



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION AND EXTENSION

Fall 2025, Issue 6  
*Quarterly Newsletter*

Community



Economic Development



## Team Spotlight



### [Dawn Thilmany](#)

Dawn Thilmany is a Professor of Agricultural Economics, Interim Head of the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, Director of the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Center, and Co-Director of the Regional Economic Development Institute at Colorado State University. She served on both USDA and Colorado Food Advisory Councils and has led a number of academic food and ag associations (AAEA, WAEA, FDRS). Her research and outreach focus on food systems and rural economic development, primarily focused on opportunities related to value-added food market supply chains and rural entrepreneurs.

## Celebrating 10 Years of Impact: [Melinda Macpherson](#) and RamCorps

For the past decade, Melinda Macpherson has led CSU Extension's AmeriCorps program—RamCorps—with energy, vision, and an unwavering commitment to service. AmeriCorps' mission is to bring people together to tackle the nation's most pressing challenges through service. In Colorado, AmeriCorps members are on the front lines of important work, including youth education, community development, and wildfire prevention—providing people power where it's needed most.



## RamCorps accomplishments over the 10 years ago include:

- **More than 9,400 youth served** through the 4-H STEM program
- **Over 90 alumni members** who continue to make an impact in their communities
- **More than 20 counties** reached with programs and services
- Support for key partners, including the Colorado State Forest Service, Denver Urban Gardens, and the High Plains Environmental Center
- Creation of **DIGS (Developing Individuals, Growing Stewards)**—[an agricultural literacy curriculum for 3rd–5th graders in collaboration with CSU's College of Agricultural Sciences](#)

RamCorps has a few remaining service slots available for this fall (serving through mid-December). If you have a short-term project that could benefit from dedicated service members, reach out to [Melinda](#).

We'll begin connecting with partners soon about opportunities for next year.

## Mark Your Calendar



- [Navigating Urban Renewal for a Small, Rural Community](#), September 17, 12 p.m., MDT, on Zoom
- [Annual Tax Increment Finance Summit](#), **Pueblo**, October 23-24.
  - [Register online](#)

## Community and Economic Development Program and Research Unit (PRU)

Join the Community and Economic Development PRU! Whether you're a current member, simply curious about our initiatives, or looking for collaboration opportunities, we are open to all OEE, CSU faculty, and community partners with similar interests.

Our next meeting is planned for Thursday, October 9, 1 p.m. at the Fort Collins Marriott during OEE's annual Forum.



## National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals

[NACDEP](#) is an organization dedicated to improving visibility, coordination, professional status, and resource base of community and economic development Extension programs and professionals.

Learn more at [www.nacdep.net/](http://www.nacdep.net/). Consider joining if you want to be more involved at the regional or national level.

Save the Date for the [2026 NACDEP National Conference](#), June 15-18, 2026.



## Economic Development Council of Colorado's (EDCC) 2025 DRIVE | LEAD | SUCCEED ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**October 26-29, 2025**

**Pueblo Convention Center, Pueblo, CO**

CSU is an institutional member and sponsor for [EDCC's Annual Drive | Lead | Succeed Conference](#), which is geared towards nurturing the growth of Colorado's economy by offering essential resources that:

- Unite leading industry influencers and thought leaders to exchange valuable insights and tackle distinctive challenges.
- Introduce innovative tools and solutions to address pressing economic issues within Colorado's professional economic development community.
- Cultivate meaningful collaboration and facilitate the exchange of fresh ideas among Colorado's Economic Development professionals, business and non-profit leaders, government officials, and beyond.



### **New this year**

EDCC is joining forces with the Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association (RMWDA) to provide a platform for essential knowledge sharing and networking to support Colorado's vibrant and growing economy. Take advantage of this one-of-kind opportunity to learn from Colorado's Workforce Development ecosystem! We think our stronger partnership with EDCC is timely, given this new focus on the workforce.

Interested in attending? Reach out to the REDI or the Community and Economic Development PRU team.

**If you can't attend a conference, [watch for virtual events from EDCC in Winter 2025](#).**

### **Save the Date for other events:**

[The Knowledge Network Series](#) (Fostering Knowledge, Innovation, and Collaboration)

- [Serving two Masters – How Economic Developers Impact Municipal and Business Finance](#), Dec. 10, 2025, | 10 – 11:30 a.m.

[Learn more about the speaker series.](#)

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## National Extension Tourism Network

**Oct. 7-10, 2025**

**Meredith, New Hampshire**

SAVE THE DATE!

**2025 NETtra Tourism Conference**

on Lake Winnepesaukee in  
Meredith, NH

**OCT  
7-10  
2025**

Calling all tourism researchers, DMOs, Extension specialists, faculty, students, consultants, etc...

Join the National Extension Tourism Network (NET) and the Northeast Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (NETTRA) for the first-ever NETtra Conference, hosted by the University of New Hampshire!

Scan the QR code to learn more and sign up for email updates

**nettra.org**

We have a growing team of CSU personnel focused on the Outdoor economy, including the role of tourism in our state. We encourage you to consider joining and attending events from our peers across the U.S., including this fall's conference. **Register by September 19.**

[More information and registration](#)

## **Funding, Program and Educational Opportunities**

### Rural Jump-Start Program

The Rural Jump-Start Program is a collaborative effort by the state, local governments, Institutes of Higher Education (IHE), and economic development organizations (EDO) to incentivize new businesses to start in or move to rural, economically distressed counties in Colorado, which are referred to as Rural Jump-Start zones, and

hire new employees.

Rural Jump-Start began in 2016 as a tax incentive program for businesses located in a Rural Jump-Start zone, and in 2021 a grant program was created. Tax benefits include relief from:

- State income tax for the new business.
- State sales and use tax for the new business.
- County personal property tax for the new business.
- Municipal personal property tax for the new business (in participating municipalities); and
- State income tax for qualified new hires

Grant benefits are dependent on the business's location:

- **If a business is located in a Rural-Jump Start zone**, businesses can receive a matching grant of up to \$15,000 as a newly established business.
- **If a business is located in a Rural-Jump Start zone that is also a [Tier 1 Just Transition community](#)**, businesses can receive a matching grant of up to \$25,000 as a newly established business.

The Rural Jump-Start Program will accept applications for the tax benefits through December 31, 2030, and for the grant benefits through June 30, 2028.

If you are a business interested in participating in this program, [review all program qualifications, discussed in greater detail under the Business Eligibility section](#).

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## [Multistate Projects](#)

Multistate project proposals should address a critical issue facing the western region. You can find a list of the priorities on the [Western priorities](#) page. The multistate project proposals need to involve at least two [western land-grant institutions](#) and must include research and extension activities. The budget should not exceed \$30,000. More information available [here](#).

## [Fellows Grant Program](#)

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) funds proposals that present innovative research and educational outreach to advance rural development in the Western United States. Only faculty from Land Grant Institutions in the Western Region are eligible for the Fellows Program. [Click here](#) to find more information.

## [Graduate Student Grant Program](#)

WRDC funds proposals that present innovative research and educational outreach to advance rural development in the western U.S. Only full-time graduate students enrolled at accredited land-grant universities in the [western region](#) are eligible to apply. At the time of proposal submission, the student must be considered full-time and must have passed their qualifying or preliminary exam. The budget is \$18,000 per year. [Click here](#) to find more information.

## [Leadership Skill Development Mini-Grant](#)

WRDC funds proposals that present innovative research and educational outreach to advance rural development in the western United States. Faculty/staff from land grant institutions in the western region are eligible for the leadership skill development mini-grant program. [Click here](#) to find more information.

- Pre-proposals are due: September 19
- Review by the review panel and select proposals for funding: September - October 2025
- Applicants informed about proposal status: End of October 2025

Leadership Skill-Development Mini Grant funding decisions will be announced three times per year (quarterly)

- Round 1
  - Proposals are due September 12, 2025, 5 p.m. MST
  - Review by panel - September each year
  - Funding decision announced - first week of October each year
- Round 2
  - Proposals are due January 12, 2026, 5 p.m. MST
  - Review by panel - January each year
  - Funding decision announced - first week of February each year
- Round 3
  - Proposals are due May 12, 2025, 5 p.m. MST
  - Review by panel - May each year
  - Funding decision announced - first week of June each year

## Save the Date: Accessible Rural Communities Solutions Roundtable

November 18, 2025 (12:30–3:30 p.m. MST), co-sponsored by the Western Community Assessment Network (WeCAN) and the Western Rural Development Center.

This live virtual event will bring together rural changemakers to share stories and strategies for building inclusive, prosperous rural communities that welcome people of all ages and abilities.

[Learn more & sign up for updates.](#)

## 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.

[More information on this program in Colorado.](#)

## Colorado Wyoming Climate Resilience Engine (CO-WY Engine)

[CO-WY Engine](#), funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation, is thrilled to announce the launch of its Engine-specific startup support program, aimed at empowering climate resilience startups across the Colorado and Wyoming region and the United States, and growing a diverse innovation ecosystem in the region.

This program offers a range of tailored services designed to help startups address the challenges bringing climate technologies to market and drives commercial growth in the emerging climate resiliency marketplace. The Engine startup support program is one of many means the Engine will deploy to build and sustain a nationally leading ecosystem in climate resiliency.

Comprehensive startup services include:

1. Customized, personal support
2. Startup specific training
3. Access to Engine R&D and Translation grant funding (for CO-WY based startups only)
4. Introductions to Engine partners (Corporates, Universities, National Labs)
5. Partially-sponsored Internships
6. Pilot opportunities
7. Support for grant submission
8. Expert Mentors and Advisors
9. Investor introductions
10. PR/Communications support

Are you interested in applying to the CO-WY Engine startup services? [Learn more about startup services included and submit an application.](#)



## Reports

In addition to these reports, we continue to update our [webpage](#) to share reports and updates from our work with community partners. Visit our new website highlights for [Community Based Projects](#).

### September 2025 Report

[The Contributions and Future Outlook for San Luis Valley's Potato Economy: Modeling Value-Added Market Scenarios](#)

[Coryn Davidson](#)

#### Key Findings

- Colorado's San Luis Valley relies heavily on the agricultural industry, particularly the potato sector, for employment and economic opportunities.
- An economic contribution of the 2022 potato industry estimates the sector brings \$328 million of economic activity and supported over 2,200 jobs in the San Luis Valley.
- Value-added market opportunities represent new opportunities for the potato industry to increase its economic contribution to the region.

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

### August 2025 Report

[Homeowners Insurance Trends in Colorado: Implications of Natural Hazard Dynamics](#)

[Caroline Conley Norris](#)

#### Key Findings

- Colorado is the sixth-costliest state for homeowners' insurance and costs are rising — mainly in wildfire-prone regions.
- Policy nonrenewal rates are relatively higher in rural, eastern regions of the state.
- CO has recently issued a state-backed insurance policy of last resort (the FAIR plan). The FAIR plan will help address availability concerns; however, insurance coverage gaps will remain.

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

## July 2025 Report

### [Evaluating Healthcare Access for Migrant Agricultural Workers](#)

[Nathan Seto](#), [Anita Alves Pena](#)

#### Key Findings

- Occupational illness and injury rates are high in the U.S. agricultural sector.
- Spatial correlations are low between migrant health centers and population concentrations of H-2A workers.
- Furthermore, migrant health centers are scarce in areas with high environmental risks, suggesting that many H-2A workers are underserved.

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

## June 2025 Report

### [Aging in Place: How Older Americans Act Funding May Reduce Nursing Home Reliance in Colorado](#)

[Justin DeBord](#), [Ray Miller](#)

#### Key Findings

- Colorado receives around \$20 million in annual Older Americans Act (OAA) funding to support aging populations.
- Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) with higher per capita OAA funding tend to see larger declines in nursing home occupancy.
- These findings suggest that OAA investments may have downstream benefits for Medicaid and long-term care costs.
- More research is needed to understand the causal pathways and effectiveness across different services and regions.

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

## May 2025 Report

### [The Value of Plant Pathology Research to US Agriculture: The Case of Sweetpotato Seed Quality](#)

[Rebecca Wasserman-Olin](#)

#### Key Findings

- Sweet potato growers face rising challenges from labor costs and virus pressure, which threaten profitability.
- Yield trials across five states show that older seeds reduce the harvest of marketable sweet potatoes, leading to economic losses of \$1,000–\$2,500 per acre.
- Clean seed from National Clean Plant Centers offers a solution that can maintain or boost yields without expanding planted area, highlighting the role of plant pathology research in the economic success of agriculture in an increasingly complex environment.

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

## April 2025 Report

### [Collaborative Pathways to Economic Resilience in Clear Creek County](#)

[William Shuster](#), [Lindsey Valdez](#), [Flo Raitano](#), [Ang Lee](#), [Lynnea Doty](#), [Maddy Kimber](#), [Matt Smith](#), [Alison Sherwood](#), [Willie Wilkins](#)

#### Key Findings

- Clear Creek County experienced a 47.3% decline in property tax revenue from 2013 to 2022, driven by falling assessed values in the natural resource extraction industry.
- A phased, multi-tiered economic diversification strategy is underway, supported by regional partners and designed to generate sustainable revenue.
- The county is applying an economic resilience framework to guide short- and long-term initiatives that leverage local strengths and address structural challenges.

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

## Colorado Governor Jared Polis' Office

CSU REDI was recognized in the acknowledgements to Governor Jared Polis' [new report](#) from the Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB). The report shows the impacts of tariff policies on Colorado families, businesses, and the state's economy. The analysis, required by Executive Order D 2025 008, finds that tariffs have already increased costs across nearly every sector of Colorado's economy.

## Colorado Futures Center Reports



The Colorado Futures Center is an independent, nonpartisan and academically grounded 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to informing about economic, fiscal, and public policy issues impacting community economic health and quality of life in Colorado and beyond.

Our Partners at the Colorado Futures Center regularly release their Statewide Economic Forecast, [ColoradoCast](#), and recently released the [ColoradoCast for the second quarter of 2025](#). This release of the ColoradoCast for the second quarter of 2025 represents a slight deviation from the release schedule.

As the first release to incorporate the early economic policy actions of the new presidential administration, this release represents a second run of the model for the second quarter. The first run, completed in April 2025 but unreleased until now, showed the Colorado economy turning sharply downward compared to the outlook completed at the end of 2024. We delayed the release to further monitor the outlook for persistence of the projected slowing of the state's economy. This release projects a slowdown in the immediate months with a recovery of growth rates at the end of the forecast horizon (November 2025). While the latest outlook suggests some vulnerability for Colorado's economic growth, it does not project a recession before the end of 2025.

## Centers Serving Community and Economic Development

## 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 to improve local and regional food systems and better serve underinvested farm and food businesses.

**Unfortunately, CSU received a modification letter from the USDA terminating the Northwest Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center award, with the exception of the Business Builder component of the award.** The university is working directly with the impacted staff and subcontractors to determine next steps.

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center (RFBC) was fortunate to reward over 130 farms and food enterprises with Business Builder grants, and will remain open to honor those commitments. [Stay tuned for other Center updates.](#)



### CSU Civic Centers Collaboration

CSU's Collaborative of Civic, Community and Economic is a network of Centers and Initiatives who align through their interests in connecting and elevating communities through engaged social science and humanities scholarship. The Collaborative has identified a particular focus on assessing and supporting the engagement, resilience and health of urban and rural Colorado communities through integrated learning, research and outreach programming.

To ensure you receive communications for this group, please add your contact information by visiting the [online membership list](#).

[Learn more about the center](#)

## The Family Leadership Training Institute

***Promoting Leadership Development, Increased Civic Capacity, and Equity in All Policies***

[The Family Leadership Training Institute of Colorado](#) (FLTI) is a nonpartisan, multi-sector, and community-driven collaborative that seeks to bridge the gap between local residents and decision-makers in order to foster the co-creation of programs and policies that reflect diverse community voices.

## Stay Connected

Find us on social media, get community and economic development related questions answered via email, forward to a friend, or submit your contributions to our newsletter!

Visit the [Regional Economic Development Institute website](#) and sign up for updates (see the bottom left sign-up prompt).

## NEWSLETTER TEAM CONTRIBUTORS

### [Dr. Dawn Thilmany](#)

- Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
- Director, [Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center](#)
- Co-Director, CSU Regional Economic Development Institute

### [Dr. Anita Alves Pena](#)

- Professor, Department of Economics
- Professor, Colorado School of Public Health
- Agricultural Economics Advisor, [High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety](#)
- Research Associate, Regional Economic Development Institute

### [Dr. Rebecca Hill](#)

- Extension Professor
- Co-Director of the [Colorado AgrAbility Project](#)
- Extension Regional Specialist, Vibrant Communities
- Research Associate, Regional Economic Development Institute

### [Sabina Regmi](#)

- PhD Student, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
- Graduate Research Assistant, REDI

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