenue.
- To foster economic diversification, we recommend that Clear Creek County establish a loan fund from a tourism support fee to encourage entrepreneurship.
- Clear Creek County's natural amenities have the potential to attract highly skilled remote workers. However, it is crucial for the county to address rising housing costs.

[Download PDF Report](#) to read more.

Across Our Communities

Coming Summer 2024: CSU Extension Interns

CSU continues its support of the [Extension Summer Internship Program](#). Some of the projects around the state in summer 2024 include

- Enhancing Tourism's Economic Impact & Empowering Business Stakeholders in Yuma
- Digital Development of the Art of Ranching Project
- Lincoln County Fair History
- Economic Analysis of Colo. Search and Rescue (CSAR) to Montezuma and La Plata
- Cataloging and Promoting Pueblo's Local Landmarks Program
- Developing and Delivering Ag Production Experiences at ARDEC for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Enrolled in the Ram Scholar Program
- Rural Colorado Workforce Development
- Community Action Plan implementation for the city of Cripple Creek
- UAV Instructor & Drone Pilot at SPUR High School Summer Camps
- Downtown Economic Development in Montezuma County
- Economic Contribution Analysis of the Ute Theater (Rifle, Colo.)
- Contribution Analysis of Pathfinder Event Center on the Local Economy

Connect with the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center (RFBC) is one of 12 Regional Food Business Centers funded by USDA, with the goal of improving local and regional food systems and better serving underinvested farm and food businesses.

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain RFBC serves Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

[Learn more](#) about the Center's educational and technical support programs for small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses and sign up for updates.



- Link to the first [newsletter](#)
- [News and events](#) from across the region
- New [grant programs](#)



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Community & Economic Development

Mission: To empower people to build resilient, vibrant, and healthy communities and economies by enhancing their well-being, leadership, civic engagement, and economic development.

We do this by:

1. Creating resilient communities and economies
2. Developing leadership and civic engagement
3. Promoting community health and wellbeing

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