



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



## About the

# Colorado Small Business Development Center Network

From the Yampa Valley to Sterling and from Durango to Trinidad, small businesses form the backbone of Colorado communities. They provide access to fresh and nutritious food, create community gathering spaces, and meet the unique needs of their communities while creating jobs and contributing to a strong Colorado economy.

The Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network supports these small businesses as they start, grow and create quality jobs that contribute to the unique fabrics of their communities. Regional centers across the state provide no-cost, confidential consulting and low or no-cost training programs. SBDC staff also connect small business owners to programs and funding opportunities available through partners like the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), which also serves as the host for the state's lead SBDC.

Each center is hosted by a higher education, city, county, or regional government institution, business incubator or economic development organization. These partners provide so much more than brick and mortar locations from which SBDC staff can serve businesses; they also foster opportunities for the centers to build relationships, develop strategic partnerships within communities and secure match funding.

The SBDC is a network of people, organizations and institutions working to sustain a positive business climate for Colorado's more than 691,000 small businesses. When small businesses win, Colorado does, too.



Funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the Colorado Small Business Development Center Network is a partnership between the State of Colorado, the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, the SBA, Colorado's institutions of higher education, local development organizations and local chambers of commerce.

# 2022 Colorado SBDC Network Statewide Impact Numbers

JOBS  
CREATED  
**1,215**

COUNSELED  
CLIENTS  
**6,694**

TRAINING  
ATTENDEES  
**16,859**

JOBS  
RETAINED  
**1,490**

BUSINESSES  
STARTED  
**235**

INCREASED  
CONTRACTS  
**\$48,915,213**

INCREASED  
SALES  
**\$93,928,141**

CAPITAL  
FORMATION  
**\$82,871,454**



## A Message From

# Eve Lieberman

Executive Director

Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade



It is my pleasure to present the Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network annual report to showcase the work of SBDC locations across the state to help small businesses thrive.

As of 2022, Colorado was home to more than 690,000 small businesses, an increase of over 9,000 businesses over 2021. Collectively, they account for 99.5% of all Colorado businesses and employ nearly half of our state's employees.

Perhaps even more impressive than the numbers are the ways these small businesses change their communities—and the state of Colorado—for the better.

East of Pueblo in Rocky Ford, Maya's Carniceria is the community's first Mexican market and provides meat and produce to rural communities that lack access to fresh food. On the Western Slope, brothers and U.S. Air Force veterans started Grand Valley Micro Farms to provide nutrient-dense food to the Grand Junction community. And in the mountain community of Crested Butte, First Ascent Coffee Roasters has pioneered a production process that takes place in a single facility—a rarity that has earned their coffees a reputation for freshness and seen them served on the International Space Station.

Each of these businesses and so many more have one important thing in common: they turned to the SBDC Network for guidance as they started and grew. Across the state, these centers helped business owners obtain low interest loans, access free consulting, create business plans, navigate licensing and permits, implement marketing campaigns and so much more.

We are proud to support this good work by housing the statewide lead center of the Colorado SBDC Network within the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), just as we are proud of the contributions these small businesses make to Colorado's economy. I want to express my immense gratitude for the work of our SBDC directors, administrative staff and consultants. This report is a celebration of their many accomplishments, and those of the businesses they serve.

With appreciation,

Eve Lieberman

## A Message From

# Nikki Maloney

Director of Business Support  
Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade (OEDIT)  
and Interim State SBDC Director

As the Director of Business Support at OEDIT and a former small business owner, I know from experience that small businesses are the engine of our state economy. I have also seen firsthand the many ways the Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network supports Colorado's small businesses by providing free, confidential consulting and low or no-cost training programs.

Serving as Interim State Director of the SBDC gave me the opportunity to meet so many of the directors, administrative staff and consultants across the state who implement SBDC programming. Like the small business owners they serve, these individuals are driven by a passion for entrepreneurship and the knowledge that every successful small business transforms the lives of business owners, employees, families and communities across Colorado. At OEDIT and the State SBDC office, we are grateful for what you do.

I am also excited to introduce Hannah Krieger as the incoming State Director of the Colorado SBDC. Hannah most recently served as Executive Director at MENTOR Colorado, where she worked to advance the quality and extend the reach of youth mentoring organizations in Colorado. Her experience is uniquely suited to leading a statewide network like the SBDC, where we are also committed to evolving and growing our support of Colorado's small business owners. Hannah joined the SBDC team at the end of January 2023, and we look forward to all that she will contribute.

As I step out of the role as Interim State Director, I will continue to partner with Hannah and the SBDC teams to help Colorado's diverse business community thrive. The role that small businesses play in all of our lives is something to be celebrated and I'm thrilled to continue to lead and work alongside such a passionate team.

Sincerely,

Nikki Maloney





"I'm thrilled to join the SBDC team and work alongside this incredible network to ensure Colorado's small businesses receive the support they need to thrive."

## A Message From

# Hannah W. Krieger

State SBDC Director

My experience starting and owning a gardening-coaching and plant start business, Roots to Harvest, gave me a taste of what so many Colorado business owners know. Owning a small business is both a livelihood and a way of life.

Small business owners take their talents, their passions and their interests and turn them into something that not only supports them and their families, but contributes to their communities. Collectively, small businesses in Colorado hire 1.2 million employees, or 47.6% of Colorado workers. Owning a business isn't easy—there can be many questions to answer and problems to solve along the way—but the rewards are clearly many.

That's why I'm thrilled to join the SBDC team and work alongside this incredible network to ensure Colorado's small businesses receive the support they need to thrive. At the state SBDC office, we know the events of the last few years have changed the business landscape. We are committed to evolving our programs to meet these new needs and create more equitable access to our programs. We want to ensure that all Colorado entrepreneurs have the resources they need to thrive.

I am excited to draw on my past experience as Executive Director at MENTOR Colorado, where my team and I grew the quality and reach of youth mentoring organizations throughout Colorado. That experience, combined with the many successes I have seen across the SBDC Network, tell me the future is bright.

By working closely with the talented SBDC staff and consultants and listening carefully to the needs of our clients, I know we can reach even more of Colorado's small business owners. Wherever they are in the state or in their business journey, we will work to ensure they are aware of SBDC resources and can readily access them.

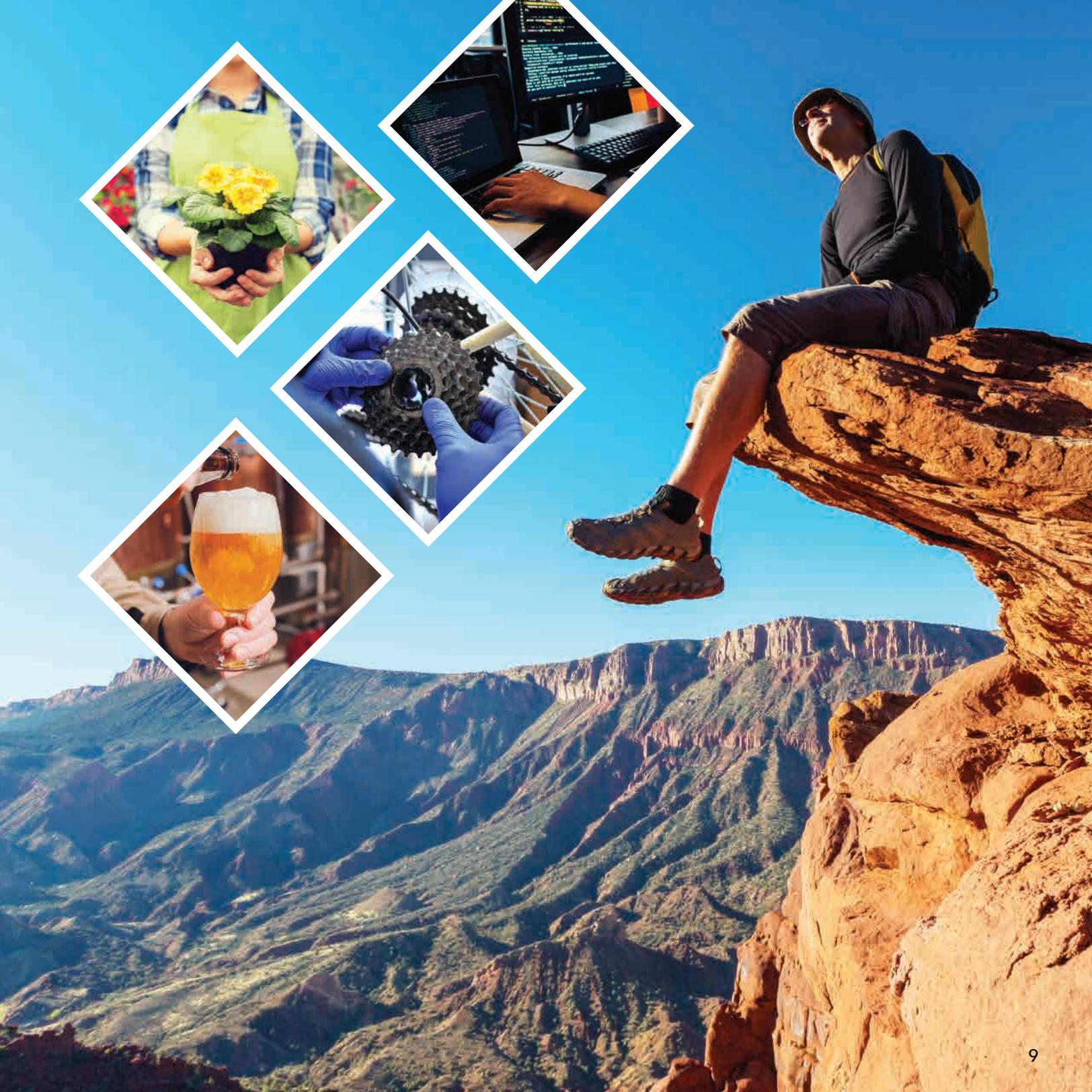
I look forward to working with you,

Hannah W. Krieger

# Colorado SBDC Programs & Services

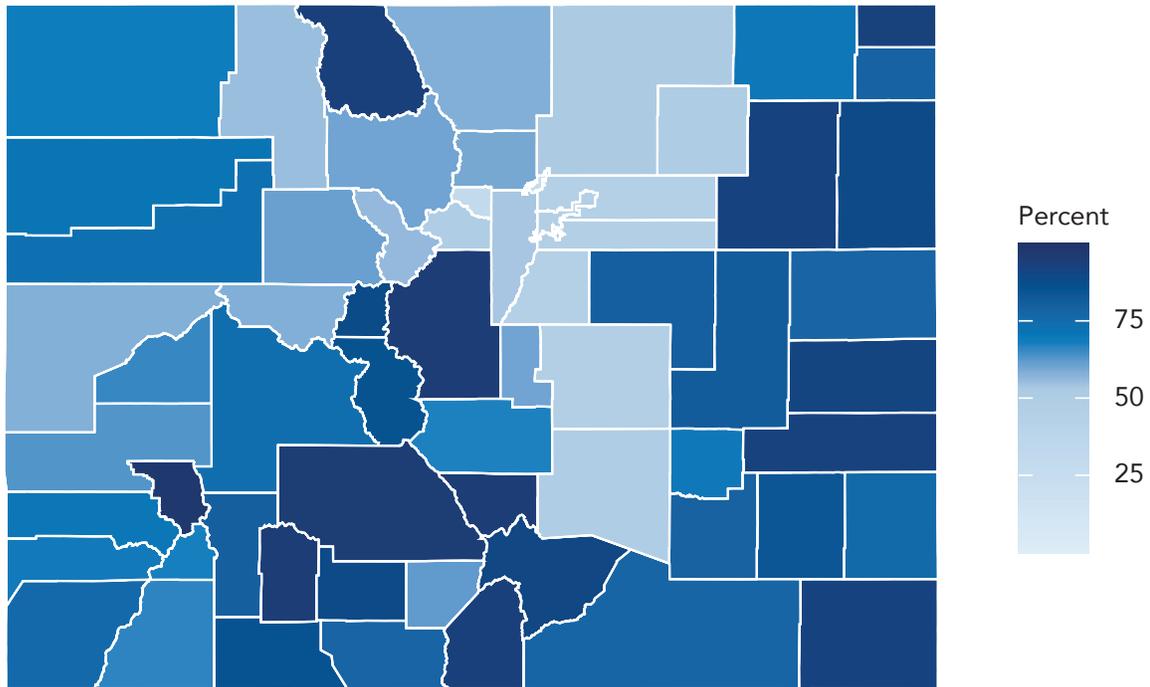
- Free and confidential one-on-one consulting for existing and new businesses on virtually any business topic
- Free or low-cost business planning workshops
- Leading Edge™: Intensive strategic business planning programs for existing and new businesses
- International trade assistance
- Assistance with loan packaging and access to capital
- Connect2DOT: Collaboration between CDOT and the SBDC helping businesses become more competitive and successful in government bidding and contracting with transportation agencies
- Access to business resource libraries with current business data, demographics and market analysis
- The SBDC Technology Program (SBDC TechSource): Focused on maximizing the economic potential of Colorado companies through direct assistance to technology ventures as well as assistance in using new technology available to business owners
- SBDC Cyber CYA: Cyber-security guidance focusing on topics for all levels of business to keep digital content secure and in compliance
- Government procurement and certification assistance
- New business feasibility analysis





## 2022 Small Business Profile

# Colorado



### 691,230 Small Businesses

Share of employees working at small businesses by county

### 1.2 Million Small Business Employees

47.6% of Colorado employees



Information courtesy U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy

# Business Ownership Share By Demographic Group

Women made up 46.1% of workers and owned 44.7% of businesses



Veterans made up 6.3% of workers and owned 7.2% of businesses



Hispanics made up 19.8% of workers and owned 11.6% of businesses



Racial Minorities made up 12.1% of workers and owned 7.7% of businesses



Information courtesy U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy

# Banh & Butter Bakery Café

“The SBDC has resources that go beyond business planning. They keep in touch with my business, answer my questions as I grow, and help find resources for funding.”



After starting out in the family restaurant, Thoa Nguyen studied baking and pastry arts, then traveled to France to continue her culinary education. There, she discovered a deeper meaning in food that inspired the name of her LLC, Plated Culture.

“It has a way of connecting me to people, culture, art, memories, stories and experiences,” she says, describing food as a worldwide language.

Thoa took out a personal loan to start and grow her business, opening Banh & Butter Bakery Café in Aurora. (“Bánh” is a Vietnamese term for a wide variety of breads, sweet and savory pastries and goods.) Located near the Anschutz Medical Center, the business has exceeded projections thanks to Thoa’s ability to adapt to her customers’ needs. She quickly recognized the demand for lunch items and expanded a pastry and coffee menu to include sweets, specialty drinks, baguette and croissant sandwiches, all-day breakfast and merchandise. The Aurora-South Metro SBDC has helped her along the way.

“The SBDC helped me better understand and prepare my business plan. Growing up in a family business, a business plan was all about going with the flow. I never knew what a cash flow was, but support from the SBDC has increased my business knowledge,” Thoa says.

As part of her business model, Thoa sources products for Bahn & Butter Bakery Café locally, including a plant vendor, jerky vendor and coffee supplier. The bakery also showcases artists and takes no commission on art sales. Thoa wants to continue these local partnerships even as she looks to grow her business.

The bakery will soon offer online orders and delivery, and Thoa sees potential in farmers markets and special event catering. She is also researching products for grocery stores and wants to create an online store to ship nationwide. The SBDC will continue to be a resource.

“The Aurora-South Metro SBDC has resources that go beyond business planning,” she says. “They keep in touch with my business, answer my business questions as I grow and help find resources for funding.”

## **THOA NGUYEN - OWNER, FOUNDER & CHEF**

### **AURORA-SOUTH METRO SBDC**

# NINAB Jewelry

"It feels great to have a cheerleader... I now have a vision for where my business is going."



Nina Brandin started making jewelry as a young girl and learned the art of metalsmithing in middle school. Making jewelry became a way to express herself, and her passion for it continued into adulthood. In 2019, she decided to turn her passion into a business and opened NINAB Jewelry in Boulder to make quality, handmade, timeless jewelry.

“The working properties of precious metals captivated me from a young age and making jewelry has always been a way for me to escape, express myself and find moments of freedom. This jewelry represents hope and the new life I am creating,” Nina says.

Yet starting a business was new, and Nina wasn’t sure where to start. The support she received from the Boulder SBDC helped her get going and keep up the momentum. Her SBDC consultant helped her develop a vision for her business and identify next steps, checked on her progress and helped her stay motivated as she launched and started to grow her business.

“It feels great to have a cheerleader,” she says. “I now have a better grasp on my business. I have a vision for where my business is going, what I want it to be and what makes me happy with the business.”

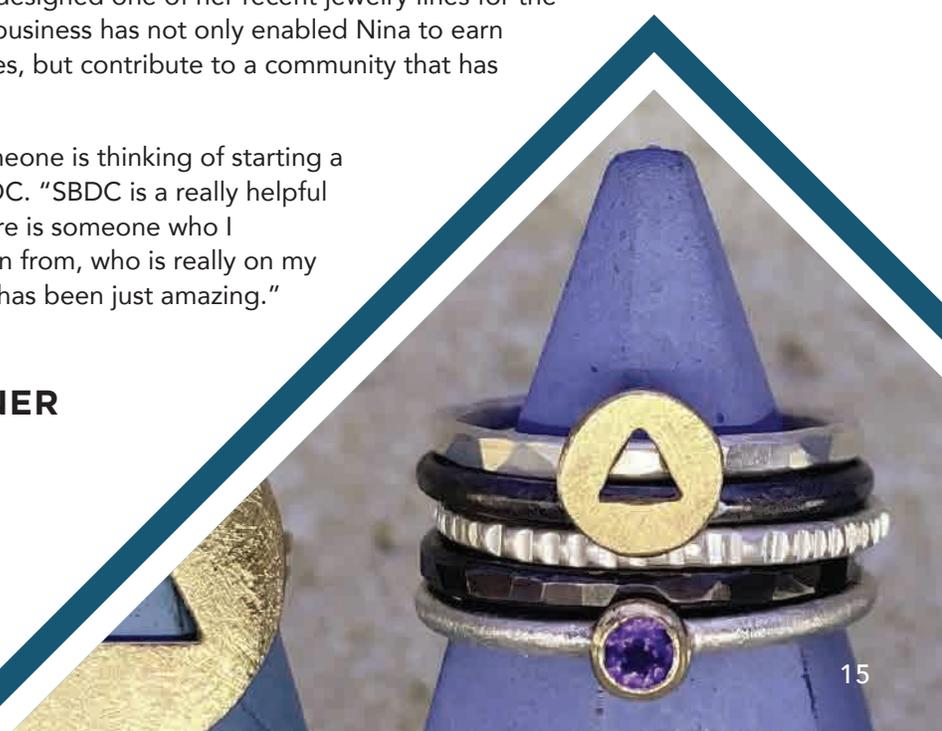
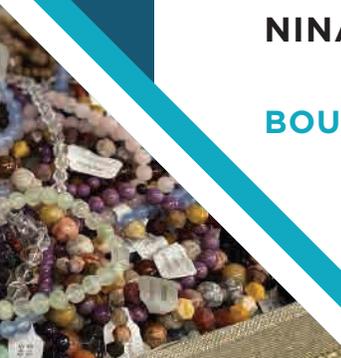
During the summer, that has meant attending art shows to sell her jewelry. In the future, Nina hopes to also display her work at a local gallery while learning to balance her business with a career in real estate.

The progress is particularly meaningful for Nina given another milestone she celebrated: three years of sobriety. The inspiration for her jewelry designs comes in part from her own path of recovery, and she designed one of her recent jewelry lines for the recovery community. Growing her business has not only enabled Nina to earn an income from something she loves, but contribute to a community that has been meaningful in her own life.

Now, whenever she learns that someone is thinking of starting a business, she recommends the SBDC. “SBDC is a really helpful program and just knowing that there is someone who I can ask questions to, get motivation from, who is really on my side and wants to see me succeed has been just amazing.”

## **NINA BRANDIN - OWNER**

**BOULDER SBDC**



# Encompass Solar

“When you are in the trenches you don’t see how other people see your business and potential. We are grateful to the SBDC for all of their encouragement.”



Kenneth (Kenny) Tapp was in “freak-out mode” when the architecture firm he worked for in Oklahoma started laying off people due to the pandemic. He and his wife, Andrea, sold their farm, hit the road in their RV and headed toward the Colorado mountains—something they had both wanted to do for a long time.

While on the road, Kenny took classes and became a certified RV technician and RV solar installer. He thought, “if nothing else, at least I would be able to fix our own RV.” They eventually landed in Buena Vista, Colorado, where they found a place to park with beautiful views of the Collegiate Peaks. Encompass Solar was born.

“We developed a business installing solar on RVs, adventure vans, and unique off-grid solar setups. We love that this business can help build on our passion for sustainable and off-grid living while encouraging others to do the same and explore beautiful Colorado!” It is just the two of them right now. Kenny laughs, “Andrea is the PR person, the personality. I am the engineer behind the curtains, the nuts and bolts.”

The Central Mountain SBDC has been instrumental in helping Encompass Solar with business development. “When you are in the trenches you don’t see how other people see your business and potential. We are so grateful to the SBDC for all of their encouragement.” Kenny says.

Kenny and Andrea both attended the Leading Edge training hosted by the SBDC, where they were inspired to build their business by adding value from the start. The SBDC also connected them to Prairie Rose Development and the idea of a Kiva loan. They wrote their story, put it out there and were touched by the encouragement and support they received from around the world. Encompass Solar received a small loan of \$7,000 the pair put toward professional solar certifications and a visual solar setup display to use during events.

Kenny says the best part about being an entrepreneur is working for himself, flushing out his desires, building for the future and, of course, the views. “Because we are mobile, I get to drive to amazing places—land that is in the absolute middle of absolute nowhere. I have the office with the best view.”

## **KENNETH & ANDREA TAPP - OWNERS**

**CENTRAL MOUNTAIN  
SBDC**

# BreakAway Meetings



“Thanks to the SBDC, we feel much more comfortable running every aspect of our small business.”



BreakAway Meetings co-owners Kim and Angela began their careers working in hotel venues and at events. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the events world shifted to a virtual setting. The innovative duo quickly adapted and decided to offer individuals the opportunity to connect through customizable meeting and event packages for hybrid and virtual attendees.

They set out to offer a completely customizable product so team members could connect with each other and build relationships. Their goal was to take as much work out of their clients' hands as possible, and provide a seamless process from start to finish.

While innovative, the pandemic pivot left Kim and Angela with a lot to learn. "Learning how to wear every hat in the business has been challenging. The SBDC has been a huge help with teaching us a lot of these new skills!"

Bi-weekly meetings with a consultant from the Denver Metro Small Business Development Center have been particularly helpful. The pair have appreciated the educated and unbiased perspective, guiding them in the right direction. "Thanks to the SBDC, we feel much more comfortable running every aspect of our small business, and feel confident that when we encounter another challenge, we can get the help we need."

The dedication has paid off. BreakAway Meetings has been Featured in The Denver Business Journal, 9News and was a finalist in the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce 2022 Business Awards. After seeing exceptional revenue growth at 700% in 2021, they are looking to the future in hopes of expanding their internal team and taking on funding opportunities.

## **ANGELA HESEMANN - CO-FOUNDER KIM CARLSON - CO-FOUNDER**

### **DENVER METRO SBDC**



# High Plains Dice & Games

Support from the SBDC helped Shelby Brandes open her store two months earlier than anticipated and exceed her sales projections by more than five times in the first month.



High Plains Dice and Games started with a little girl who loved to read books. As a child, Shelby Brandes fell into worlds filled with dragons, ghosts, shield-maidens, and magic. As an adult, she discovered the “Friendly Local Game Store,” a place filled to the brim with all the things she loved. Inspired, she started playing around with the idea to build her own game store in 2021.

Shelby reached out to the East Colorado SBDC, where a consultant helped her flesh out the idea. She credits her consultant with offering templates, advice, recommendations, and connections that were instrumental in forming a business plan and getting her business license.

“Even when I had to step back for a couple of months, the SBDC consultant was supportive and understanding,” Shelby says.

With the help of her consultant, Shelby ultimately got in touch with the Northeastern Colorado Revolving Loan Fund based out of Yuma, Colorado. That connection, along with the support of the SBDC, helped her open High Plains Dice and Games two months earlier than anticipated and exceed her sales projections by more than five times in the first month.

“Owning a business is the hardest thing I’ve ever done outside of motherhood, but I wouldn’t change it for one second. Thanks to the SBDC, the Revolving Loan Fund, and all of my absolutely amazing friends I was able to breathe life back into several communities, give opportunities for other small business owners to showcase their wares, and most importantly, give other little girls reading books a place to see their dreams become reality.”

## SHELBY BRANDES - OWNER

### EAST COLORADO SBDC



# Grand Valley Micro Farms



“We view the SBDC partnership as essential to any small business startup.”



When brothers Phil and Nate Strouse first decided to start their own business, they could think of no better place than their home of Grand Junction, Colorado. They envisioned a centrally located hub in the Grand Valley to provide nutrient dense micro greens to the community, called Grand Valley Micro Farms.

Both veterans of the U.S. Air Force, they had traveled extensively and experienced a variety of cultures and lifestyles. Their travels taught them that a community plays a key role in how a business survives and thrives. While Phil and Nate knew they had a successful business model, they needed guidance on how to bring their vision to life. They turned to the Grand Junction SBDC in July 2021. After taking the class How to Start a Business in Western Colorado, the brothers knew the center would be their operational nexus.

“The SBDC’s strategy sessions and networking opportunities served as both catalyst and course-corrector in this first year of producing and showcasing our microgreens in farmers’ markets, storefronts and restaurants,” Phil says.

Nate adds, “The resources from the experienced staff in a variety of specialties, the available courses and the camaraderie of other entrepreneurs have been invaluable. In hindsight, we wouldn’t have survived the first year if we had proceeded on our own. We view the SBDC partnership as essential to any small business startup.”

In January 2022, after three months of consultation and coaching, they launched Grand Valley Micro Farms. Their association with the SBDC gave them credibility throughout the community, including connections to business groups and new clients. Grand Valley Micro Farms has now established a network of businesses that enable Grand Valley residents to purchase their products year-round.

**PHIL STROUSE - CO-FOUNDER**  
**NATE STROUSE - CO-FOUNDER**

**GRAND JUNCTION SBDC**



# DJM Design

“When this opportunity came up, it brought together so many interests and skill sets, I couldn’t say no.”



DJM Design started as Daniel James Media in February 2017 when Daniël-James van den Berg lived in Fort Collins. His family had moved from South Africa to the U.S. in 2013, living in South Carolina and Chicago before calling Fort Collins home. "I started my business out of my bedroom for \$3,000, but in Fort Collins, I finally gained traction."

Daniël-James learned about the Larimer Small Business Development Center (SBDC) by attending a networking event. He signed up for consulting and has been reaping the benefits ever since.

Daniël-James employs his wife, Joy, and three other locals part time and up to 15 contractors across the globe. The benefit of this model is the connection to specialists with outside expertise. At its essence, DJM is Ubuntu, a South African word used to describe "community," including the virtues of compassion and humanity. DJM Design specializes in web design with an emphasis on human psychology: the who, why, what, and how best they can serve someone. They market The Tree vs. The Fruit. "A piece of fruit is one and done, but if you plant a fruit tree, it benefits you long term."

They also give back in big ways. "We donate 11% of our gross profits to South African NPOs and USA communities that impact orphans, job creation and community development."

Like most small businesses, the pandemic was tough for Daniel James Media. "I said the thing you should never say to a client. I told him I needed the job, and I wasn't mentally tough enough for rejection. He said he wasn't going to hire me until I was in a better place. That... turned things around."

He reset the team, cut back on projects, simplified their model, and applied for PPP and EIDL loans. They got aggressive with customer service and partnered with other agencies. Finally, they rebranded in December 2021 and became DJM Design. They've been in a good place since.

Daniël-James credits SBDC webinars, networking, and free one-on-one consulting. He stresses the importance of taking the time to find the right consultant and that you'll get out of it what you give. He found each session to be beneficial. His advice to budding entrepreneurs? Read! Owning a business requires constant learning and growth. Some books he recommends are Good to Great, Profit First, Scale, Get Different, and Sell Like Crazy.

## **DANIËL-JAMES VAN DEN BERG - FOUNDER**

### **LARIMER SBDC**



# JCS Cleaning Services

Within three months of completing a SBDC website training program, Jorge Torres reported a \$5,000 increase in annual sales.



A strong online presence can be crucial to a business's success, but for many small business owners, acquiring the skills to create and manage a professional website can be overwhelming. To provide these digital skills, especially among minority business owners, the North Metro Denver SBDC started a website program in partnership with the Alliance Business Assistance Center. Jorge Torres, owner of JCS Cleaning Services, was selected to participate in the first round of the training.

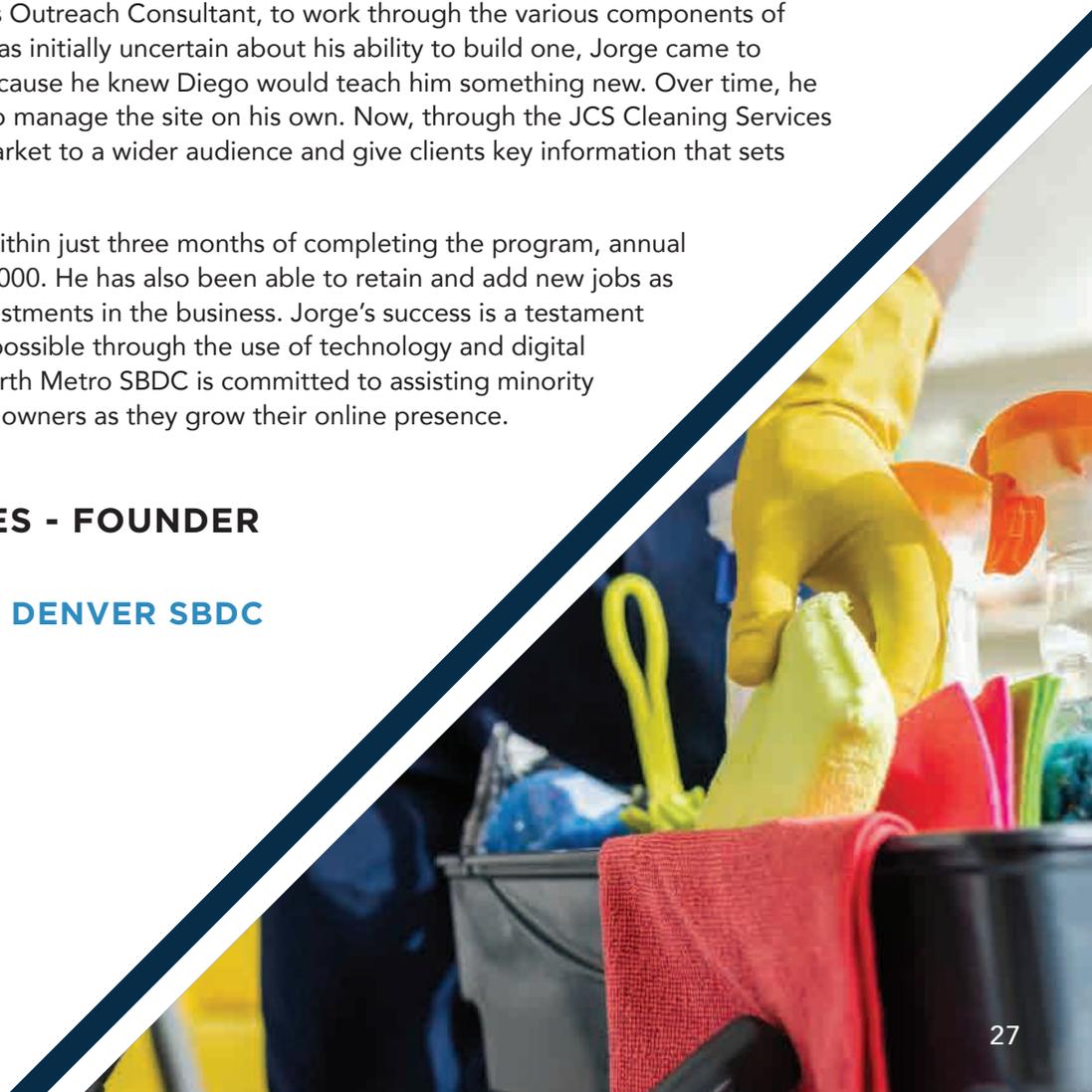
Jorge, whose business offers commercial and residential cleaning services throughout the Denver Metro region, has been in business for many years but never created a website. While he wanted to grow his business, he had a hard time recruiting new clients without a web presence.

For three months, Jorge met weekly with Diego Leyes, Bilingual Digital Marketing Specialist and Spanish Programs Outreach Consultant, to work through the various components of a website. While he was initially uncertain about his ability to build one, Jorge came to enjoy each session because he knew Diego would teach him something new. Over time, he developed the skills to manage the site on his own. Now, through the JCS Cleaning Services website, Jorge can market to a wider audience and give clients key information that sets JCS apart.

Jorge reported that within just three months of completing the program, annual sales increased by \$5,000. He has also been able to retain and add new jobs as well as make new investments in the business. Jorge's success is a testament to the growth that is possible through the use of technology and digital tools, and why the North Metro SBDC is committed to assisting minority owned small business owners as they grow their online presence.

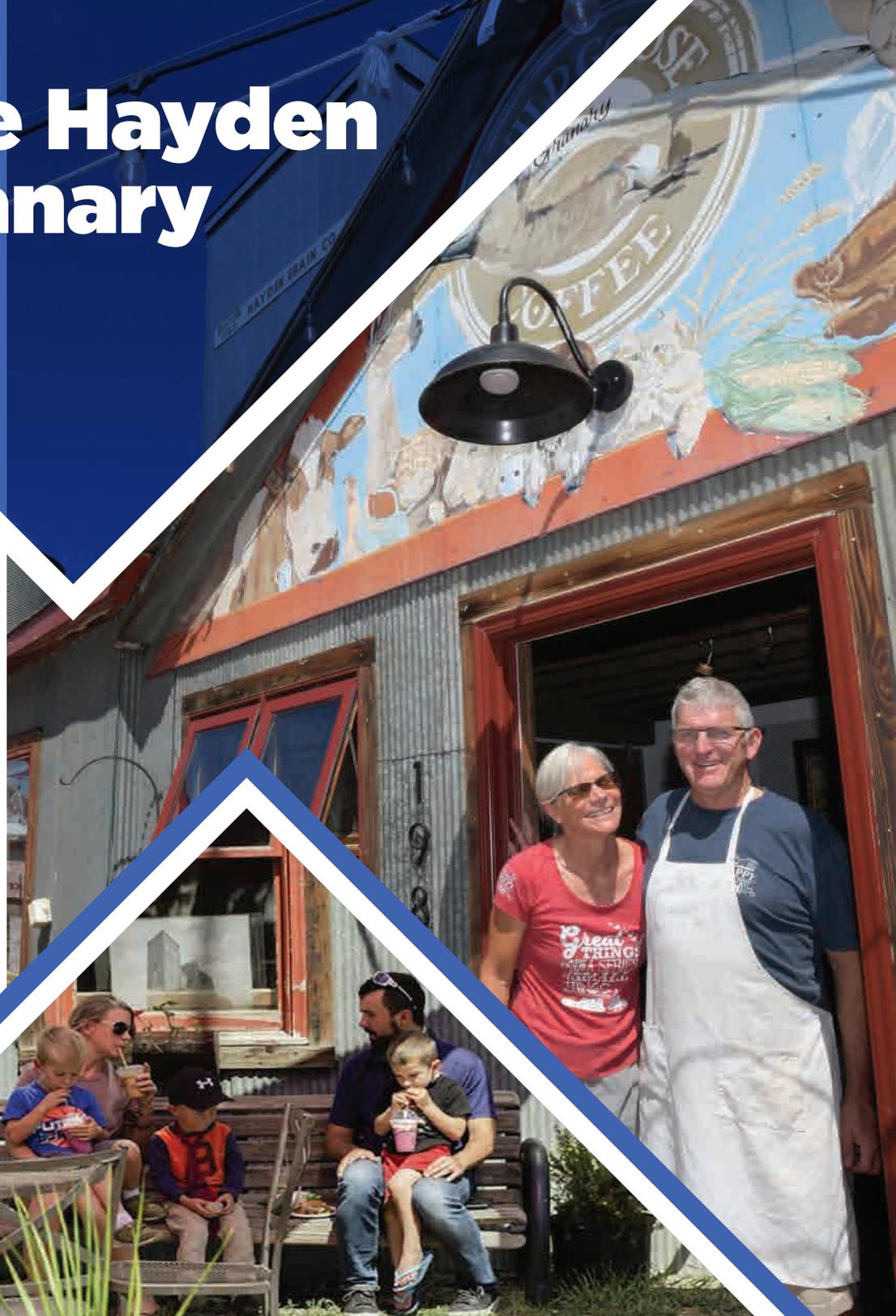
## **JORGE TORRES - FOUNDER**

### **NORTH METRO DENVER SBDC**



# The Hayden Granary

Transforming a grain elevator into a community gathering space for Yampa Valley communities.



The Hayden Granary, the only standing grain elevator in Routt County, looks like the backdrop of a movie set hidden just off the highway in rural Yampa Valley. Tammie and Patrick Delaney purchased the 1917 building to continue its operation as Yampa Valley Feeds and serve the agricultural needs of the region. Tammie quickly noticed, however, that demand for the free coffee they offered remained consistent regardless of feed store sales. It even spiked when outdoor operations slowed. The store was a hub for rural community members to see neighbors and swap stories, and that kept the operation going even after delivery services could replace retail feed stores.

After a few years of ownership, the Delaneys decided to close Yampa Valley Feeds and opened Wild Goose Coffee at the Hayden Granary. Later, they worked with business partners to start a nonprofit organization to preserve and further develop the historic site, which now houses multiple small businesses, including Yampa Valley Brewing, Embers Pizza, Sage and Spirit food truck, and four short-term rental units. The entire property also serves as an event space that provides multiple outdoor and indoor settings for groups to gather.

The Northwest SBDC has been a proud supporter of what is now a road trip-worthy landmark in Northwest Colorado.

"The Small Business Development Center has been with us from the beginning in our small business ownership of the Hayden Granary," Tammie said. "Many of the ideas and recommendations from years back with the SBDC continue to evolve, from business plan assistance to forming a nonprofit for building preservation and community events, to switching from feed store to coffee shop and developing succession plans for the future."

Her love for the people and community of Hayden continues to drive the business' evolution. Since the Hayden Granary is anchored by local startups and central to a number of towns, it has also become an inspiring gathering space for regional entrepreneurs. The planning to ensure the viability of the project and multiple connected businesses in rural Colorado has been extensive.

"I highly recommend the SBDC for concepts, implementation, transitions and more in your business," Tammie said. "They are highly qualified, confidential, and very enthusiastic in supporting the crazy journey of entrepreneurs."

**TAMMIE & PATRICK DELANEY  
- OWNERS**

**NORTHWEST COLORADO SBDC**



# Integrity Communications Solutions

Designing,  
developing and  
enhancing new  
and existing  
communications  
throughout the  
world.



In 1979, the Village People recorded the song, "In the Navy." A couple of the verses were, "If you like adventure, don't wait to enter" and "Come on and protect the motherland."

Although only five years old at the time, that is exactly what Michael Tipton set out to do. Born in Agana, Guam where his parents were stationed (Mike's father was in the Navy Seabees, or United States Naval Construction Battalions), Mike moved to Africa with his family before they settled in Oklahoma in 1979. Mike joined the Navy after graduating from high school.

His nine-year tour saw him aboard three nuclear submarines...the USS Tuscon, the USS Boise and the USS Albany. He trained and excelled in radio and satellite communications and became actively involved in U.S. Joint Forces Command (SATCOM). When 9/11 happened, Mike was involved in troubleshooting Presidential Communication Support for Air Force One.

Leaving the Navy, Mike worked at Schriever AFB, where he developed a communications support shop to support SATCOM and traveled internationally training various operations on the process.

Being of an entrepreneurial spirit, Mike ultimately started Integrity Communications Solutions. Believing that communications is the number one problem facing the world today, he focused the company on the design, development and enhancement of new and existing communications throughout the world.

His innovative ideas and concepts led to contracts with military and government support operations that involved major changes, additions and diversifications of existing systems. Integrity now has 36 employees, many of which are retired military with required security clearances, operating in engineering, design, development and training capacities.

Headquartered in Colorado Springs with satellite offices in Georgia and Maine, a large portion of the company's work centers around the training of military, civilian and government contractors to manage, operate and maintain the nation's nuclear communications backbone structure. This support is provided to the United States and many of its allies.

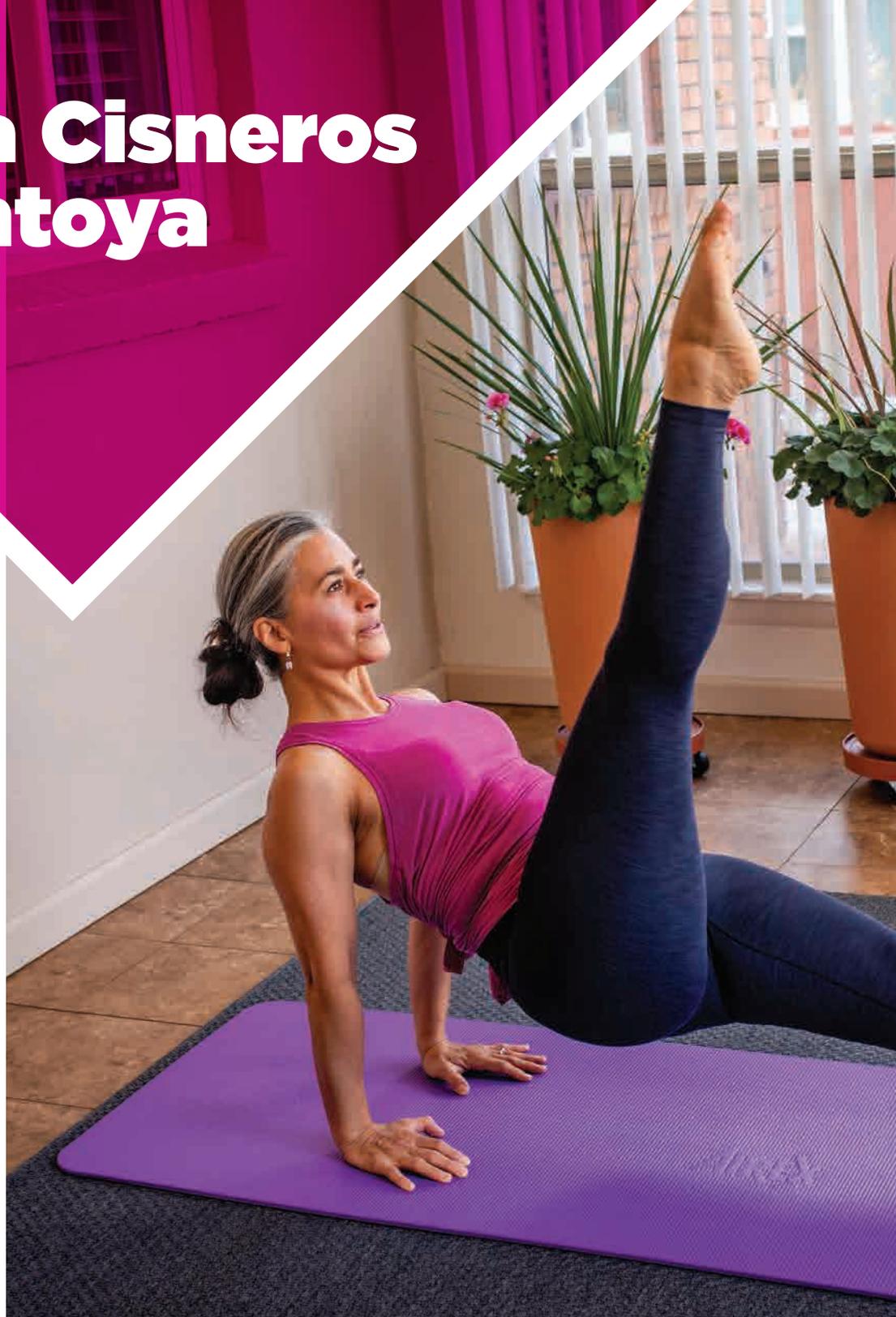
Throughout the growth of Integrity, Mike has always found time to meet with and offer advice to numerous different startup businesses as he is thankful for the success of Integrity and is committed to giving back to others. Mike has been very adamant about the help and support that he and the company have received from the Pikes Peak SBDC.

## **MICHAEL TIPTON - FOUNDER**

**PIKES PEAK SBDC**

# Yula Cisneros Montoya

Finding the  
right financial  
resources to  
purchase  
Pilates studio  
equipment.



Yula Cisneros Montoya is a Mexican born, U.S.-based dance educator and Pilates instructor. She has over twenty years of experience as a dancer and educator and teaches specialized dance techniques in ballet, modern, African and Afro-Latino dance aesthetics. Pilates has always been a part of her training and she recently dedicated more time to teaching full time. She has taught Pilates at fitness clubs and ballet studios, and has now started her own studio in Alamosa, Colorado.

Yula arrived in Alamosa in January 2020 and planned on starting her business during Spring 2020. With the pandemic, however, it was not a good time to start a Pilates studio. She looked for other ways to start her business during the pandemic and says that the San Luis Valley SBDC has been key in starting her business journey.

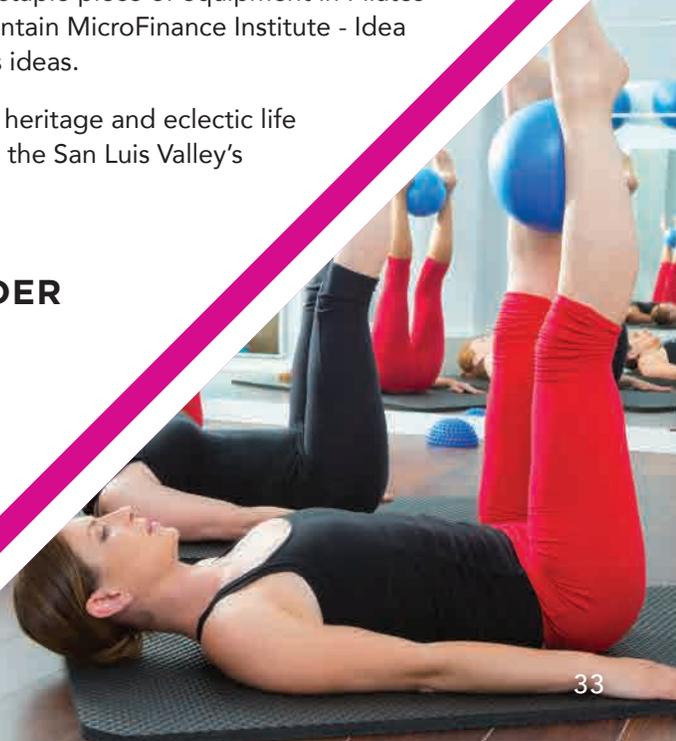
“I met the SBDC and they kindly provided me with the necessary information to open my studio in the valley. My relationship with SBDC continued to grow and got enriched with the new director, Jason Medina, who has been fundamental for promoting my Pilates studio in the valley and introducing me to key organizations that have been crucial to establish my business in the San Luis Valley. I value so much what the SBDC has done for me. What has been most helpful are the practical/technical support—how they have educated me on so many aspects of starting and promoting my business—and the social and emotional support—getting networked in the community and how to be resilient,” Yula says.

Among these connections, the First Southwest Community Fund (FSWCF) was instrumental in preparing her to launch her own business. In November 2020, Yula received the Rural Women Led-Business Fund Grant to acquire reformers, a staple piece of equipment in Pilates studios. And in spring 2021, she attended the Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute - Idea Business Lab, funded by FSWCF, to fine tune her business ideas.

As a Latina in the United States, she plans to draw on her heritage and eclectic life experiences as she grows her business and contributes to the San Luis Valley’s potential as a hub for business, tourism, and art.

## **YULA CISNEROS MONTOYA - FOUNDER**

### **SAN LUIS VALLEY SBDC**



# Maya's Carniceria

Improving  
access to fresh  
food in rural  
Southeast  
Colorado.



Maya Rivera opened her fresh meats and produce business, Maya's Carniceria, in August 2022. She wanted to serve her Rocky Ford community by improving access to fresh foods in rural areas. Maya and her business partner met with the Southeast Colorado Small Business Development Center in 2021 to get assistance with startup essentials. She worked with the SBDC to create her business plan, prepare for real estate conversations, receive guidance on licensing permits, and marketing.

She said, "We appreciate all the support we have received from FWECF (First Southwest Community Fund), SBDC & OEDIT (The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade)!"

Maya's Carniceria is proud to be the first Mexican market to open in Rocky Ford, where their mission is to provide more access to healthy foods. They look forward to evolving to meet the needs of the people they serve and are excited to continue working with the SBDC to build on their growth.

## **MAYA RIVERA - FOUNDER**

### **SOUTHEAST COLORADO SBDC**



# **Maya's Carniceria**

**Fresh Meat & Fresh Produce**



# Visuospatial Education Center

Ready to  
launch with  
support from  
the Southern  
Colorado  
SBDC.



The Visuospatial Education Center (VEC) is a Professional Development Unit that aligns abstract reasoning with an objective emotional approach for curricular standards. After 18 years of research, Dr. Theresa Ferg developed a new assessment that measures three physiological components of the affective symmetry gauging (ASG) action that is demonstrated while being creative.

Ferg started off as an artist where she recognized the need for students and teachers to understand that our natural visualization process is actually guided by emotion via homeostasis cellular communication. In response, Ferg devoted her time developing a curriculum to help more people understand our visualization within a three-dimensional world that is moving into two dimensions — a consequence of digital media. Now she has evolved into a scientist, mathematician, educator, and artist. Ferg possesses one bachelor degree, three masters, and one doctoral degree.

In 2021, Ferg submitted a pitch proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the VEC. After gaining approval, Ferg spent seven months writing a full Phase I Proposal for a project on visuospatial ability. The research supports a curriculum that Ferg developed for individuals to rapidly learn and engage their natural ability to be inventive.

The process was long, and Ferg recognized the need to begin looking for alternative ways to launch the programming. She began to focus her efforts on the VEC EDU business planning component and became a client of the Southern Colorado SBDC. Twenty months later the NSF granted Ferg \$256,000 for her proposal in August 2022.

The NSF also enrolled Ferg in a six-week business accelerator of which she said, “Because I had already started with the SBDC, I was able to do better in the ICorp Bootcamp than I even realized.”

Ferg is currently at the phase of contacting K-12 program directors, education publishers, and independent accelerated education programs to inquire about their current and future educational needs for teacher professional development linking visualization to academic standards.

**DR. THERESA FERG - FOUNDER**

**SOUTHERN COLORADO SBDC**



# Pagosa Mountain Sports



“After crunching numbers with the SBDC consultant, it looked like purchasing the bike shop would be a good move for us.”



A community outdoor shop with a heavy focus on bikes. Doesn't that sound like a dream? Jake and Janine Emmets, Amanda Gadowski, and Coquette Collins all thought so.

So in 2015, they launched Pagosa Mountain Sports in a tiny house in Downtown Pagosa Springs. For the past seven years, their business has continued to grow. They sell and provide rentals of stand-up paddle boards, skis, snowshoes, and of course, bikes.

By 2021, the team of managers realized that they had maxed out what they could accomplish in their tiny space. They knew they needed a solution for growth, so they reached out to the SBDC.

The consultants met with them to discuss various paths for expansion. They looked at enlarging their downtown facility but couldn't find a way to do it without shutting down during their busiest summer months. Then they learned that an uptown bike shop was for sale. "After crunching numbers with the SBDC consultant, it looked like purchasing the bike shop would be a good move for us," says co-owner Amanda Gadowski. Pagosa Mountain Sports completed the acquisition in spring 2022.

Transitioning to two separate locations has been a huge transition, and the business has had to shift how they operate. Their downtown location focuses on rentals, while their uptown location has more room for servicing and inventory.

They've also brought on a number of new staff members. Amanda explains, "For years, our staff consisted of the four owners and one part-time employee. We now have four full-time and 12 part-time employees. In adding new staff, we really don't want to lose the Pagosa Mountain Sports vibe. We pride ourselves on providing excellent customer service with a community-focused feel, and we want to make sure we aren't just super efficient at selling stuff. We want our customers to know what we care about because that's what made us successful in the first place."

The owners of Pagosa Mountain Sports are grateful to the SBDC for all their help. "The SBDC made the sale process super simple. They helped us gather and evaluate information, which made it really easy to decide that this would be a good move for us. They also helped us evaluate the cost and determine what to pay for the purchase. They are a good resource for anything that relates to business."

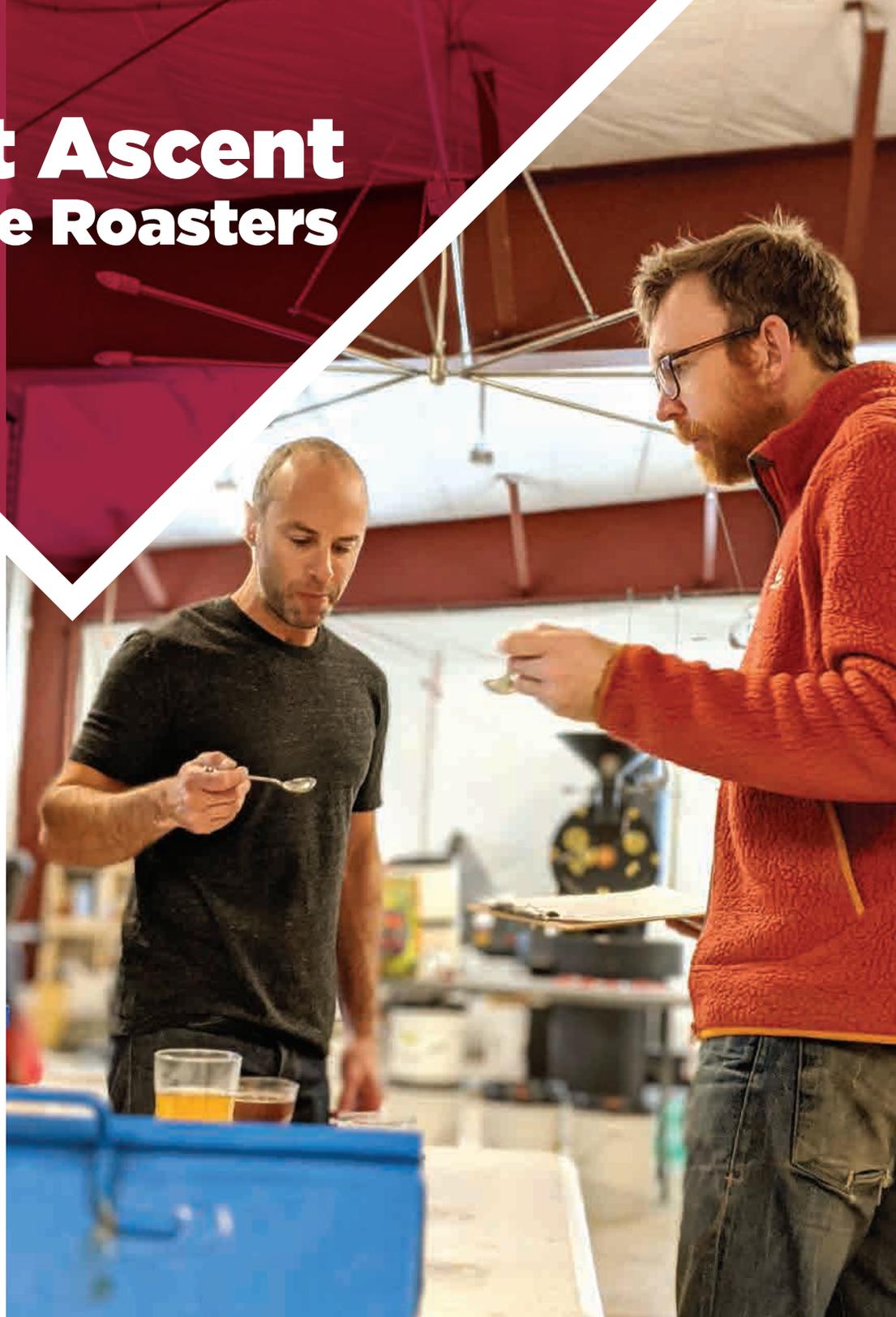
**JAKE AND JANINE EMMETS  
AMANDA GADOMSKI  
COQUETTE COLLINS  
- CO-OWNERS**

**SOUTHWEST COLORADO SBDC**



# First Ascent Coffee Roasters

“It’s a pretty amazing feeling knowing that astronauts sipped our coffee at the International Space Station.”



First Ascent Coffee Roasters has always been at the forefront of innovation. The company launched in 2014 as part of The Guild Café on Crested Butte, Colorado's historic Elk Avenue. When co-lessee Mountain Oven Bakery relocated to Paonia in 2018, First Ascent owners Mark and Ali Drucker made their own pivot to focus on roasting specialty coffees for wholesale and moved the business to Crested Butte's industrial park.

The seed for something bigger had actually been planted the prior summer when the couple lugged a bag of beans, a French press and a hand grinder on a multi day backpacking trip. Upon return, Mark began working on a prototype for handcrafted instant coffee for people to take on adventures, and it worked. *Outside* magazine named First Ascent's instant coffee the best all-around backcountry brew in May 2019.

Today, First Ascent produces light, medium and dark roast instant coffees that are sold in single-serving packets and bulk packages. "As far as we know, we are the only instant coffee makers today who do the entire process—roast, brew, freeze-dry and package—under one roof to guarantee freshness," says Mark.

West Central SBDC has been a partner in the progress. "SBDC has done a lot for First Ascent Coffee, helping us obtain a low-interest loan from Region 10 to help match grant funds we received from the state," says Sam Higby, who became a co-owner after working in the outdoor recreation industry. "We've also been able to meet with small business experts who offered free consulting through the SBDC network."

The business propelled into a new stratosphere when the brand's Dawn Patrol instant coffee launched with NASA's SpaceX Crew-5 mission to the International Space Station on October 5, 2022. It all started about a year earlier when Higby found himself on the phone with an astronaut who lamented the subpar instant coffee options available at the Space Food Systems Laboratory. After sending samples, First Ascent received an order for 256 eight-ounce servings.

For the mission, the instant coffee was repackaged in individual foil pouches with a valve on one end, allowing the astronauts to add a straw and hot water, shake and drink. Higby says, "It's a pretty amazing feeling knowing that astronauts sipped our coffee at the International Space Station."

**MARK DRUCKER, ALI DRUCKER  
SAM HIGBY - OWNERS**

**WEST CENTRAL SBDC**



**Thank You To Our**

# Host Organizations

The Colorado Small Business Development Center would like to sincerely thank each of our host organizations throughout the state. Given your effort, support, and community dedication, Colorado's economic development continues to thrive. We are looking forward to an amazing 2023 together!



**City of Aurora**

**Aurora-South  
Metro**



**City of Boulder**

**Boulder**



**Chaffee County**

**Central  
Mountain**



**Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce**

**Denver Metro**



**Monfort College of Business**

**East Colorado**



**Western Colorado Business  
Development Corporation**

**Grand  
Junction**



**Front Range Community College**

**Larimer**



**Front Range Community College**

**North Metro  
Denver**



**Eagle County**

**Northwest  
Colorado**



**El Paso County**

**Pikes Peak**



**San Luis Valley Development Resources  
Group & Council of Governments**

**San Luis  
Valley**



**Pueblo Community College**

**Southern  
Colorado**



**Monfort College of Business**

**Southeast  
Colorado**



**Fort Lewis College**

**Southwest  
Colorado**



**Region 10**

**West  
Central**

# Colorado SBDC Network Locations & Websites



## Aurora-South Metro

15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. #2300  
Aurora, CO 80012  
aurora-southmetrosbdc.com



## Boulder

1500 Pearl St., Suite 300  
Boulder, CO 80302  
bouldersbdc.com



## Central Mountain

339 East Highway 50  
(Rainbow Blvd), Suite 104  
Salida, CO 81201  
centralsbdc.org



## Denver Metro

1445 Market St.  
Denver, CO 80202  
denversbdc.org



## East Colorado

800 17th St, Kepner Hall #0025  
Greeley, CO 80631  
eastcoloradosbdc.com



## Grand Junction

2591 Legacy Way  
Grand Junction, CO 81503  
grandjunctionsbdc.org



## Larimer

4616 South Shields St,  
Blanca Peak 151  
Fort Collins, CO 80526  
larimersbdc.org



**North Metro  
Denver**

3645 W. 112th Ave.  
Westminster, CO 80031  
northmetrosbdc.com



**Northwest  
Colorado**

500 Broadway  
Eagle, CO 81631  
northwestsbdc.org



**Pikes Peak**

102 S Tejon St #1200  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
pikespeaksbdc.org



**San Luis  
Valley**

610 State Ave. #120  
Alamosa, CO 81101  
slv-sbdc.com



**Southern  
Colorado**

121 W City Center Drive, Suite 150  
Pueblo, CO 81003  
southerncoloradosbdc.org



**Southeast  
Colorado**

800 17th St, Kepner Hall #0025  
Greeley, CO 80631  
eastcoloradosbdc.com



**Southwest  
Colorado**

1000 Rim Dr, 140 EBH  
Durango, CO 81301  
sbdcfortlewis.org



**West Central**

145 S Cascade Avenue  
Montrose, CO 81401  
r10sbdc.org

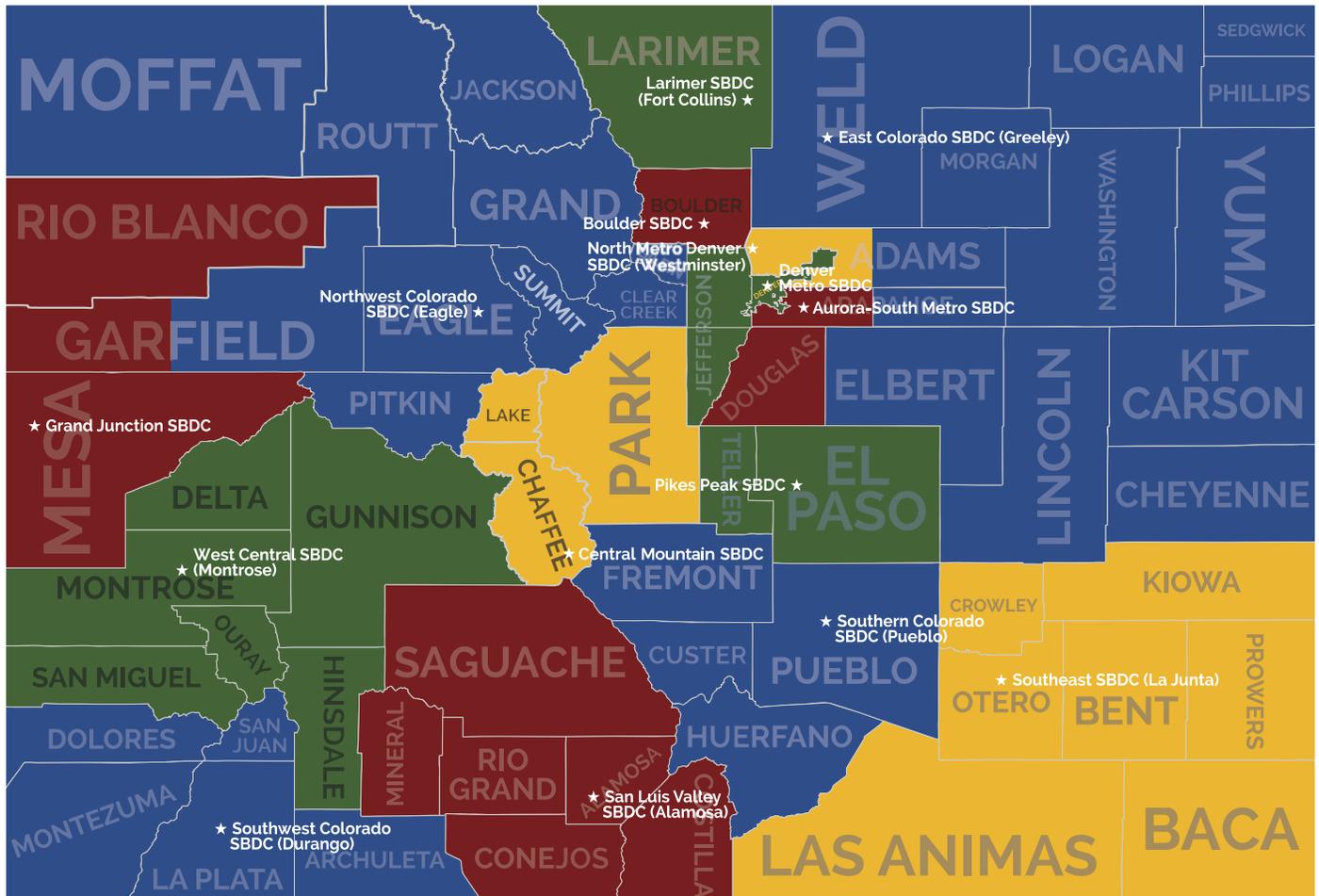


Small Business Development Center Network

# Colorado Small Business Development Center Locations

WWW.COLORADOSBDC.ORG

303-860-5881 | info@coloradosbdc.org



★ Full-Time SBDC Center (advising and training)