

Agenda | Updated 2.25.25

- 8:30 – 9 a.m. **REGISTRATION, NETWORKING & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**
Presented by: **Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association**
- 9 – 9:30 a.m. **OPENING COMMENTS AND WELCOME**
Presenters:
- Maytham Alshadood, Business & Licensing Division Director, Colorado Department of State
 - Kim Woodworth, Executive Director, Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC)
 - Eve Lieberman, Executive Director, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)
- 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. **Northwest Colorado: A Regional Economic Overview**
Unlock the economic potential of Northwest Colorado. This session provides a comprehensive regional overview, exploring the area's economic drivers, unique assets, and opportunities for growth. Gain valuable insights for strategic decision-making in business, investment, and community development.
Presenters:
- Kate Watkins, State Demographer, Colorado Department of Local Affairs
 - Nicolas Sly, Vice President, Economist, Denver Branch Executive, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
- 10:30 – 10:45 a.m. **NETWORKING BREAK**
Presented by: **Xcel Energy**
- 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. **TOPIC #1: Igniting Rural Entrepreneurship: Building a Thriving Business Ecosystem**
Building a thriving business ecosystem examines why fostering entrepreneurship is crucial for the long-term health of rural communities. This session will explore the connection between entrepreneurship and economic diversification, job creation, and community revitalization. We'll discuss the key ingredients for a thriving ecosystem and how to create a supportive environment where entrepreneurs can flourish, contributing to a more sustainable and prosperous future for rural areas.
Moderator: Jeff Engell, Western Extension Regional Specialist, CSU Office of Engagement and Extension

Presenters:

- John Bristol, Executive Director, Routt County Economic Development Partnership Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center
- Jennifer Pieroni, Executive Director, Harmonie House
- Brittany Romano, Executive Director, StartUp Colorado
- Sasha Nelson, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow serving Routt County Economic Development Partnership in support of the Northwest Colorado Development Council

11:45 – 12:45 p.m.

TOPIC #2: Food System Resilience: Building a Stronger Economy

The food and agriculture landscape in Northwestern Colorado is shifting due to changing beef prices, evolving trade policies, and the changes in federal agricultural and food supports. This session will explore how these factors are impacting Northwestern Colorado producers and the regional food system. We will focus on strategies to enhance regional food systems through investments in physical infrastructure, the expansion of local markets, and improved access to capital. Join us for a dynamic discussion on how Northwestern Colorado can adapt to these challenges and build a more resilient and robust livestock sector.

Moderator: Dawn Thilmany, Co-Director CSU Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI@CSU) & Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics

Presenters:

- Debbie Fitch, Owner, Fitch Ranch Artisan Meat Co.
- Jorgiea Raftopoulos, Owner, Two Bar Sheep Ranch

12:45 – 2 p.m.

NETWORKING LUNCH

Presented by: Antero Group

Enjoy a true Colorado food experience supplied by Colorado's finest agricultural producers in Northwest Colorado.

2 – 3:30 p.m.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: Leveraging University and Government Resources for Economic Development

Brought to you by: CSU Extension & REDI@CSU

Facilitators:

- Tim Komarek, Associate Professor of Economics, REDI@CSU
- Rebecca Hill, Ph.D., CSU Extension State Specialist & Co-Director of AgrAbility Project

2 – 4 p.m.

NW CO Agriculture and Food System Convening

The NW CO Agriculture and Food System Convening, hosted by CSU's Rural-Urban Connections Food Summit, will bring together stakeholders to discuss key challenges and opportunities facing the region's agricultural and food systems. Through presentations and facilitated table discussions, participants will explore critical issues like physical and financial infrastructure, market access, and ranching operations, aiming to identify solutions and resources to support the future of agriculture and food in Northwest Colorado.

Moderator: Michele Meyer, Markets Division Senior Program Manager, Colorado Department of Agriculture

Presenters:

- Tyler Cozzens, Director- Livestock Marketing Information Center, CSU Extension
- Dawn Thilmany, Co-Director, REDI@CSU & Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics
- Katie Stanhope, Yampa Valley Foods Manager, Community Ag Alliance

3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

National Science Foundation (NSF) Colo/Wyo Engine Regional Educational & Listening Sessions – NW Colorado

Join us to build a stronger Colorado! EDCC and NSF Colo-Wyo Engine invite you to a vital listening session where your expertise on resource management, disaster preparedness, and innovation will directly shape investments for community benefit and economic growth. You'll discover economic opportunities, influence resource availability and protection, and connect with valuable resources to strengthen your local workforce.

Facilitator:

- Tim Jones, Director of Strategic Partnerships, CO-WY Engine | COO, Innosphere

4 - 6 p.m.

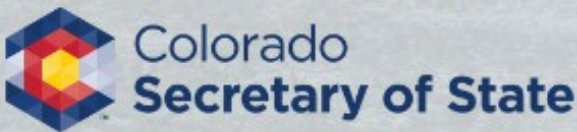
NETWORKING RECEPTION

Brought to you by: **Rural-Urban Connections Food Summit**

Location: The Local, 576 Yampa Avenue, Craig, CO 81625 (Located inside Yampa Valley Brewing Co. Taproom)

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