



Drive | Lead | Succeed
CONFERENCE
Economic Development Council of Colorado

CHAMONIX HOTEL CRIPPLE CREEK

SEP. 27-30, 2026



Agenda

(Updated September 20, 2026)

"Striking Gold: 50 Years of Grit, Growth and Prosperity."

Title Sponsor: CHFA

Strategic Partner: Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association

Staking Our Claim: Why Cripple Creek? Why Now?

In the 1890s, bold visionaries, relentless prospectors, and hardworking pioneers converged on Cripple Creek to unearth what became one of the greatest gold strikes in American history. They built infrastructure out of raw ambition, turned rugged terrain into thriving communities, and laid the economic bedrock for the State of Colorado.

Fast forward to 2026, and Colorado stands at an unprecedented milestone: a historic Triple Anniversary marking EDCC's 50th Golden Anniversary, Colorado's 150th Sesquicentennial, and America's 250th Semi-quincentennial (*as well as the Colorado Mining Association and CU Boulder celebrating their 150th!*)

Today's economic development leaders are the modern prospectors. We don't wield pickaxes; we forge workforce pipelines, support business retention, expansion, and attraction, navigate legislative landscapes, build infrastructure, and cultivate vibrant communities.

For five decades, **we've driven, we've led, and we've succeeded**, shaping the economic landscape of our great state.

We chose Cripple Creek to celebrate our 50th year because true economic resilience is built on solid ground. Set against the backdrop of Battle Mountain and surrounded by rich mining heritage, this conference is a tribute to where Colorado's economic story began, and an invitation to stake our claim on the next 50 years of statewide prosperity.

Friday/Saturday, September 27

Make it a Golden Getaway! *We know that building resilient communities is hard work, which is why we've secured your discounted conference hotel rate for two days before and two days after the event. Bring the family along to explore the historic gold mines, ride the narrow-gauge railroad, visit the casinos, or hike the stunning trails around Pikes Peak. Enjoy some well-deserved downtime, during the peak of leaf peeping season, and before the real prospecting begins!*

Sunday, September 27

8 – 2 p.m.

THE PROSPECTOR'S SCRAMBLE GOLF FUNDRAISER

LOCATION: Shining Mountain Golf Course | 100 Shining Mountain Ln, Woodland Park, CO. 80863 – *Unearth Golden Opportunities on the Green*

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED | Deadline: September 18th

Don't leave your luck on the sidelines—kick off the 50th Anniversary conference with high-stakes fun, high-altitude views of Pikes Peak, and the best networking of the week! The Prospector's Scramble is where statewide connections are forged *before* the main stage even opens.

Best of all, every swing serves a higher purpose: **Your registration fee does more than buy a round—it directly powers the EDCC Scholarship Fund**, directly breaking down financial barriers and upskilling the next generation of Colorado economic developers. Spots fill fast and bragging rights are on the line. Stake your claim, support our industry's future leaders, and join us on the green! No prior skills required!

4 – 6 p.m.

WELCOME RECEPTION: Stake your Claim in Cripple Creek!

LOCATION: Cripple Creek's Pocket Park

Hosted by: **El Pomar Foundation**

Welcome to the historic heart of Colorado's gold country!

Join your fellow economic, community, and workforce development trailblazers for a relaxed evening at Cripple Creek's Pocket Park. This welcome reception is your official kickoff to the Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference, the perfect opportunity to pan for new connections, swap stories from the field, and form strategic alliances before we begin digging into the week's sessions.

Experience the grit and hospitality of Cripple Creek while networking with a community of professionals dedicated to building a prosperous future.

6 – 8 p.m.

EDCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LOCATION: Don Juan's Cocina (*located within the hotel property*)

Explore, Dine & Stake Your Claim! *Welcome to town! Sunday evening is yours to explore the historic charm, vibrant energy, and rich heritage of Cripple Creek and Victor. Grab a group of colleagues, explore Bennett or Victor Avenues, and check out the local dining scene to kick off your conference experience. Dinner tonight is on your own, so we highly recommend making reservations or planning ahead with your crew!*

[Chamonix Restaurants](#) | [Cripple Creek Restaurants](#) | [Victor Restaurants](#) |

[Woodland Park Restaurants](#) - [Shop & Dine Passport](#)

Monday, September 28

8 – 8:30 a.m.

CONFERENCE ORIENTATION

LOCATION: The Petite Ballroom

Are you new to EDCC or EDCC's Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference? This event is for you! Kick off your conference experience with a dynamic orientation, helping you maximize your time as an economic, community, and workforce development practitioner. Join us to learn how to unleash your prospecting skills and connect with the incredible mentors and mentees in our program.

Hosted by: EDCC's Professional Development Committee

8 - 10 a.m.

BREAKFAST

A light breakfast will be served starting at 8 am. Conference kicks off at 9 a.m.

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Hosted by: Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association (RMWDA)

9 – 9:30 a.m.

CONFERENCE KICK-OFF & WELCOME: Staking your Claim | The moment has arrived... Trailblazers, it's time to DIG IN!

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Welcome to the official launch of the Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference. Join us for our opening "Claim Stake Briefing," where we will formally welcome our modern-day prospectors - *our network of economic, workforce, and community champions* - to this year's historic event.

As we celebrate a tremendous triple-anniversary year, prepare to be inspired as we set the stage for three days of high-yield insights, strategic connections, and collaborative action. Get ready to grab your tools, coordinate your efforts, and embark on a mission to unearth economic prosperity across Colorado!

The Prospecting Pioneers (Presenters):

- ❖ Steve Boice, Manager, Business Finance, Colorado Housing & Finance Authority
- ❖ Tyler Purvis, 2026 EDCC Board Chair | Community Development Director/ Assistant City Administrator, City of Brush!
- ❖ Tami Grant, President, Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association (RMWDA) | Deputy Director of the Weld County Department of Human Services
- ❖ Kim Woodworth, Executive Director | Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC)
- ❖ Mayor Annie Durham, City of Cripple Creek

9:30 – 9:45 a.m.

50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: The Foundations of Colorado's Growth + EDIE Awards Announcements

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

PLENARY SESSION 1: Panning for Progress | Population Trends & Business Confidence

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

What lies ahead on Colorado's economic horizon? In an era defined by constant shift, economic developers must pan through the noise to find the nuggets of truth that drive sustainable growth. Join State Demographer, Neil Marquez, and CU Leeds Business Research Director, Brian Lewandowski, for our annual deep dive into Colorado's population dynamics, workforce migration, and business confidence metrics. Equipping you with the latest data and demographic insights, this session delivers the economic intelligence you need to navigate Colorado's evolving landscape, foster regional resilience, and strike gold in your community's economic future.

The Data Claim-Stakers (Presenters):

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

10:45 – 11:45 a.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

PLENARY SESSION 2: Unearthing Talent | A Collaborative Strategy for Colorado's Future-Ready Workforce

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

In a rapidly evolving economy, a community's greatest resource isn't just buried in the ground, it's found in its people. Colorado has moved beyond siloed programming to build a unified, data-driven workforce ecosystem designed to mine, refine, and deploy top-tier talent. This session reveals how state agencies strategically align education, credentials of value, and industry needs using the annual Talent Pipeline Report. Join our panel of workforce assayers to learn how real-time labor data and sector partnerships are forging the high-demand skills businesses need to strike gold in today's market.

Head Assayer (Moderator): Kelly Reeser, Teacher Externship Specialist, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)

The Talent Assayers (Panelists):

- ❖ Grace Crain-Wright, PhD, Director, Colorado Space Institute, Arapahoe Community College (ACC)
- ❖ Sami Mooney, Education Consultant, Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- ❖ Stephanie Mufic, Associate Director of Strategic Engagement, CDLE
- ❖ Madelyn Oaks, Education Alignment Specialist, Apprenticeship Colorado a Division of CDLE - Employment and Training
- ❖ Dr. Keith Richard, Vice Chancellor of Workforce Solutions and Innovation, Colorado Community College System (CCCS)

- 11:45 – Noon **50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: Resilience, Rebuilding & Regionalism + EDIE Awards Announcements**
- Noon – 1:30 p.m. **NETWORKING LUNCH & CO|ALIGN UPDATE**
LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom
Hosted by: **Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA)**
- 1:30 – 1:45 p.m. **50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: Economic Diversification & Innovation + EDIE Awards Announcements**
- 1:45 – 5:15 p.m. **TOUR 1 | Striking Gold at the Source: Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine Tour**
REGISTRATION REQUIRED: Passenger van will pick up at hotel; space is limited
 Go behind the scenes of Colorado's rich mining heritage and modern economic engine with an exclusive tour of the active Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine. Experience firsthand how a historic 1890s gold rush site evolved into a modern, large-scale surface mining operation that continues to drive the regional economy. Guided by industry experts, attendees will explore the massive geology, advanced recovery operations, and the community partnerships that keep this historic claim thriving today.
- 2:15 – 3:15 p.m. **URBAN**
Workshop 1: Every Day is Festivus! Business Retention Expansion Edition
LOCATION: The Petite Ballroom (Mont Blanc, Verbier, Zermatt)
 Made famous by *Seinfeld*, Frank Costanza's secular holiday of Festivus is known for an aluminum pole, the "airing of grievances," and "feats of strength." Sound suspiciously like a Business Retention & Expansion visit? When meeting local business owners, you'll almost certainly hear what they hate about city hall (grievances) before taking a tour while they brag about their triumphs (feats of strength). Join us as we turn these everyday BRE challenges into true "Festivus miracles"—because economic development really is a "*Festivus for the rest of us!*"
Chief of Festivus (Presenter): Derrek Jerred, Economic Development Manager, City of Greeley
- RURAL**
Workshop 2: The Rural Resilience Playbook: Navigating Leadership and Growth
LOCATION: The Aspen Mine Center
 Rural economic development takes true grit, especially when shifting local councils and high turnover threaten to collapse your hard-earned progress. In small communities where the learning curve for new officials is steep, keeping long-term economic strategy on track requires a sturdy playbook. This session moves beyond the basic mechanics of rural development to explore how resilient communities navigate leadership gaps and political cycles without abandoning their economic vision. Join our panel of seasoned frontier guides to discover battle-tested case

studies and practical strategies for maintaining stability, protecting workforce investments, and striking long-term prosperity, no matter who holds the gavel.

Trail Boss (Moderator): Bobby Tech, City Administrator, City of Victor

Trailblazers (Panelists):

- ❖ Kami Collins, Rural Opportunity Office, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT)
- ❖ Curtis Esquibel, Senior Director of Communications and Community Engagement, Boettcher Foundation
- ❖ Kelly Flenniken, Executive Director, Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI)
- ❖ Todd Leopold, Central Regional Manager, Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 3: Fault Lines & Fortune Prospecting for Prosperity in the New Labor Landscape

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Hosted by: Lightcast

The modern labor market is experiencing a massive structural disruption fueled by geopolitics, AI, and demographic labor shortages. This session uses decades of Lightcast research to analyze how these overlapping "fault lines" threaten workforce planning and regional competitiveness. By reframing talent as the central economic constraint, the report provides concrete data and practical policy implications for modern workforce challenges. Join us to uncover an evidence-forward playbook for adapting - *and striking gold* - when the ground shakes beneath your feet.

The Fault Line Surveyor (Presenter): Nathan Foss, Labor Market Analytics Expert, Lightcast

URBAN/RURAL/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

Workshop 4: From Barriers to Breakthroughs: How to Make Your City Small-Business-Ready

LOCATION: The Triple Crown Casino

Whether you're an entrepreneur or a city official, outdated regulations and costly permitting fees often stifle local growth. In this collaborative session, *Cities Work* shares nationwide best practices to help you identify and remove these regulatory barriers. Participants will leave with a practical toolkit to simplify local rules, engage key decision-makers, and pave the way for small business success.

The Municipal Path-Finders (Presenters):

- ❖ Dylan DelliSanti, Policy Associate, Cities Work
- ❖ Laura Kelly, Activism Coordinator, Institute for Justice

3:45 – 4:45 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 1: Yes. And... Reclaiming Colorado's Business Narrative

LOCATION: The Petite Ballroom (Mont Blanc, Verbier, Zermatt)

Polarized debates over Colorado's economy make practical, data-backed communications more essential than ever. Join Denver South and Denver: Best Return on Life to explore the "Yes. And..." framework, a powerful tool for addressing community challenges without losing control of the positive narrative. Through collaborative exercises, attendees will learn to turn workforce and demographic data into compelling, low-cost regional stories. Walk away with practical messaging templates, research tools, and adaptable assets for your own market.

The Master Frontier Storytellers (Presenter):

- ❖ Erin Schneiderman, Director of Marketing & Communications, Denver South
- ❖ Andrea Fulton, Executive Director, Denver: Best Return on Life

RURAL

Workshop 2: Prospecting for Capital Unlocking USDA Resources for Rural Economic Prosperity

LOCATION: The Aspen Mine Center

Building a thriving rural community takes more than grit, it takes the right capital and tools to strike long-term prosperity. In this session, discover how USDA Rural Development programs provide the financial bedrock and technical assistance needed to fortify rural Colorado. From upgrading vital infrastructure and building housing to revitalizing historic Main Streets and fueling small business growth, learn how these key programs act as powerful catalysts for job creation and community renewal. Join us to find out how to stake your claim on federal funding and transform your local economy from a quiet outpost into a bustling, resilient boomtown.

The Rural Claim Warden (Presenter): Sallie Clark, State Director, USDA Rural Development for Colorado

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 3: The Silver Vein: Mining 50+ Talent for Early Childhood Education

LOCATION: The Triple Crown Casino

The U.S. faces a dual crisis: a growing shortage of qualified early childhood educators and a large, capable workforce of adults 50+ seeking meaningful “encore careers.” This session treats childcare as economic infrastructure and puts a concrete workforce solution on the table: recruiting, training, and retaining adults 50+ through Registered Apprenticeships and the newly launched federal Workforce Pell Grant program.

As of July 1, 2026, Workforce Pell Grants are live — funding short-term (8–15 week) high-quality credentials that lead to high-skill, high-wage, in-demand jobs, including early childhood education pathways. Paired with Colorado’s Registered Apprenticeship model and emerging state incentives, the timing is right to build a real pipeline. Rather than another awareness-raising panel, this session is designed to get participants building: naming barriers, mapping partnerships, and leaving with next steps they can act on before EDCC ends.

The Prospecting Partners (Presenters):

- ❖ Wendy Corley, MSOL, Business Innovation & Strategy Manager, Division of Employment & Training, Strategic Engagement Branch, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
- ❖ Kathleen Sparrow, EdD, Early Childhood Workforce Scholarship Specialist, Colorado Department of Early Childhood

Workshop 4: Building Manufacturing Ecosystems: How Legacy Properties Drive New Growth

LOCATION: The Yoga Room

Across Colorado, communities are breathing new life into existing facilities and transforming them into dynamic hubs for manufacturing, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and community engagement. Through case studies of FORGE Campus in Loveland, Emergent Campus in Florence, and the Watertower Place in Pueblo, this session will explore how private investment, strategic partnerships, and economic development support can unlock the potential of underutilized assets in both urban and rural settings. Attendees will gain practical insights into creating manufacturing ecosystems that support business growth, attract investment, strengthen talent pipelines, and expand economic mobility while generating lasting economic benefits for the communities they serve.

Trail Boss (Presenter): Kat Hart, Program Manager, Warehouse Business Accelerator

URBAN/RURAL/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

Workshop 5: Passing the VIBE Check: Building Bedrock Partnerships in Local Government

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Striking economic gold takes more than land and incentives—it requires predictable, bedrock government processes built on trust. Drawing from the Metro Mayors Caucus' VIBE Toolkit, this interactive session digs into the human side of economic development, revealing how professional staff and elected officials can align to eliminate communication cave-ins and reduce business uncertainty. Guided by Heidi Williams and Lone Tree Mayor Marissa Harmon, attendees will explore practical strategies to streamline approvals, foster trust, and build a responsive, business-friendly culture without sacrificing community values or policy oversight.

The Chief Frontier Alliance Surveyors (Presenters):

- ❖ Heidi Williams, President & CEO, Civic Results; Executive Director, Metro Mayors Caucus
- ❖ Mayor Marissa Harmon, Lone Tree; Owner, Roots & Mane

5:30 p.m.

Buses Depart, on Carr Ave (north side of hotel), Chamonix Casino Hotel

6 – 9 p.m.

EVENT | The Golden Mic Showdown: Victor Street Party & Karaoke Challenge

LOCATION: Pinnacle Park Plaza | 3rd Street & Victor Avenue, Victor, CO

Hosted by: City of Victor

Unwind and connect at an upbeat, informal evening hosted by our wonderful partners at the City of Victor! We're gathering at the new Pinnacle Park Plaza for a relaxed block party and friendly "Karaoke Challenge." Just nine minutes down the road, it's a casual, spirited way to kick back, experience local Victor hospitality, and cheer on your colleagues as they take the stage!

Event Details & Logistics:

- ❖ **Complimentary Transportation:** To make your evening seamless, shuttle service is provided. Buses depart from the Chamonix Hotel starting at 5:30 p.m. Return shuttles will run at two designated times; one earlier option for those seeking an early night, and a final pickup at the end of the party. Buses will pick up and unload on the Carr Avenue side of the hotel.
- ❖ **Food & Beverages:** While food is on your own, Victor is rolling out the red carpet with a local food truck and a full-service bar right at the Plaza. Grab a bite, grab a cold drink, and get ready to show off your vocal skills!

Tuesday, September 29

6:30 - 8 a.m.

SUNRISE HIKE | Rita the Rock Planter

LOCATION: Little Grouse Mountain Trail, Victor, CO

Start your morning with an inspiring sunrise trek to visit [Rita the Rock Planter](#), Cripple Creek's famous giant wooden troll created by renowned artist Thomas Dambo! Guided by local experts and members of the community focus group behind the project, this early-morning excursion offers a stunning backdrop as the sun rises over the historic mining district. Learn the story behind Rita's creation, hear insider perspectives from project leaders, and return with plenty of time for morning conference sessions.

Transportation: Plan to carpool or drive, it's a short 5-minute drive before you get to the Town of Victor. [Google Maps Link >](#)

8:15 – 9 a.m.

BREAKFAST & OPENING REMARKS: Bedrock of Progress: Mining's Legacy and Colorado's High-Tech Future

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom | *Breakfast will be served starting at 7:45 am. Presentation will begin at 8:15 a.m.*

HOSTED BY: SSR Mining | *Presented in partnership with the Colorado Mining Association*

Enjoy breakfast hosted by SSR Mining as we celebrate shared milestone anniversaries with the Colorado Mining Association and the Colorado 150/EDCC 50 initiatives. This briefing highlights the modern economic realities of mining—from high-paying local careers and headquarters operations to sustainable environmental stewardship. Hear how Colorado's vast rare earth mineral deposits are paving the way for advanced technology and securing our state's place in the global supply chain.

The Modern Policy Prospector (*Moderator*): Simon Tafoya, Director of Government Affairs, SSR Mining

The Modern Mineral Trailblazers (*Presenters*):

- ❖ Lowe Billingsley, General Manager, SSR Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine
- ❖ Adam Eckman, President & CEO, Colorado Mining Association

9 – 10 a.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

PLENARY SESSION 3: Megawatts and Myths: The True Operational, Energy, and Economic Impact of Data Centers

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Separate fact from fiction on power demands, water use, and the true economic return of digital infrastructure. Kick off with a "Data Center 101" overview before diving into real-world insights on regional recruitment strategies in Wyoming, grid reliability, and municipal policy. Industry leaders from Google, United Power, Cheyenne LEADS, and facility management experts will unpack where hyperscale

tech is heading, what happens after construction, and how host communities can successfully balance energy growth with long-term economic gains.

Trail Boss (Moderator): Sandra Hagen Solin, Founder/CEO, Capitol Solutions, DataGrid Consortium

Trailblazers (Panelists):

- ❖ Betsey Hale, CEO, Cheyenne Leads
- ❖ Mayor Jan Kulmann, City of Thornton
- ❖ Jim Johnson, Community & Workforce Development Manager
Economic & Community Development (ECD), Google

10 – 10:15 a.m.

50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: Economic Diversification & Innovation + EDIE Awards Announcements

10:15 – 11 a.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

PLENARY SESSION 4: The Mother Lode: Water, Growth, & Colorado's Next Boom

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Hold onto your hats! Colorado's next 50 years of growth and prosperity will depend in no small part on its most fundamental resource: water. From groundwater beneath our feet to the rivers, reservoirs, and infrastructure that sustain our communities, securing reliable water supplies while preserving the agricultural and environmental values that define the Headwaters State will require some prospecting of its own. Drawing on lessons from across Colorado and the Colorado River Basin, James Eklund will explore where water policy is headed, where new opportunities may be found, and how innovation, investment, and more flexible approaches to water can help Colorado strike the right balance between development and sustainability.

The Water Cowboy (Presenter): James Eklund, Partner, Taft Law

11 – 11:45 a.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

PLENARY SESSION 5: Recruiting the Skies: Air Connectivity as an Economic, Workforce, and Tourism Multiplier

DEN is Colorado's global hub, but the state's regional airports are vital for business, leisure and personal mobility. Join aviation experts Laura Jackson (DEN) and Howard Mann (Campbell Hill) to explore trends at these airports and learn how local economic developers can leverage passenger data within their economic development strategy.

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

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

11:45 – Noon

50TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: Navigating Change & Strengthening Communities + EDIE Awards Announcements

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

KEYNOTE LUNCH: Defending the Claim: Legislative Recaps, Election Forecasts, and Business Champions

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Hosted by: *City of Cripple Creek*

Stake your claim at the lunch plenary for an insider's look at Colorado's high-stakes political landscape. EDCC Public Policy Committee Chair Rich Werner and Lobbyist Jennifer Cassell take the stage to unpack the toughest economic battles from the recent legislative session—highlighting how EDCC fought back against harmful policy cave-ins to protect our state's business climate. Looking down the trail, they'll analyze the upcoming November elections, break down the impact of major legislative turnover, and preview key priorities for the next legislative session. Grab your lunch, celebrate our local Business Champions, and discover what it takes to defend Colorado's prosperity under the Gold Dome.

- ❖ **Chief Policy Claim-Defender:** Rich Werner, EDCC's Public Policy Committee Chair & Past Board Chair, President & CEO, Upstate Colorado
- ❖ **Master Capitol Surveyor:** Jennifer Cassell, EDCC's Lobbyist & Committee Administrator, Bowditch and Cassell

1:45 – 5:15 p.m.

TOUR 2 | Striking Gold at the Source: Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine Tour

REGISTRATION REQUIRED: Passenger van will pick up at hotel; space is limited

Go behind the scenes of Colorado's rich mining heritage and modern economic engine with an exclusive tour of the active Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine. Experience firsthand how a historic 1890s gold rush site evolved into a modern, large-scale surface mining operation that continues to drive the regional economy. Guided by industry experts, attendees will explore the massive geology, advanced recovery operations, and the community partnerships that keep this historic claim thriving today.

1:45 – 5:45 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

Workshop 1: Inside the Mind of the Manufacturer: The *Ready or Not*™ Business Simulation

LOCATION: The Aspen Mine Center

To effectively support local primary employers, economic developers need a clear window into how business leaders make decisions under pressure. Hosted by **Manufacturer's EDGE**, this interactive workshop puts you in the driver's seat of a manufacturing enterprise using their *Ready or Not*™ simulation. Working in small, cross-functional teams, you'll navigate realistic operational tradeoffs—balancing capacity against demand, cash flow against growth, and market disruptions against risk. By experiencing firsthand how companies navigate supply chain shocks, labor challenges, and margin pressures, you'll walk away with a sharper business IQ and actionable insights to better advocate for and retain businesses in your region. Plus, you'll learn how you can bring this powerful simulation directly to the primary employers and leadership teams in your own community.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 2: Protecting Colorado's Advanced Industries

LOCATION: The Petite Ballroom (Mont Blanc, Verbier, Zermatt)

Colorado's advanced industries account for nearly 35% of state exports and 24% job growth since 2019, but soaring business costs and corporate relocations threaten this critical economic driver. Powered by an NSF Engine investment, the Common Sense Institute Colorado presents a diagnostic assessment revealing the data every practitioner needs to retain and scale these high-value assets. Discover the steps required to safeguard Colorado's competitive advantage before our top talent and industries move elsewhere.

The Chief Assayers (Presenter): Mike Freeman, CEO, Innosphere & NSF Ascend Engine

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 3: The Bedrock Pipeline: Unlocking Economic Growth Through Early Childhood Education (ECE) Apprenticeships

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Childcare is no longer just a community amenity—it is the foundational bedrock beneath Colorado's entire workforce engine. In this session, discover how ECE Apprenticeships resolve the industry "trilemma" of family affordability, quality care, and livable wages for educators. Through "earn-while-you-learn" models and collaborative regional hubs, Dr. Kathleen Sparrow demonstrates how investing in local childcare pipelines frees up workforce talent across all local industries. Walk away with an actionable map to navigate state regulations and funding streams, transforming local childcare needs into high-yield economic assets for your community.

The Frontier Capacity Builder (Presenters):

- ❖ Kathleen Sparrow, EdD, Early Childhood Workforce Scholarship Specialist, Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- ❖ Meghan More, Early Childhood Recruitment & Retention Administrator, Colorado Department of Early Childhood

URBAN/RURAL/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

Workshop 4: Freaky Friday: When Planners and Economic Developers Swap Perspectives to Shape a Stronger Community

LOCATION: The Triple Crown Casino

Ever wondered what it would be like if Economic Developers and Planners switched places? A case study in how cross-discipline collaboration turned Midtown Centennial, the city's reimagined city center, from concept to reality. Followed by a guided discussion on what it takes for planners and economic developers to switch seats and make the partnership work.

The Regulatory Pathfinders (Presenters):

- ❖ Ryan Dwiggins, Director of Economic Development for JLL, City of Centennial District 3 Council Member, and former Planning and Zoning Commissioner, City of Centennial
- ❖ Neil Marciniak, CECD, Economic Development Director for the City of Centennial

3:45 – 4:45 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE

Workshop 1: Mining the Masterpieces: How Colorado's Creative Economy Fuels Local Tax Bases

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom

Economic gold isn't just found under the soil, it's forged through Colorado's thriving culture, arts, and creative industries. In this joint presentation, leaders from the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) and Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) examine how arts and culture act as high-yield economic engines across our 37 Certified Creative Districts. Discover how your community can stake a claim on state grants, build powerful arts-business partnerships, and leverage creative infrastructure to attract top talent and boost local tax bases. Walk away with an actionable map to transform local creative assets into long-term economic prosperity.

- ❖ **The Chief Cultural Assayer:** Christin Crampton Day, Executive Director, Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA)
- ❖ **The Creative District Claim-Staker:** Josh Blanchard, Director of the Colorado Creative Industries (CCI), OEDIT

URBAN/RURAL/WORKFORCE/PLANNER-COMMUNITY

Workshop 2: Digging for Data Diamonds – *finding data in the rough*

LOCATION: The Petite Ballroom (Mont Blanc, Verbier, Zermatt)

In today's competitive economic landscape, effective storytelling is no longer optional for communities striving to attract investment, support business growth, and shape long-term prosperity. Data has become the essential foundation of that story—transforming economic development narratives from anecdotal to actionable, from descriptive to strategic, and from reactive to visionary. But what are the questions you need to ask as you dig for the data you need?

In this interactive workshop you will learn what questions to ask to get you the salient data you need to achieve your economic development goals. Bring your laptops and questions!!

The Data Miners (*Presenters*):

- ❖ Barbara L. Larsen, Business Support Analyst, Workforce Boulder County
- ❖ Patrick Holwell, MA, Workforce Economist, Arapahoe/Douglas Works!
- ❖ Derrek Jones, Senior Management Analyst, Denver Office of Economic Development and Opportunity

3:45 – 5:15 p.m.

URBAN/RURAL

Workshop 3: Prospecting for Community Prosperity Through Collaboration

LOCATION: The Triple Crown Casino

Colorado's next gold rush isn't underground, it's found where commerce, civics, and community collaboration converge.

This hands-on workshop uses Colorado's mining heritage as a metaphor for discovering community assets, building civic leadership, engaging residents, and aligning business and government around shared economic goals. Participants will work in teams to solve real-world economic development challenges while learning proven approaches to stakeholder engagement, policy navigation, and cross-sector collaboration.

You'll leave with fresh ideas, new connections, and practical strategies to help your community strike gold.

The Chief Civic Assayers (*Presenters*):

- ❖ Tom Lucero, Co-Founder, Leveraging Local Leaders
- ❖ Jenifer Freeman, Founder & CEO, Constellation Strategies, LLC.

6 – 9 p.m.

EVENT | Staking the Golden Table: The Historic Bennett Avenue Triple-Anniversary Feast and Long Table

LOCATION: Historic Bennett Avenue, Downtown Cripple Creek

Sponsored & co-hosted by: SSR Mining – Cripple Creek & Victor Mine, Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC, US Foods, cities of Cripple Creek, Victor, & Woodland Park, 150 Tables Across Colorado, Downtown Colorado Inc., and EDCC

Pull up a chair as we take over historic Bennett Avenue for the marquee celebration of our entire conference! The year 2026 marks an incredible triple anniversary: EDCC's 50th Golden Anniversary, Colorado's 150th Sesquicentennial, and America's 250th Semi-quincentennial, and many others that we're finding out. For five decades, **we've DRIVEN, we've LED, and we've SUCCEEDED**, forging a profound, lasting impact on Colorado's economic landscape.

Set against a backdrop steeped in rich mining heritage, with the legendary SSR Mining Cripple Creek & Victor Mine casting its historic golden flow over the evening, we're shutting down Cripple Creek's main thoroughfare to break bread alongside local residents, regional partners, and statewide leaders at one massive **Long Table**. Gather to honor our legacy leadership, celebrate Colorado's economic formation, and toast to the next 50 years of driving economic success together.

Event Details: Thanks to the generosity of our hosts, a complimentary meal will be served to all registered attendees and local community guests!

To help us get an accurate headcount:

- ❖ If you haven't registered yet, please RSVP for this event during checkout.
- ❖ If you're already registered for the conference, keep an eye on your inbox, the EDCC team will contact you shortly to confirm your RSVP!

Wednesday, September 30

9 – 11 a.m.

CELEBRATORY CHUCKWAGON BRUNCH: The Golden Trailhead: Big News, Big Prizes & Grand Send-Off

LOCATION: The Grande Salon Ballroom | *Breakfast will be served starting at 8:30 am. Presentation will start at 9 a.m.*

Hosted by: **OEDIT**

Save the best for last! Join us Wednesday morning for a hearty Chuckwagon Brunch and the ultimate send-off to our 50th Anniversary conference. This power-packed morning session brings together legacy leadership, crucial economic updates, and the presentation of our final EDIE Awards. You'll also have one last chance to strike gold during our grand-prize **Golden Ticket Basket Giveaway!** Wrap up your conference experience by connecting with peers and celebrating our collective impact. Trust us, you won't want to miss what we have in store!



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