

## Agenda

*“The League of Change Makers: Supercharging Economic Prosperity”*

*(Updated October 24, 2025)*

*Tile Sponsor: CHFA*

*Strategic Partners: Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association | APA Colorado*

### Sunday, October 26

8 – 3 p.m.

#### **SUPERHERO GOLF TOURNAMENT [\$\$\$ - Register Separately]**

*Unleash your superpowers on the green at EDCC's pre-conference Superhero Golf Tournament!*

##### **Location:**

Walking Stick Golf Course | 4301 Walking Stick Blvd., Pueblo, CO 81001

**8 a.m.** | Registration Begins

**9 a.m.** | Putting Contest

**10 a.m.** | Shotgun Start

**Hosted by** *Pueblo County!*

This powerful and playful kickoff to the Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference is your chance to connect with fellow changemakers and champion the future of economic development. Every swing, putt, and drive helps fund the next generation of heroes. All proceeds from the tournament go directly to the EDCC Scholarship Fund, which provides critical professional development opportunities for economic developers across Colorado. Your participation helps aspiring professionals earn key designations, attend essential training, and bring bold solutions to communities statewide.

*Suit up, tee off, and make a heroic impact—one swing at a time, even if you don't play golf!*

1 – 3 p.m.

#### **REGISTRATION OPENS IN MAIN HALLWAY OF CONFERENCE CENTER**

4 – 6 p.m.

### OPENING RECEPTION

#### **Superheroes' Assembly Point – Forging Alliances in the Steel City |**

*Welcome to Pueblo, Colorado's resilient Steel City!*

#### **Location:**

Brues Alehouse Brewing Co. | 120 Riverwalk Pl., Pueblo, CO 81003

*Conference registration will be available at the reception.*

#### **Hosted by the *City of Lakewood!***

Join your fellow economic and workforce development Superheroes for a relaxed evening at our "Superheroes' Assembly Point." This welcome reception is your chance to forge new connections, build powerful alliances, and engage in meaningful conversations (and take a special ride down the River Walk) as we kick off this year's Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference. Experience the spirit of a city known for its resilience and innovation and get ready to connect with your league of extraordinary professionals.

*Enjoy your discounted weekend rate as you settle in for a truly extraordinary conference! We hope you and your family enjoy this well-deserved downtime before your heroic mission begins.*

6 – 8 p.m.

### EDCC BOARD MEETING

**Location:** Brues Alehouse Brewing Co. | The Interrogation Room

## Monday, October 27

- 7 a.m. **REGISTRATION OPENS IN MAIN HALLWAY OF CONFERENCE CENTER**
- 7:15 – 8:15 a.m. **CONFERENCE ORIENTATION & MENTOR PROGRAM BREAKFAST & SHOWCASE** | *Start your conference experience by fueling up and gearing up for action! Breakfast will be served in the Pavilion for those attending the orientation.*
- Location:** The Heroes Pavilion (*a separate breakfast buffet will be in the Pavilion*)
- This breakfast is for attendees who want to kick off their conference experience with a dynamic orientation, helping you maximize your time at the conference. Join us to learn how to unleash your superpowers by getting to know more about EDCC and its offerings and connect with the incredible mentors and mentees.
- Get ready to connect, learn, and prepare to unleash your superpowers!*
- 7:30 – 9 a.m. **OPENING BREAKFAST**
- Superheroes' Power-Up Breakfast** | *For general session attendees who are not attending the conference orientation.*
- Hosted by the** *Colorado Housing & Finance Authority (CHFA)*!
- Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)
- Hosted by our *Housing Superheroes*, this breakfast is available to all conference attendees. For those joining us for the Conference Start your day by fueling up with your fellow superheroes and preparing for a day of action-packed sessions and epic networking.
- 8:30 – 9 a.m. **CONFERENCE KICK-OFF & WELCOME: Assembling the Alliance – Mission Briefing** | *The moment has arrived... Superheroes ACTIVATE!*
- Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)
- The League of Economic Strategists (Presenters):**
- ❖ Steve Boice, Manager of Business Finance, CHFA; EDCC Board Ex-Officio, Title Sponsor
  - ❖ Mayor Heather Graham, City of Pueblo
  - ❖ Tami Grant, President of RMWDA, Deputy Director of the Weld County Department of Human Services
  - ❖ Adam Krueger, 2025 EDCC Board Chair, Economic Development Director, City of Thornton Economic Development

- ❖ Kim Woodworth, Executive Director, Economic Development Council of Colorado

9 – 10 a.m.

### PLENARY SESSION 1

**Economic Headquarters: A Strategic Command Briefing** | *Join us for a crucial "Strategic Command Briefing" at our Economic Headquarters.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

#### The Market Intelligence Unit (*Keynote Speakers*):

- ❖ Brian Lewandowski, Executive Director of the Business Research Division, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder
- ❖ Kate Watkins, State Demographer, Department of Local Affairs

10 – 10:30 a.m.

### SOLUTION SHOWCASE

**Unleashing Your Arsenal: Rapid-Fire Solutions for Real-World Missions** | *Prepare for a high-impact session where you'll discover the ultimate tools and strategies for tackling pressing economic and workforce development challenges*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

In this dynamic "lightning round," leading experts will rapidly demonstrate how their innovative approaches and resources can directly empower your work. Gain tangible value through quick, skills-building takeaways – your new power-ups – and witness real-world applications of solutions that can supercharge your initiatives.

*This interactive showcase is your opportunity to gather vital intelligence and connect with the resources you need to achieve your most critical missions.*

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

### BREAK | *CU Leeds School of Business!*

**Strategic Recharge: Powering Up for the Next Mission** | *Even Superheroes need a moment to regroup!*

**Location:** Heroes' Alley (*Main Hallway-Vendor Hall*)

10:45 – 11 a.m.

**MISSION UPDATE! Defending Colorado's Economy Against the Perils of P&C** | *The Property & Casualty (P&C) Fortress is under siege!*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

Join us for a critical mission briefing on the escalating threats facing Colorado's insurance market. We'll reveal the supervillains straining the system: rising reinsurance costs, increasing natural disaster frequency (averaging up to \$4 billion in annual damages), and legislative pressures. Discover how these forces are pushing homeowner premiums to record highs and causing insurers to retreat from high-risk areas. This session unpacks the narrow policy margin for error and outlines the balanced,

heroic efforts needed to promote disaster resilience and secure the long-term affordability and availability of coverage for all Coloradans.

**The Risk Rebalancer (Presenter):** Shaun Brog, Economist & Manager of Economic Competitiveness, Metro Denver EDC

11 – Noon

## PLENARY SESSION 2

**Fortifying Our Foundations: Blueprinting the Future of Affordable Housing** | *Join our League of Innovators for a critical "Strategic Briefing" on the state of affordable housing.*

This session will delve into the current affordable housing landscape, utilizing data-driven insights to navigate its complexities and unveil the innovative "blueprints" that promise a more equitable and sustainable future for our communities.

*Discover how we can collectively fortify our foundations and ensure housing stability for all.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

**Captain Capital (Moderator):** Steve Boice, Manager of Business Finance, CHFA; EDCC Board Ex-Officio

**The Blueprint Brigade (Panelists):**

- ❖ Sam Albrecht, Director, Office of Regulatory Oversight, DOLA
- ❖ Adam Berger, Founder, Adam Berger Development, LLC
- ❖ Nathan Peterson, Founder and CEO, Vederra Modular
- ❖ Walker Thrash, Managing Partner, Vertikal
- ❖ Jack Tiebout, Senior Program Manager, OEDIT

Noon – 1:15 p.m.

## LUNCH

**The ASCEND Engine: An Immersive Briefing on Our Next Mission** |

*Join us for an exclusive, immersive briefing on the NSF ASCEND Engine, a powerful new coalition ready to propel our region to the global stage.*

**Hosted by the Comcast!**

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

This is your chance to get a firsthand look at this heroic initiative, its core mission, and its strategic goals. Prepare to refuel and learn how you can become a vital part of this new alliance, securing your place in the next great chapter of Colorado's economic future.

**The Ascendant (Presenter):** Jeni Cross, Director of Co-Creation, NSF ASCEND Engine

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### SESSION 1

**The Rural Resilience Force |** *Not all heroes wear capes—some are forged in the heart of rural communities.*

**Location:** The Interrogation Room (*Fortino C-West*)

Join the masterminds behind the Workforce Resilience Program (WRP) to discover how to build a powerful and adaptable workforce. This session will reveal the strategies and tools needed to overcome the unique challenges of rural workforce development, arming you with the knowledge to cultivate a league of skilled professionals and fortify your community's economic future.

**The Resilience Ranger (Presenter):**

- ❖ Courtney Morris, Director of WBL/SE Colorado Regional Coordinator, Lamar Community College

### SESSION 2

**Sales Tax is King: Why Retail Recruitment is Your City's Superpower |** *Every superhero community needs a strong foundation to thrive.*

**Location:** The Situation Room (*Fortino C-East*)

In Colorado, sales tax is a crucial superpower, fueling essential services like public safety and infrastructure. This session will reveal how a strategic retail recruitment plan can be your ultimate tool for building a powerful municipal budget. Learn to detect shifting consumer trends and use best practices to fortify your community's financial strength and long-term sustainability.

**The Sales Tax Sentinel (Presenter):**

- ❖ Aaron Farmer, President, Retail Coach

### SESSION 3

**The Data Dilemma: Weighing a Tech Titan's Impact |** *Data centers can be a double-edged sword for any community. Are they a hero bringing capital and jobs, or a potential villain with high energy demands and land use challenges?*

**Location:** The Batcave (*Exhibit Hall A1*)

This panel assembles a team of industry leaders and economic development professionals to investigate the facts. Learn to analyze the opportunities, mitigate the risks, and decide if a data center is the right kind of superpower for your community.

**The Tech-Tradeoff Titans (Presenters):**

- ❖ Brittany Romano, Executive Director, Startup Colorado
- ❖ Michelle Solomon, Manager in the Electricity Program, Energy Innovation

- ❖ Lee Boughey, Vice President of Member Experience, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association
- ❖ James Eklund, Partner, Taft/

#### SESSION 4

**Site Selection Superpower: Unlocking Economic Development with X-Ray Vision** | *Tired of flying blind when scouting new locations? The economic development landscape requires more than guesswork—it requires X-Ray Vision.*

**Location:** The Strategy Chamber (*Exhibit Hall A2*)

Join GIS Webtech's heroes for a deep dive into how location intelligence transforms static data into a dynamic, competitive advantage. Learn to use their cutting-edge technology to instantly see beneath the surface, pinpointing the perfect site with surgical accuracy. We'll demonstrate how to wield the superpower of advanced mapping tools to visualize infrastructure, analyze demographics, and present compelling proposals that win deals. Stop searching and start seeing your path to success.

**The Tech Titan (Presenter):**

- ❖ Ron Bertasi, CEO, GIS Webtech

3 - 5 p.m.

*Boarding at 2:30 p.m.*

#### EXPEDITION 1 [\$\$\$ - Register Separately]

**Beyond the Rails: Exploring PuebloPlex and Swisspod Technologies** | *Join us for an immersive experience at the heart of Pueblo's innovation hub.*

We'll tour the sprawling **PuebloPlex**, a former military facility now revitalized as a center for economic growth. Then, we'll step into the future with a visit to **Swisspod Technologies'** testing facility to see hyperloop technology up close. Discover how this historic location and a pioneering company are shaping the future of high-speed transportation.

**Expedition Commanders (Presenters):**

- ❖ PuebloPlex Representative
- ❖ Swisspod Technologies Representative

2:45 – 3:45 p.m.

**[ROUND #1 BREAKOUT SESSIONS] MISSION CRITICAL: Building Your Super- Capacity** | *Join these concurrent tracks designed to equip economic development, workforce development, and city/county planning departments with the tools and strategies to amplify their impact and build robust operational capacity.*

Superheroes carefully select two (2) missions that best align with your personal growth and your organization's objectives to empower your team to overcome challenges and achieve heroic outcomes.



### TRACK 1

**A.I.nation: The League of Justice for the Digital Frontier** | *Join the League of Justice for the Digital Frontier and become an A.I.nation superhero!*

**Location:** The Interrogation Room (*Fortino C-West*)

In the ever-expanding digital frontier, your department is a fortress facing new and powerful forces. But with great power comes great responsibility, and the rise of AI tools presents a new set of challenges. This training will equip you with the essential superpowers to evaluate, adopt, and implement AI tools safely. Learn to navigate the treacherous landscapes of data privacy, understand the all-seeing powers of the Colorado AI Act, and master the arcane arts of other regulatory guidance. Arm yourself with knowledge and become the hero your department needs to champion a future where AI serves justice, not chaos.

**Captain Compliance (Presenter):**

❖ Jackie Benson, Partner, Taft/

### TRACK 2

**Supercharging Your Strategy: The Hero's Guide to Growth** | *What small teams, departments, and local organizations must do now to refocus and scale with purpose.*

**Location:** The Situation Room (*Fortino C-East*)

Every hero faces constant challenges, shifting demands, limited resources, and raising expectations. This session provides strategic blueprints to help you avoid "mission drift" and align your team to conquer chaos. Learn how to diagnose common breakdowns, build a resilient organization, and use a simple framework to lead from a place of clarity and power. Walk away with practical tools to supercharge not only your own work, but also to guide the communities and partners you serve.

**The Capacity Commander (Presenter):**

❖ Anna-Sophia Kristjansson, Founder & CEO, Lexicon Lens

### TRACK 3

**Data-Driven Superpowers: Proving Your Worth** | *To keep your mission alive, you must prove its value.*

**Location:** The Batcave (*Exhibit Hall A1*)

This session will equip you with the essential skills to advocate for your organization using data-driven storytelling. Learn to track, analyze, and present your successes in a compelling way, turning long-term, hard-to-quantify progress into undeniable evidence of your impact. You'll leave



with the tools to fortify your budget, secure your funding, and ensure your program's survival even when resources are tight.

**The Metrics Magicians (Presenters):**

- ❖ Tim Komarek, Ph.D., Co-Director of REDI CSU, and Associate Professor of Economics
- ❖ Dawn Thilmany, Ph.D., Co-Director of the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Center, Co-Director of REDI CSU, and Professor of Agricultural Economics
- ❖ Rebecca Hill, Ph.D., Co-Director of the Colorado AgrAbility Project, CSU Extension Professor, and REDI CSU Affiliate
- ❖ Derek Jones, Senior Continuous Quality Assurance Analyst, Denver Office of Economic Development and Opportunity

**TRACK 4**

**The Funding Formula: Grant Writing for Mission Success |** *Master the art of securing vital resources through effective grant writing.*

**Location:** The Strategy Chamber (*Exhibit Hall A2*)

This "Grant Writing 101" session will break down the essential components of successful grant applications, providing you with the "secret formula" to articulate your mission, demonstrate impact, and unlock the funding necessary to power your economic and workforce development initiatives.

**The Resource Retriever (Grant Guru):**

- ❖ Mistalynn Meyeraan, Deputy Director and CO-Regional Grants Navigator, Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC)

3:45 – 4 p.m.

**BREAK | CORE Electric!**

**Inter-Track Briefing: Strategic Selection & Power-Up Pause |**

*Superheroes, take a moment for a crucial inter-track briefing and power-up pause before diving into your next mission!*

**Location:** Heroes' Alley (*Main Hallway-Vendor Hall*)

This break is your opportunity to recharge, reflect on the insights gained, and strategically select your second of the four concurrent breakout sessions that best align with your personal growth and your organization's objectives. Grab a quick refreshment, connect with fellow professionals, and prepare to amplify your expertise in the tracks of your choice.

4 – 5 p.m.

**[ROUND #2 BREAKOUT SESSIONS] MISSION CRITICAL: Building Your Super-Capacity |** *Superheroes carefully select two (2) missions that best align with your personal growth and your organization's objectives*

*to empower your team to overcome challenges and achieve heroic outcomes.*

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**A.I.nation: The League of Justice for the Digital Frontier** | *Join the League of Justice for the Digital Frontier and become an A.I.nation superhero!*

**Location:** The Interrogation Room (*Fortino C-West*)

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- ❖ Tim Komarek, Co-Director of REDI CSU, and Associate Professor of Economics
- ❖ Dawn Thilmany, Co-Director of the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Center, Co-Director of REDI CSU, and Professor of Agricultural Economics

**TRACK 4**

**The Funding Formula: Grant Writing for Mission Success** | *Master the art of securing vital resources through effective grant writing.*

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**The Resource Retriever (Grant Guru):**

- ❖ Mistalynn Meyeraan, Deputy Director and CO-Regional Grants Navigator, Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC)

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**DINNER ON YOUR OWN**

**Superheroes' Respite – A Culinary Reconnaissance Mission** | *Even the mightiest Superheroes need to refuel!*

Take this opportunity for a "Superheroes' Respite" and embark on your own "Culinary Reconnaissance Mission." Explore Pueblo's diverse dining options, savor local flavors, and gather with your fellow Eco Devo Superheroes to experience the city's vibrant culinary scene.

*Please note: Dinner is on your own, allowing you the flexibility to choose your own adventure and recharge with your colleagues. A list of restaurants will be located at Visit Pueblo's Vendor Table.*

Tuesday, October 28

7 a.m.

## REGISTRATION OPENS IN MAIN HALLWAY OF CONFERENCE CENTER

7:30 – 9 a.m.

### BREAKFAST

**Dawn Patrol Fuel-Up – Energizing Our Superheroes** | *Rise and shine, Superheroes! Kick off Day 2 with our "Dawn Patrol Fuel-Up," a vital session designed to energize you for another day of impactful missions.*

**Hosted by** *Xcel Energy!*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

*Power up your morning with breakfast and a fireside chat featuring Nathan Ohle, President & CEO of IEDC. He'll be joined by Adam Krueger, Board Chair of EDCC and Economic Development Director for the City of Thornton, and SeonAh Kendall, Secretary & Treasurer of IEDC and Economic Health Director for the City of Fort Collins. Together, they'll share what's driving change in economic development and highlight how Colorado's economic developers can turn challenges into opportunities and lead boldly into the future. Thanks to our partners at Xcel Energy, this session will fuel your day with insights, inspiration, and a forward-looking call to action.*

#### *The ED-Catalyst (Keynote Speaker):*

- ❖ Nathan Ohle, President & CEO, International Economic Development Council (IEDC)
- ❖ SeonAh Kendall, CPA, Director of Economic Health, City of Fort Collins, IEDC Board Director
- ❖ Adam Krueger, CEcD, Director of Economic Development, City of Thornton, and EDCC's Board Chair

9 – 9:30 a.m.

### PLENARY SESSION 3

**Legislative Watchtower: Scanning the Policy Horizon** | *Gather at the "Legislative Watchtower" for a critical update on the public policy landscape impacting Colorado's business community, Economic, and Workforce Development.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

This plenary session will provide a comprehensive "2025 Legislative Review," analyzing key victories and challenges from the past year, followed by a strategic "2026 What to Expect" forecast.

We will also take this opportunity to honor our legislative champion with the "Lifetime Achievement" award, recognizing those who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to our shared mission.

#### *The Policy Paladin's (Presenters):*

- ❖ Jennifer Cassell, EDCC's Lobbyist, Bowditch and Cassell
- ❖ Rich Werner, EDCC's Public Policy Chair, President & CEO, Upstate Colorado

9:30 – 10 a.m.

#### PLENARY SESSION 4

**Liquid Power: Colorado's True Super Resource** | *Every Colorado economy has a hidden superpower: water.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

Hear a status update and learn how communities across the Headwaters State can turn water challenges into catalysts for innovation, resilience, and sustainable prosperity.

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

**HydroCatalyst (Presenter):**

- ❖ James Eklund, Partner, Taft/

10 – 10:15 a.m.

#### BREAK | *Black Hills Energy!*

**Strategic Readiness: Gearing Up for Concurrent Missions** | *Superheroes, it's time to prepare for your next set of specialized missions!*

**Location:** Heroes' Alley (*Main Hallway-Vendor Hall*)

This break is your opportunity for "Strategic Readiness"—a chance to grab a coffee, connect with your fellow economic and workforce development professionals, and mentally prepare for the diverse and impactful concurrent sessions ahead. Choose your next area of focus and gear up to amplify your expertise and contribute to our collective success.

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

#### PLENARY SESSION 5

**The Fiscal Frontier: Financing Colorado's Future** | *Join us for a strategic briefing on the legislative forces shaping Colorado's fiscal future.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

This session will delve into the state's budget challenges and explore potential solutions from diverse perspectives. Our experts will present a balanced and in-depth discussion, analyzing various approaches to stabilizing and strengthening Colorado's fiscal health. We'll examine policy proposals aimed at addressing budget woes, from tax reform and spending priorities to economic development strategies.

*This session is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the difficult choices and opportunities facing Colorado. By hearing from different viewpoints, you will be armed with the knowledge to navigate this critical frontier and contribute to a more secure financial future for our state.*

**Undercover Budget Stabilizers (Presenters):**

- ❖ Chris deGruy Kennedy, President, The Bell Policy Center
- ❖ DJ Summers, Director of Communications & Research Operations, Common Sense Institute, Colorado

11:15 – 12:15 p.m.

**PLENARY SESSION 6**

**Federal Fortress: Unlocking Mission-Critical Funding** | *Navigating Federal Economic Development Funding, Opportunities, and Challenges*

**Hosted by:** *Colorado Secretary of State!*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

In an ever-changing landscape, understanding the federal funding fortress is a heroic feat. With the FY2026 budget secured, join us for a critical overview of major federal programs like IIJA and CHIPS. Mirielle Burgoyne will reveal how agencies are translating these allocations into actionable programs, helping you identify new opportunities and navigate challenges to maximize economic growth and resilience in your community.

**The Budgeteer (Presenter):**

- ❖ Mirielle Burgoyne, Deputy Executive Director, National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.

**LUNCH**

**Aligning Our Superpowers: Economic Intelligence Lunch** | *Take a break from your heroic missions to join us for a crucial mid-day mission briefing.*

**Hosted by:** *Office of Economic Development & International Trade!*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall A & B*)

This session is your mission briefing! Join our alliance of economic superheroes—to share intelligence and guarantee collective impact. We'll get crucial updates from **OEDIT** on their latest strategic directives and learn how to best deploy **Opportunity Zones 2.0** as our secret weapon for catalytic projects. Finally, we'll reveal the next major phase of **CO|Align**, ensuring all allies are perfectly positioned to tackle Colorado's economic challenges and secure a prosperous future.

**The Catalyst Network (Presenters):**

- ❖ Leslie Hylton-Hinga, Special Projects Director, OEDIT
- ❖ Eve Lieberman, Executive Director, OEDIT
- ❖ Laura Lewis Marchino, Chair, Colorado Association of Regional Organizations (CARO) and Executive Director, Region 9 EDD

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE RETREAT**

**Location:** Advisory Alcove (*Berstein Brothers*)

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### SESSION 1

#### **Steel Veins of Commerce: Rail & Supply Chain Super-Strategies |**

*Unleash the hidden power of your community!*

**Location:** The Interrogation Room (*Fortino C-West*)

Unleash the hidden power of your community! In a world of evolving demands, discover how rail infrastructure acts as the steel veins of commerce, providing a strategic advantage for economic development and robust, circular supply chains. See how one Colorado organization is using rail as one of many innovative solutions to close the gap on a sustainable, circular economy.

#### *Captain Conductor (Presenters):*

- ❖ Lindsay Van Meter, Regional Manager Economic Development – CO/WY/UT/NV, BNSF Railway
- ❖ Laurie Johnson, Founder & CEO, Circular Colorado
- ❖ Ryan Dwiggins, Director of Economic Development, JLL

### SESSION 2

#### **POW! DEN vs. The Forces of Chaos | Soar into a discussion on the**

*economic impact of air travel.*

**Location:** The Situation Room (*Fortino C-East*)

KABOOM! The first half of 2025 has been a high stakes battle against the forces of tariffs, economic uncertainty, and geopolitical villains. But DEN, one of the world's mightiest airports, is ready for the fight! Join us as we go behind the scenes to review the epic struggle for air travel demand, see how our flagship airlines are using their powers to adjust to the new reality, and peer into the future to see what's next for passenger traffic in the coming years.

#### *The Air Travel Avengers (Presenters):*

- ❖ Laura Jackson, Vice President, Air Service Development & Aviation Research, Denver International Airport (DEN)
- ❖ Howard Mann, Vice President, Campbell-Hill Aviation Group

### SESSION 3

#### **The Childcare Crisis: Assembling Your Alliance of Heroes | Every hero knows a great team can overcome any crisis.**

**Location:** The Batcave (*Exhibit Hall A1*)

Join the architects of the La Plata Early Childcare Strategic Investment Plan to uncover the true economic cost of the childcare crisis and the transformative power of collaboration. This session will share the critical



data that established a new baseline for community action and provide a roadmap for building your own alliance of public, private, and philanthropic partners to create and implement sustainable solutions.

**The Alliance Architects (Presenters):**

- ❖ Sarah Tober, Executive Director, La Plata Economic Development Alliance
- ❖ Heather Hawk, Executive Director, Early Childhood Council of La Plata County
- ❖ Jason Callegari, Initiatives Director, Buell Foundation

**SESSION 4**

**The Resource Rangers: Stretching Every Dollar for Economic Growth**

*| Assemble with the Resource Rangers as economic development professionals from diverse jurisdictions share their success blueprints!*

**Location:** The Strategy Chamber (*Exhibit Hall A2*)

Our hero panelists will reveal their journey and strategies in business retention, attraction, local business support, and workforce development that amplify impact regardless of your organization's size or scope. This isn't about having the biggest budget - it's about making every dollar count and demonstrating measurable results to stakeholders.

**The Resource Rangers (Presenters):**

- ❖ Cindie Perry, Business Development Manager, Bludot
- ❖ Max Daffron, Economic Development Manager, Town of Frederick
- ❖ Sarah Miley, Economic Development Specialist, Arvada EDA
- ❖ William Slate, Economic Development Manager, City of Englewood
- ❖ Janine Ledingham, Associate Director of Economic Development Larimer County Economic Development

3 - 5 p.m.

*Boarding at 2:30 p.m.*

**EXPEDITION 2 [\$\$\$ - Register Separately]**

**Pueblo's Urban Crusaders: A Tour of Renewal** | *Join Pueblo's Urban Crusaders, the Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority (PURA) and Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI), for a behind-the-scenes tour of Pueblo's heroic revitalization efforts.*

Discover how the city uses its powerful tools—Urban Renewal and Tax Increment Financing (TIF)—to transform areas, rebuild communities, and spur economic growth. Aboard the shuttle and witness past missions, current projects, and the future blueprint for Pueblo's ongoing heroic legacy.

**Hosted by:** *Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority & Downtown Colorado Inc.!*

2:45 – 3:45 p.m.

**[ROUND #1 BREAKOUT SESSIONS] MISSION CRITICAL: Empowering Your Community's Super-System** | *This afternoon's workshops are designed to equip you with the strategic tools and insights needed to build a resilient and thriving community.*

Superheroes carefully select two (2) missions that will best empower your team to overcome challenges and achieve heroic outcomes for your community.

### TRACK 1

**The Entrepreneurial Forge: Igniting Innovation & Community Vitality** | *Step into "The Entrepreneurial Forge" and discover the powerful tools, groundbreaking projects, and essential resources being utilized across Colorado to support our local entrepreneur ecosystem.*

**Location:** The Interrogation Room (Fortino C-West)

Hear directly from the experts on how these initiatives are igniting innovation, creating jobs, and forging new vitality for the communities they serve.

**The Capital Catalyst (Moderator):** Nim Patel, Chief Operating Officer, Colorado Enterprise Fund

**The Innovation Architects (Panelists):**

- ❖ Brittany Romano, Executive Director, Startup Colorado
- ❖ Allison Seabeck, Executive Director, Warehouse Innovation Business Accelerator
- ❖ Brian Estrada, Executive Director, Southern Colorado SBDC

### TRACK 2

**The Civic Nexus: Forging Government-Economic Development Alliances** | *Explore the vital connection between government leadership and economic development success.*

**Location:** The Situation Room (Fortino C-East)

This session, featuring insights from the Metro Mayors Caucus, will delve into how to build powerful alliances between public policy and economic growth. Learn best practices for effectively onboarding and empowering elected officials to become champions for economic prosperity in your community.

**The Governance Guardians (Presenters):**

- ❖ Heidi Williams, former Mayor for the City of Thornton, Executive Director, Metro Mayors Caucus & Civic Results
- ❖ Mayor Marissa Harmon, City of Lone Tree

### TRACK 3

**The Alignment Force: Co-Creating Colorado's Skilled Workforce** | *This session is your Strategic Synchronization Briefing. Several high-level*

*strategic plans across the state—from the WIOA State Plan to CEDS plans and Regional Talent Action Plans—all call for one critical action: addressing the urgent needs of Colorado employers.*

**Location:** The Batcave (*Exhibit Hall A1*)

Join The Opportunity Nexus Squad to talk through how we can leverage the specialized powers of Sector Partnerships and Talent Pipeline Management approaches. Learn how to streamline industry feedback and implement the goals of these key strategic plans to co-create a skilled workforce. This is a critical discussion for aligning our resources and launching a unified attack on the talent gap.

**The Sector Partnership Strategist (*Moderator*):**

- ❖ Bobbie Wolfe, Senior Consultant for Sector Partnerships and Industry, Colorado Workforce Development Council

**The Opportunity Nexus Squad (*Presenters*):**

- ❖ Erica Romero, Business Relations Manager, Pikes Peak Workforce Center
- ❖ Patrick Garrett, Sector and Industry Engagement Supervisor, Workforce Colorado Rural Alliance
- ❖ PJ Chenoweth, Executive Director, Baca County Economic Development Commission

#### **TRACK 4**

**Forging the Future: Manufacturer's EDGE's Upgrade** | *Every hero needs a strategic upgrade to stay ahead of the game.*

**Location:** The Strategy Chamber (*Exhibit Hall A2*)

Join the masterminds behind the new Manufacturer's EDGE and discover how their revamp will help you equip manufacturers with the cutting-edge tools, resources, and strategies needed to dominate the global marketplace. Learn how this powerful transformation will help businesses build a more resilient supply chain, unlock new opportunities for growth, and forge a heroic future for Colorado's manufacturing industry.

**The Architects of Industry (*Presenters*):**

- ❖ Glenn Plagens, CEO, Manufacturer's Edge
- ❖ Rob Newbold, Vice President of Client Success, Manufacturer's Edge
- ❖ Ed Olivo, Director of Workforce & Community Partnerships, Manufacturer's Edge

3:45 – 4 p.m.

**BREAK** | *The Retail Coach!*

**Strategic Readiness: Gearing Up for Concurrent Missions** | *Superheroes, it's time to prepare for your next set of specialized missions!*

**Location:** Heroes' Alley (*Main Hallway-Vendor Hall*)

This break is your opportunity for "Strategic Readiness"—a chance to grab a coffee, connect with your fellow economic and workforce development professionals, and mentally prepare for the diverse and impactful concurrent sessions ahead. Choose your next area of focus and gear up to amplify your expertise and contribute to our collective success.

4 - 5 p.m.

**[ROUND #2 BREAKOUT SESSIONS] MISSION CRITICAL: Empowering Your Community's Super-System** | *Superheroes carefully select two (2) missions that will best empower your team to overcome challenges and achieve heroic outcomes for your community.*

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**The Governance Guardians (*Presenters*):**

- ❖ Heidi Williams Executive Director, Metro Mayors Caucus & Civic Results

- ❖ Mayor Marissa Harmon, City of Lone Tree

### TRACK 3

**WIDE: The Data League — Unmasking the Power Behind Workforce Intelligence** | *Every superhero team needs a group of brilliant strategists working behind the scenes — and that's where the Workforce Intelligence Data Experts (WIDE) come in.*

This powerhouse alliance of data heroes ensures that Colorado's workforce system has the insight, precision, and evidence needed to drive impactful decisions.

In this session, members of WIDE will reveal how they harness workforce data to strengthen economic and community development efforts statewide. Learn how their expertise — spanning labor market intelligence, return-on-investment analysis, and data standardization — helps workforce and business leaders make informed, future-focused decisions.

Join Barbara Larson, Derek Jones, and Patrick Holwell as they “unmask” the ways WIDE can serve as your go-to resource for workforce intelligence and collaborative innovation.

#### Succession Strategist (Presenter):

- ❖ Barbara Larsen, Business Analyst, Workforce Boulder County
- ❖ Derek Jones, Senior Continuous Quality Assurance Analyst, Denver Office of Economic Development and Opportunity
- ❖ Patrick Holwell, Workforce Economist, Arapahoe/Douglas Works Development Board

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- ❖ Ed Olivo, Director of Workforce & Community Partnerships, Manufacturer's Edge

6 – 10 p.m.

**SUPERHEROES' GALA: The EDIE Awards & the League of Change Makers After Party** | *Join us for a heroic evening of triumph and camaraderie at the Heroes' Gala.*

**Hosted by** *Dinner, Ceremony, Awards Sponsor: City of Pueblo; Reception Sponsor: BNSF*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

We'll kick off this super-celebration with a special presentation of the EDIE Awards, honoring the extraordinary achievements and heroic missions of Colorado's economic development champions. Following the ceremony, the festivities will continue at the League of Change Makers After Party, your chance to connect with fellow heroes, share your victories, and celebrate the incredible work being done across the state.

**Master of Ceremonies:**

- ❖ Adam Krueger, 2025 EDCC Board Chair, Economic Development Director, City of Thornton Economic Development

Wednesday, October 29

**WORKFORCE WEDNESDAY** | *Your ultimate training ground!*

Join fellow professionals to unlock the synergy between economic and workforce development, which is a powerful combo for boosting economic growth and job creation. This collaborative platform, brought to you by **EDCC** and the **Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association**, offers a unique opportunity for knowledge-sharing, networking, and activating your own workforce development superpowers. It's time to learn from Colorado's best and help build a stronger, more vibrant economy!

7:30 – 9 a.m.

**BREAKFAST**

**Dawn Patrol Fuel-Up – Energizing Our Superheroes** | *Rise and shine, Superheroes! Kick off Day 3 of the conference with our "Dawn Patrol Fuel-Up," a vital session designed to energize you for another day of impactful missions.*

**Hosted by** *Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association!*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

Join us for a delicious breakfast as we power up with our partners at Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association, who are dedicated to fueling our communities and our efforts. This is your chance to recharge, connect with fellow economic and workforce development professionals, and prepare to tackle the challenges ahead with renewed strength and clarity.

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

**PLENARY SESSION 8**

**The Workforce System: Your Strategic Super-Map** | *Join this immersive panel to get a high-level overview of the Colorado Workforce System and how to use it as your strategic super-map.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

You'll learn how the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment's system operates to support economic growth and address the needs of local businesses. Discover inspiring success stories and examples of deliberate partnerships that have led to job creation, workforce preparedness, and business growth. This session is key to unlocking the full potential of our workshops and strategically leveraging the workforce system.

**The System Sync (Moderator):** Britta Blodgett, Assistant Director – Communications and Collaboration



**The Navigators of Talent (Presenters):**

- ❖ Matthew Broker, MS, MBA, Regional Veterans Employment Representative, Veterans' Employment Services
- ❖ Erica Romero, Business Relations Manager, Pikes Peak Workforce Center
- ❖ Nancy Zimmer, Work-Based Learning Lead/Apprenticeship Navigator, Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

**PLENARY SESSION 9**

**Connecting Colorado: The Ultimate System Upgrade** | *Every hero needs a powerful digital infrastructure.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

This session chronicles the epic evolution of Connecting Colorado and the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment (CDLE)'s digital ecosystem. Discover how data, automation, and accessibility improvements are transforming legacy systems into innovative platforms, enabling businesses and job seekers to connect faster and more effectively than ever before.

**The Strategic Coordinator (Presenter):**

- ❖ Christy Gonzales, Statewide Workforce Administrator, CDLE, Division of Employment & Training

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

**BREAK | Colorado Workforce Development Council!**

**Strategic Readiness: Gearing Up for Concurrent Missions** | *Superheroes, it's time to prepare for your next set of specialized missions!*

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10:45 – 11:15 a.m.

**PLENARY SESSION 10**

**A Quantum Leap into the Future** | *Heroes know that fueling tomorrow's workforce requires a quantum leap in education.*

**Location:** EDCC's Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

Discover how this initiative is empowering K-12 educators by connecting them with STEM industries to ensure students gain the real-world skills needed to tackle future challenges.

**The Future Forger (Presenter):**

- ❖ Kelly Reeser, Business Development Supervisor & Teacher Externship Specialist, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

11:15 – 11:45 a.m.

### PLENARY SESSION 11

**WIDE: The Data League — Unmasking the Power Behind Workforce Intelligence** | *Every superhero team needs a group of brilliant strategists working behind the scenes — and that’s where the Workforce Intelligence Data Experts (WIDE) come in.*

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11:45 – Noon

### PLENARY SESSION 12

**The Visionary: Forging the Future of Our Workforce** | *Every league needs a visionary to lead the way.*

**Location:** EDCC’s Command Center (*Fortino Grand Hall*)

From the EDCC's Command Center, receive a powerful closing keynote sharing a heroic vision for the future of workforce development and economic growth. Learn why constant innovation and teamwork are critical superpowers for tackling new challenges and driving positive, ongoing economic success.

#### The Workforce League Director (Presenter):

- ❖ Tami Grant, President of RMWDA, Deputy Director of the Weld County Department of Human Services

Noon | Conclusion

**YOUR MISSION IS COMPLETE, SUPERHEROES!**

Now, it's time to take everything you've learned and put it into action. Go forth, forge new alliances, and use your newfound powers to build stronger, more resilient, and more vibrant communities across Colorado.

*The world is waiting for your next heroic move!*