



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023







# About the Colorado Small Business Development Center Network

From the Front Range to Grand Junction and from Fort Collins to Pueblo, small businesses are what defines the fabric of Colorado's communities. They offer vital local services and innovative solutions to the distinct needs of their communities, all while providing jobs for Coloradans and contributing to our state's robust 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 statewide network.

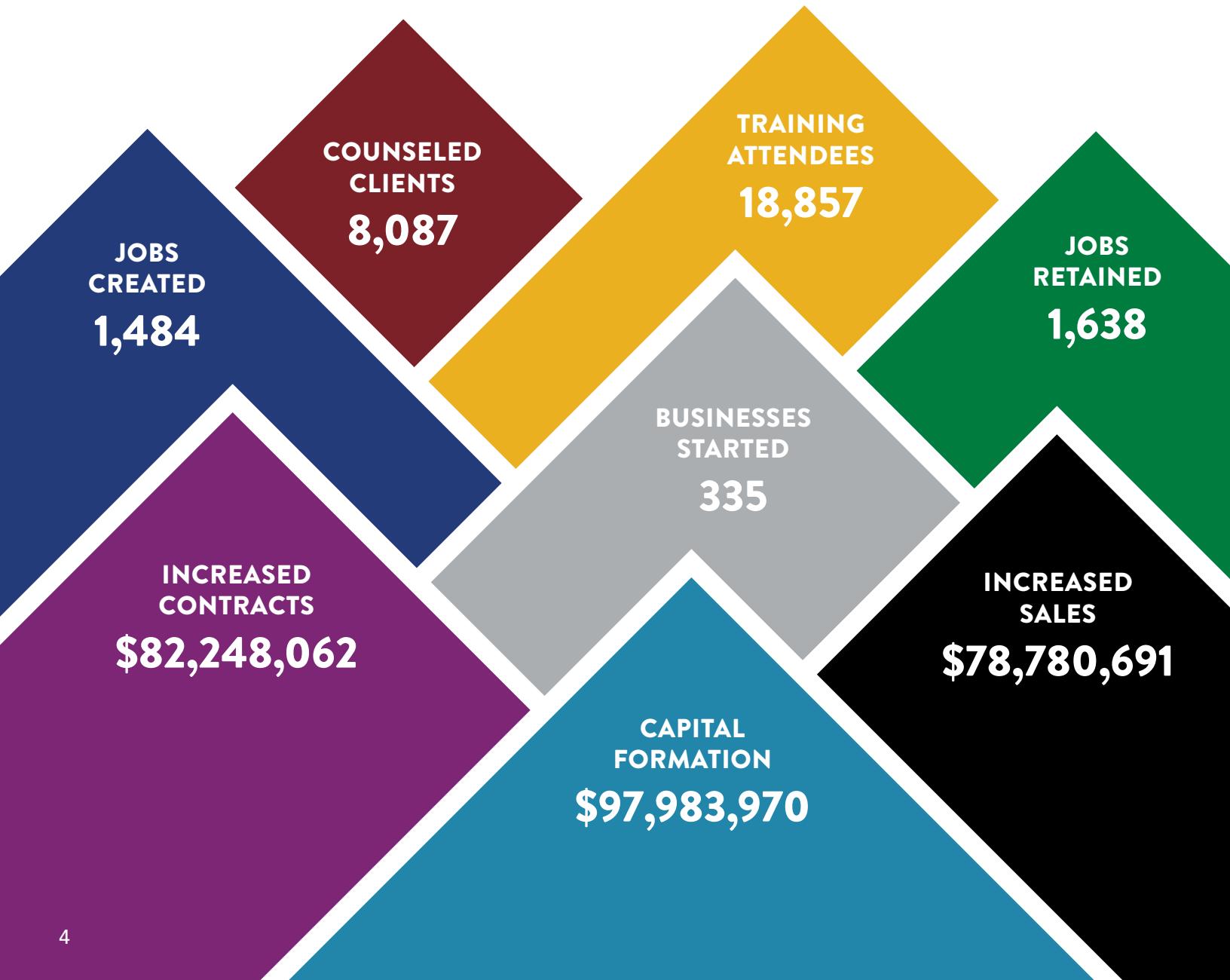
Each center is hosted by an institute of higher education, city or county government, economic development organization, or chamber of commerce. These partners provide so much more than brick and mortar locations from which SBDC staff can serve businesses; they also foster opportunities for the centers 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 684,726 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 governments, economic development organizations, and chambers of commerce.

# 2023 Colorado SBDC Network Statewide Impact Numbers





# A Message From **Eve Lieberman**

**Executive Director**

**Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade**

I'm excited to share the Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network annual report, highlighting the impactful efforts of the SBDC throughout the state to help small businesses thrive.

99.5% of Colorado businesses are classified as small businesses. These small businesses make a tremendous impact within our state and their success serves as a role model for the national level. In 2023, Colorado was home to more than 684,000 small businesses and employed 1.2 million small business employees. Across the state, we saw a net job creation of 360,559, marking an impressive increase of more than 125,000 jobs from the previous year.

This year has also been notable for the diversity and vibrancy of the small business community across the state. Our small businesses, varied in industry, ownership, and community impact, have been instrumental in meeting the needs of both rural and urban areas, from the Rocky Mountains, to the Eastern Plains, to the Denver region.

We witnessed the launch of numerous businesses, such as Fortified Development Trucking, a small family business in Aurora. Dulceria BomBon opened its doors in Boulder, offering candies, authentic piñatas and custom cakes inside their shop that celebrates Mexican culture and heritage. In the San Luis Valley, a children's clothing store, Bullfrogs and Butterflies, opened and is offering a space for local photographers to rent out. Jamie Blanchard-Poling launched the Compost Queen, a green composting business, passionately offering a solution that did not exist for Larimer County residents. Thanks to the offerings from GreenPrint LLC, young people in the Denver Metro area can now feel empowered, be informed and feel confident navigating life's important financial decisions through GreenPrint's financial tools and services.

The SBDC Network, made up of 14 Service Centers across the state, provided essential support for all of these businesses. Through free consulting and training programs, the SBDC provides support for them to obtain low interest loans, create business plans, launch marketing campaigns, navigate licensing and permits, and so much more.

We are proud to support this excellent work by nesting the statewide lead center of the Colorado SBDC Network within the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). I extend my profound thanks for the hard working and dedicated individuals from our SBDC directors, to administrative staff, to our consultants. This report celebrates their achievements, the small business owners we serve, and the vibrant communities throughout Colorado.

With appreciation,  
Eve Lieberman



## A Message From

# Hannah W. Krieger

**State SBDC Director**  
**Colorado SBDC Network**

Reflecting on the past year, it's clear that 2023 was an extraordinary time for small businesses in Colorado. With over 30,000 new small business ventures launched, we've seen firsthand the remarkable spirit of entrepreneurship that continues to thrive across our state. This achievement underscores not just the resilience and ambition of our communities, but also the collaborative efforts of our Service Centers across the Colorado SBDC Network, which have been instrumental in supporting businesses as they navigate hurdles.

Marking my first anniversary as the SBDC State Director, I draw immense pride from the partnerships we've forged and the dedicated team we've assembled across the state. Looking ahead, we are invigorated by the unity we are fostering throughout the Colorado SBDC Network and the work we are doing to meet the needs of all small business owners.

Whether you're an aspiring entrepreneur who needs help getting started, an existing small business owner looking to expand, or you're trying to find a way to exit the business and preserve your legacy, the Colorado's SBDC Network is here to support you on your journey.

We have seen year-over-year growth in engagement from women and minority business owners, and we've also seen encouraging trends among veteran workers and veteran-owned businesses. Beyond the success stories celebrated in this report, it's important to recognize the 1.2 million small business employees in Colorado. We are grateful to these individuals and the business owners who employ them, as they are the drivers of our state's vibrant economy.

Colorado continues to stand out as a premier destination for starting a business, offering entrepreneurs the chance to be part of something truly remarkable. As we move forward, we are committed to fostering an environment where every small business can thrive, building on the achievements of the past while embracing the innovations and opportunities of the future.

Hannah W. Krieger



# Colorado SBDC

## Programs & Services

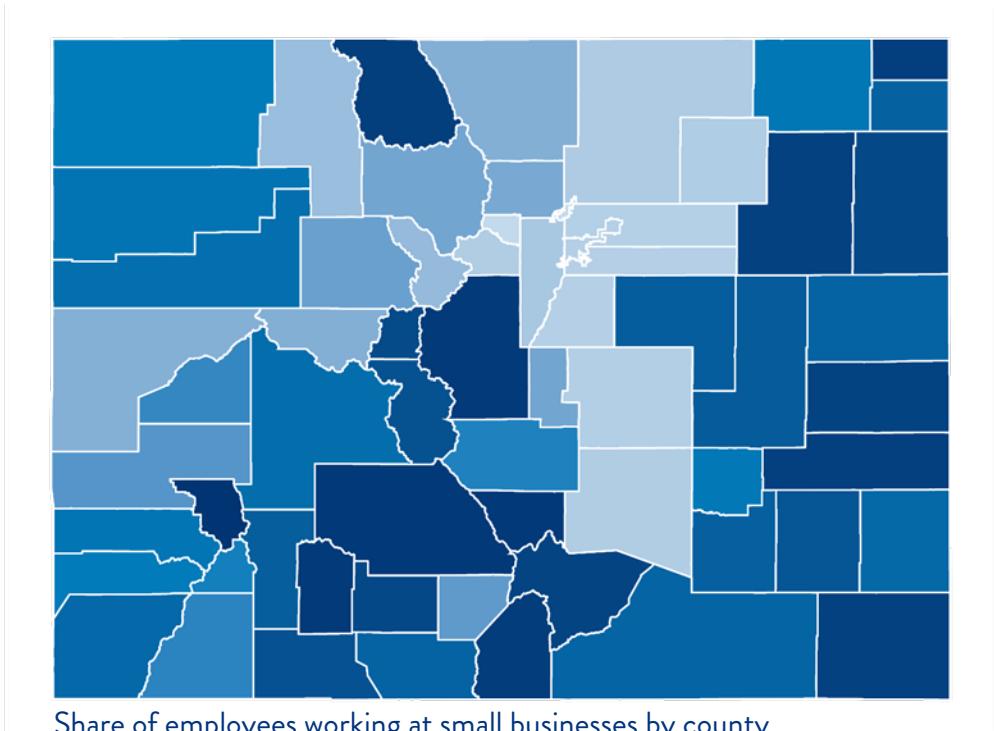
- Free and confidential one-on-one consulting for existing and new businesses on virtually any business topic
- Free or low-cost business planning workshops
- Leading Edge™: Intensive strategic business planning programs for existing and new businesses
- International trade assistance
- Assistance with loan packaging and access to capital
- Connect2DOT: Collaboration between Colorado Department of Transportation (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
- 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
- New business feasibility analysis
- Childcare Business Program: Supporting centers and in-home childcare businesses through a partnership with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC)





## 2023 Small Business Profile

# Colorado



**684,726 Small Businesses**

**99.5% of all Colorado businesses are small businesses**

**1.2 Million Small Business Employees**

**47.6% of Colorado employees work for small businesses**



# Small Business Ownership Share By Demographic Group

**Women made up 45.9% of workers and owned 44.8% of businesses**



**Veterans made up 6.0% of workers and owned 7.1% of businesses**



**Hispanics made up 19.4% of workers and owned 12.2% of businesses**



**Racial Minorities made up 15.1% of workers and owned 8.3% of businesses**



# FORTIFIED DEVELOPMENT TRUCKING

“The Aurora-South Metro SBDC has helped our business connect with technical resources, prime contractors, and other invaluable tools to sustain our business.”



Fortified Development Trucking strives to be innovative and solutions-driven, challenging their drivers to provide reliable and excellent customer service while balancing their career and family. The minority-owned trucking company's mission is to become the transporter of choice for construction hauling and both short- and long-hauling from coast to coast. With the byline "Realizing Potential at Every Level in the Trucking Industry," Fortified Development Trucking offers reliable, safe, timely delivery that is the most cost-effective trucking carrier available for construction hauling projects and line-haul in 48 states.

Based in Aurora, Colorado, Fortified Development Trucking is a family-owned business that began in October 2019. Owners Arthur and Monica Gilbert came from a trucking family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After years in the corporate world, with husband Arthur in real estate and their son also in business, they decided to research the trucking industry. They found low-paying opportunities with taxing schedules, making it difficult to maintain a healthy home life. In response to the struggle, the partners pooled their experience to create a solution to meet their needs, as well as offering viable employment opportunities for individuals coming out of incarceration.

They started their business with personal investments, credit cards, and a Small Business Administration loan from the Colorado Enterprise Fund. They believe in building relationships, and through partnerships with the community and the trucking industry, they are working to build a transportation company that delivers not only freight, sand, gravel, dirt, and more, but also "Hope" to the community.

Their partnership with the Aurora-South Metro SBDC has spanned over four years, gaining assistance in business planning, lending options, trucking regulations and government certification. Today, with help from the SBDC's certification consultant, they hold the following small business certifications: MBE, DBE, WBE, SBE and ESB. Business is booming, with annual revenues increasing six-fold from 2021 to 2022. They've also added three full-time employees for a total of five.

"The Aurora-South Metro SBDC has helped our business connect with technical resources, prime contractors, and other invaluable tools to sustain our business." shared Monica. Fortified Development Trucking doesn't just talk about hope for the community but they now provide prevailing wages for those who want to work in the transportation industry.

## **ARTHUR & MONICA GILBERT - FOUNDERS FORTIFIED DEVELOPMENT TRUCKING**

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



# DULCERIA BOMBON

Bueno was introduced to the Boulder SBDC through its one-on-one, bilingual consulting program and was connected to additional Spanish-language resources for her business. She participated in the market research training program and has received assistance with business development, marketing strategies, and financial planning and shares, “their [SBDC] guidance has played a key role in our growth.”



Dulceria BomBon offers a wide variety of Mexican candies, authentic piñatas, and customizable cake orders for all occasions. Owner Linda Bueno says her favorite part of her business is bringing joy to people's celebrations through her business's unique and tasty products. Since opening the store, Dulceria BomBon has expanded its product range and continues to grow its customer base.

Bueno's passion for Mexican culture and traditions, along with her enthusiasm for cake making, inspired her to open her "dulceria" (candy store) in 2016. She wanted to share the vibrant and delicious aspects of Mexican culture with her local community. Through her business, Dulceria BomBon, she brings unique candies, piñatas, and custom cakes for all celebrations and everyday enjoyment to Longmont, Colorado.

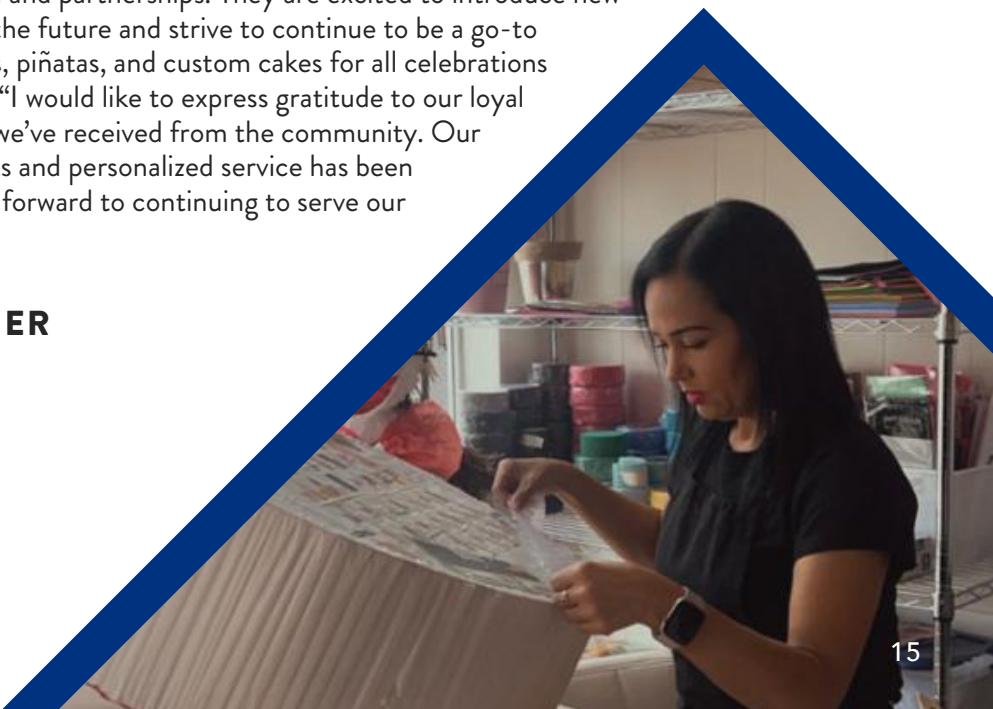
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The resources through the Boulder SBDC helped Bueno develop a solid business plan, understand market trends, and connect with local resources. The combined support through the one-on-one consulting and workshops helped Linda address specific challenges in the food and events industries.

Looking ahead, Dulceria BomBon is exploring new avenues for growth and is interested in expanding its online presence and partnerships. They are excited to introduce new products to their customers in the future and strive to continue to be a go-to destination for Mexican candies, piñatas, and custom cakes for all celebrations in the community. Bueno says, "I would like to express gratitude to our loyal customers and for the support we've received from the community. Our commitment to quality products and personalized service has been key to our success, and we look forward to continuing to serve our customers."

## **LINDA BUENO - OWNER DULCERIA BOMBON**

## **BOULDER SBDC**



# EMPOWER PHYSIOTHERAPY & TRAINING

Kuehn openly shares her biggest challenge—marketing effectively in a small town where word of mouth prevails. This led her to the Central Mountain SBDC, where she received invaluable assistance not only in marketing but also in financial processes, including depreciation and capital expenditures. Her strategies include reaching out to local mom's groups, midwives, doulas, and chiropractors, resulting in promising referrals. The idea of pop-up clinics is also on the horizon.



Empower Physiotherapy & Training was successfully launched by Dr. Kelsey Kuehn in 2021. Relocating to Buena Vista, Colorado in 2017, Kelsey embarked on the challenge of establishing her company in 2019, a feat made even more formidable during the global pandemic. Despite the hurdles, Kelsey immersed herself in travel physical therapy, and officially opened her door for business in 2021.

As a Doctor of Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy and Strength Conditioning Specialist, Kuehn designed her business around three pillars: physical therapy, performance, and education. Her approach caters to diverse needs, from aiding recovery from injuries to supporting postpartum pelvic floor strength. Kuehn crafts personalized exercise and nutrition programs and imparts knowledge through clinics, particularly with the National Strength and Conditioning Association. She states, “My sweet spot is transitioning someone from physical therapy back into training for sport.”

Having faced multiple injuries as a soccer athlete, her mission extends to encompass individuals like grandmothers wanting to walk with their grandkids and construction workers needing to lift plywood overhead.

Kuehn blends in-person treatments with remote coaching. Her home office serves as a private treatment room, and now, in collaboration with Fortitude Fitness & Crossfit BV, she is adding an office and treatment room, providing access to equipment and the chance to coach clients in the gym.

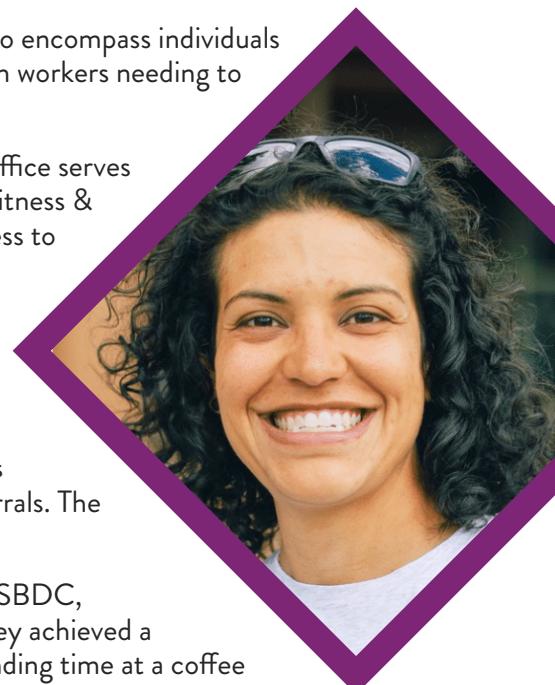
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Kuehn appreciates the wealth of resources and classes provided by the SBDC, acknowledging their pivotal role in navigating challenges. In 2023, Kelsey achieved a \$20,000 increase in sales. For aspiring entrepreneurs, she advises spending time at a coffee shop, having found that this simple presence has led to significant leads and connections.

Kuehn serves as the official physical therapist for Guam’s Women’s National soccer team. Her combined love for travel, soccer, and physical therapy is a synergy she envisions continuing into the future. With enthusiasm, she declares, “It is a fun merging of my passions, and I don’t see that changing anytime soon.”

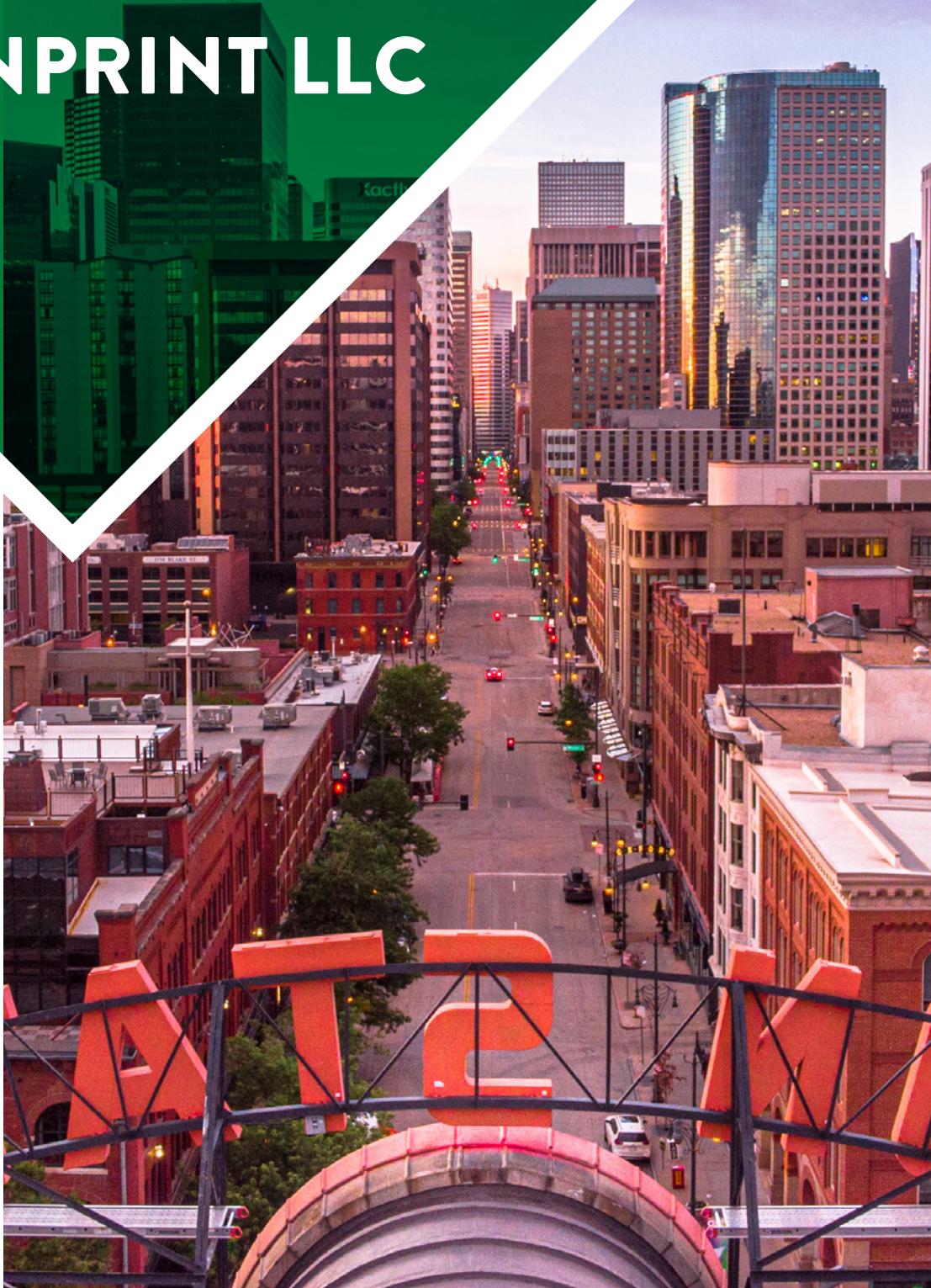
## **DR. KELSEY KUEHN PT, DPT, CSCS - FOUNDER EMPOWER PHYSIOTHERAPY & TRAINING**

### **CENTRAL MOUNTAIN SBDC**



# GREENPRINT LLC

“We currently sit very comfortably in the business-to-business space, opening up the opportunity to provide our resources to more people at once as opposed to a more direct business-to-consumer model.”



GreenPrint LLC was founded by Ben Rather and DeShawn Phenix in 2020. GreenPrint provides its clients with knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of money and achieve financial wellness. Rather and Phenix saw the necessity for the next generation to know more about personal finance. “We’ve been through those struggles ourselves,” said Rather, “and we want to pass along tools and resources that see young folks more financially empowered as they grow into adulthood.” While Rather and Phenix had a clear vision for their business, they knew they needed some help with the foundations of getting it started.

There were a variety of challenges for GreenPrint in the beginning, centering on funding and defining their customers. “Despite a communal understanding that the service we provide is so needed, we’re always on the hunt for folks who want to promote our vision with their dollars,” said Phenix.

Through their work with the Denver Metro SBDC, Rather said they were able to narrow down who their target audience was and how to approach them. “We currently sit very comfortably in the business-to-business space, opening up the opportunity to provide our resources to more people at once as opposed to a more direct business-to-consumer model.”

Despite the challenges that come with starting any business, they accomplished a variety of milestones and successes. “One of our biggest successes to date is ongoing programming that we run within the different campuses of Denver Public Schools,” said Phenix. “Getting in front of kids early, before they are faced with too many of life’s financial hurdles, is key for us.”

Phenix says the largest goal for GreenPrint is to see their vision come to fruition. Phenix shared, “Creating a world where everyone is empowered with equal financial knowledge. If we’re able to look back and see that what we’ve done sparked systematic educational change, we’ll know we’ve accomplished something.”

When asked what advice they would pass on to their former selves if given the chance, Rather and Phenix shared, “We’d tell ourselves to just keep going. There are going to be great times ahead and challenging times ahead. But hold on to that spark your vision created. It’s very powerful and will make all of those challenging times worth the struggle!”

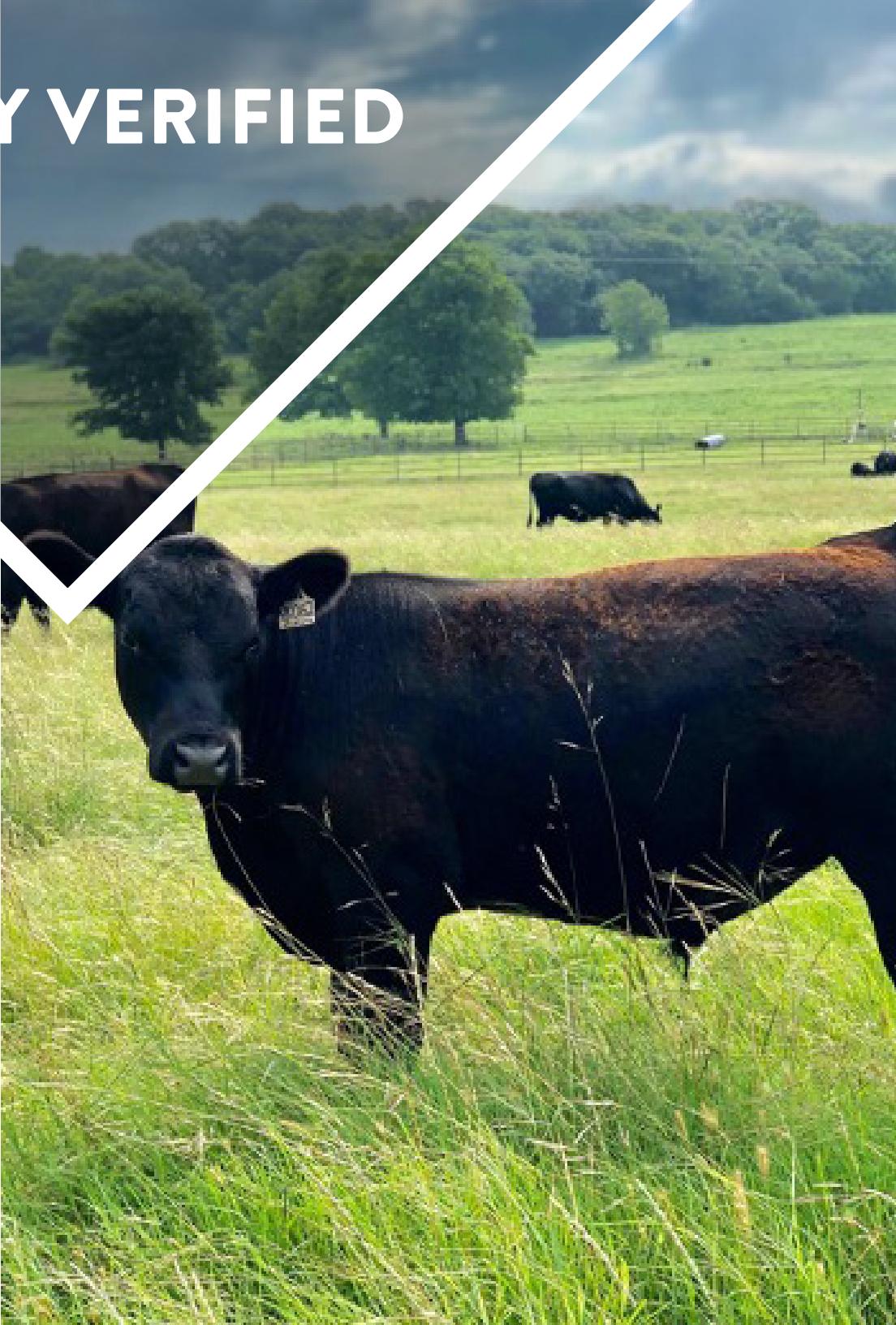
## **BEN RATHER AND DESHAWN PHENIX - FOUNDERS GREENPRINT LLC**

### **DENVER METRO SBDC**



# LEGACY VERIFIED

The East CO SBDC played a significant role in supporting Legacy Verified's technological advancement. They facilitated the acquisition of laptops, enabling Legacy Verified to enhance their efficiency and productivity. They provided support to apply for a marketing research grant, allowing Legacy Verified to gather valuable market insights and make informed marketing decisions.



Legacy Verified offers a range of services, including U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service Programs Programs, Source & Age Verification, and Non-Hormone Treated Cattle, and has a successful partnership with the East Colorado (CO) SBDC. The East CO SBDC has provided invaluable support, helping them achieve their goals and grow their business.

One of the key ways the East CO SBDC has assisted Legacy Verified is through the mentorship of Craig Curl. Craig's guidance and expertise have been instrumental in helping Legacy Verified navigate challenges and make informed decisions. His mentorship has provided valuable insights and advice, enabling Legacy Verified to make strategic choices directly contributing to their success.

Additionally, the East CO SBDC helped Legacy Verified secure an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). This financial assistance has been crucial in helping Legacy Verified weather challenges from unforeseen circumstances and continue operations.

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Legacy Verified has ambitious plans for the future. They intend to launch multiple seasonal campaigns, targeting different customer segments and maximizing their reach. They aim to expand their presence in the dairy industry and implement regional promotions to grow their customer base. Legacy Verified plans to build programs customized to the specific needs of their clients, ensuring they provide the highest level of service and value.

Enthused about the USDA natural beef products program, Legacy Natural, RaeMarie Knowles, President of Legacy Verified shared that the "Legacy Natural program is a terrific way for a producer to maximize the return on investment on their investment in good genetics and management!"

Legacy Verified plans to migrate their tag database to Microsoft with customer online lookup capabilities, enhancing convenience and accessibility for customers. Additionally, Legacy Verified aims to develop a fully digital auditing system, streamlining their processes and improving accuracy. The company will provide tablets to all auditors, further elevating efficiency and data management.

Thanks to the SBA and the SBDC, Legacy Verified will receive digital marketing training and grants to enhance their online presence, reaching an even wider audience.

Legacy Verified's partnership with the East CO SBDC has been instrumental in their growth and success. The mentorship, financial assistance, technological advancements, and ongoing support have all contributed to Legacy Verified's ability to thrive and create their future plans.

## **RAEMARIE KNOWLES - PRESIDENT & MANAGING PARTNER LEGACY VERIFIED**

# FOGLE CUSTOM HOMES

“Over the last two years, the resources that I have been able to access at the SBDC have been instrumental in growing our business, and I am so grateful to their incredible team that cares so much about nurturing small businesses and helping them thrive.”



Ben and Sarah Fogle operate a proud, family-owned, local business Fogle Custom Homes, and have been serving the Grand Valley since 2019. Ben is the general contractor and builder and has 25 years of experience in the construction industry. He has had the opportunity to work in many different areas of construction over the years and his knowledge and experience is vast and varied. Ben loves doing custom work that their customers will appreciate for a lifetime.

Sarah is a 4th-generation carpenter and helping run Fogle Custom Homes is her second career. Along with managing the day-to-day responsibilities that go along with running a small business, Sarah also loves to swing a hammer and work alongside her husband on the job site. From installing cabinets, to framing a new home, to texturing drywall in preparation for paint, they do it all side by side.

As a husband and wife team with two young children, they feel it is important to include their boys in the business to teach them skills and life lessons. Sarah grew up tagging along with her dad to job sites and those are some of her fondest memories.

At Fogle Custom Homes, their goal is to create dream homes on the Western Slope with impeccable craftsmanship, high-attention to detail, and a strong work ethic. Their intention is to foster meaningful relationships within their community and to build homes in which families can make lasting memories.

Sarah shared “The SBDC has taught us so much about learning to run a successful business. As a former Dental Hygienist, I had no idea how to run a small business. I started by taking a couple of classes, found a coach, and then took the Leading Edge course at the beginning of 2023. Over the last two years, the resources that I have been able to access at the SBDC have been instrumental in growing our business, and I am so grateful to their incredible team that cares so much about nurturing small businesses and helping them thrive.”

## **BEN AND SARAH FOGLE - OWNERS FOGLE CUSTOM HOMES**

### **GRAND JUNCTION SBDC**



# COMPOST QUEEN

“They lay a solid framework of what to do when starting a business, and that’s helped me immensely, as well as all of their resources. It helps me separate the different aspects of business, so it’s not just one pile of things to do.”



“I wondered why there wasn’t a solution—not in Northern Colorado. I decided I could be that solution,” said Jamie Blanchard-Poling, a former backyard composter, and now owner, and queen, of Compost Queen.

Blanchard-Poling founded Compost Queen in 2018, operating on partner farm sites until March 2023, when, with state grant funding, she was able to open her headquarters in Fort Collins. Jamie picks up food waste at customers’ homes and businesses and takes it to the headquarters and to four local farm partners. She does curbside pickups in Fort Collins and Timnath, but also has five drop-off sites in Fort Collins, Windsor, and Loveland.

“We do everything with organic waste from top to bottom,” Blanchard-Poling said. “We pick it up, haul it, and take it to whichever facility that route goes to.” Customers get a 4-gallon bucket they can fill with food scraps for weekly or biweekly curbside services or for drop-off at their convenience. They then can collect finished compost during two customer appreciation days.

“We have a very high retention rate of customers because we do such a good job in what we do,” Blanchard-Poling said. She has optimized her time using an Aerated Static Pile Composting system, purchased with a Front Range Waste Diversion grant she received for equipment and establishing her headquarters.

To grow her business, Blanchard-Poling works with the Larimer SBDC, where she’s taken classes on starting a business and works with consultants on marketing, bookkeeping, and financial planning. “They lay a solid framework of what to do when starting a business, and that’s helped me immensely, as well as all of their resources. It helps me separate the different aspects of business, so it’s not just one pile of things to do.”

Blanchard-Poling works with the Larimer SBDC anytime she has to pivot, including adding farm partners and streamlining offerings to just buckets and carts.

“My advice for entrepreneurs is don’t give up. If you give up, you never know what you could have achieved.” Blanchard-Poling said. “Now I’m a success story.”

## JAMIE BLANCHARD-POLING - FOUNDER COMPOST QUEEN

LARIMER SBDC



# CIMBRA INC.

Feeling equipped with the necessary information and resources, Miriam states, “I feel happy and I feel like finally I am getting to where I wanted to be.”



Owning and operating a business is challenging. Doing so as someone who is underrepresented in business as well as their own industry adds even more hoops to jump through. For Miriam Rodriguez, though, the challenges are worth it to do the work she loves.

Rodriguez is the owner of Cimbra Inc, a construction business offering landscaping, environmental services, and land reclamation services based in Brighton, Colorado. She has made use of the SBDC consulting services and programming for the last several years. Rodriguez is a recent graduate of the Leading Edge program through the North Metro SBDC, where she was enthusiastically engaged each week and capitalized on the new information to take her business to the next level.

Through the help of the North Metro SBDC and connections made during the course, Rodriguez received her certifications as a Minority/Woman-owned Business Enterprise, Small Business Enterprise, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, and Emerging Business Enterprise in October of 2023. Feeling equipped with the necessary information and resources, Miriam states, “I feel happy and I feel like finally I am getting to where I wanted to be.”

Rodriguez expressed the difficulties of being a female leader in the construction industry. Despite being extremely qualified, she is often overlooked due to longstanding discrimination in the industry. However, feeling equipped by all she has learned in the SBDC’s Leading Edge course, Rodriguez has a renewed outlook on the industry that she loves and is willing to work through the discrimination to live out her passion. Fueled by a new sense of confidence, Rodriguez says, “Information is power.”

Since completing the Leading Edge course, Rodriguez has continued to meet with SBDC consultants and has been collaborating with counselors through the Connect2DOT program (collaboration between the SBDC and the Colorado Department of Transportation) as well as the Minority Business office. The SBDC is proud to support the journey of businesses like Cimbra Inc. and celebrates the success Rodriguez has already realized, as well as the new opportunities coming her way in the future.



## **MIRIAM RODRIGUEZ - OWNER CIMBRA INC.**

## **NORTH METRO SBDC**

# MOUNTAIN AND COMPANY

"The consultant from SBDC was invaluable to helping me understand whether or not this was a good business decision and a viable business to invest in. They also helped me refine my business plan so that I can really hone in on the aspects that will drive the business to success."



Lake and Company was a socially conscious magazine, carefully curated with a give-back message that supports adventure, innovation, conservation, and community built around lake culture. It had multiple, complementary brick-and-mortar retail locations in Colorado and Minnesota selling outdoor clothing and gear. With the help of the Northwest SBDC, two clients were able to distill its early roots in what would eventually become Mountain and Company.

Early in 2023, founder Megan Kellin decided it was time to pare down the physical locations and devote more time to scaling the magazine. An exit strategy specialist with Northwest SBDC was there to offer support. Through a series of consulting sessions Kellin learned how to understand the value of her business within each retail location. For the Steamboat Springs location, the end result was a successful sale to a new owner.

That new owner, Anna Sladek, had separately sought Northwest SBDC assistance with the goal of deciding if the purchase of an existing storefront was the right choice for her. SBDC consulting sessions provided guidance on establishing the business under her ownership, as well as strategic planning and expansion. Additionally, Sladek attended Startup to Scaleup, an intensive two-day event presented by the Northwest SBDC in partnership with CU Boulder and the Leeds School of Business.

Sladek says, “The consultant from SBDC was invaluable to helping me understand whether or not this was a good business decision and a viable business to invest in. They also helped me refine my business plan so that I can really hone in on the aspects that will drive the business to success.”

The “new” company has recently undergone a rebranding to shift focus from lake culture to mountain life with the name Mountain and Company. Anna is currently updating the store by bringing in Colorado brands as well as creating partnerships with local guides to offer additional resources to customers.

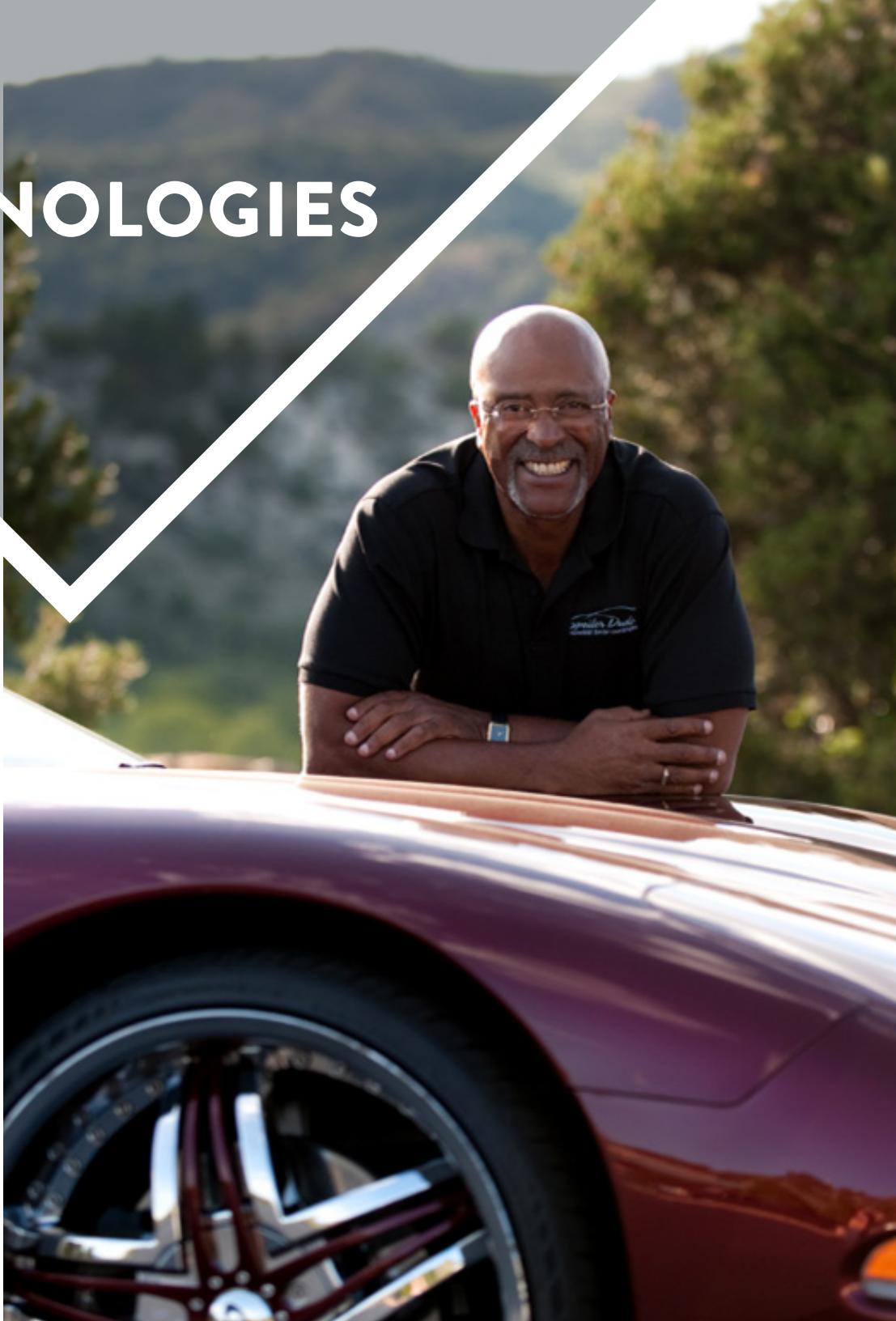
**ANNA SLADEK -  
FOUNDER  
MOUNTAIN AND COMPANY**

**NORTHWEST SBDC**



# TINT TECHNOLOGIES

“The SBDC helped me to focus on growing my business instead of working in my business.”



Paul Hasty is the owner of multiple companies in the Colorado Springs area, all centered in the automotive industry. His focus is mostly around car aesthetics, making cars look and feel fantastic. With Tint Technologies, he grew a reputation as the best window tint company in Colorado Springs, not only for any automotive needs, but also for homes and commercial buildings. Hasty uses what is known as “break-resistant” window tint, and customer testimonials have shown their appreciation for this extra safety measure.

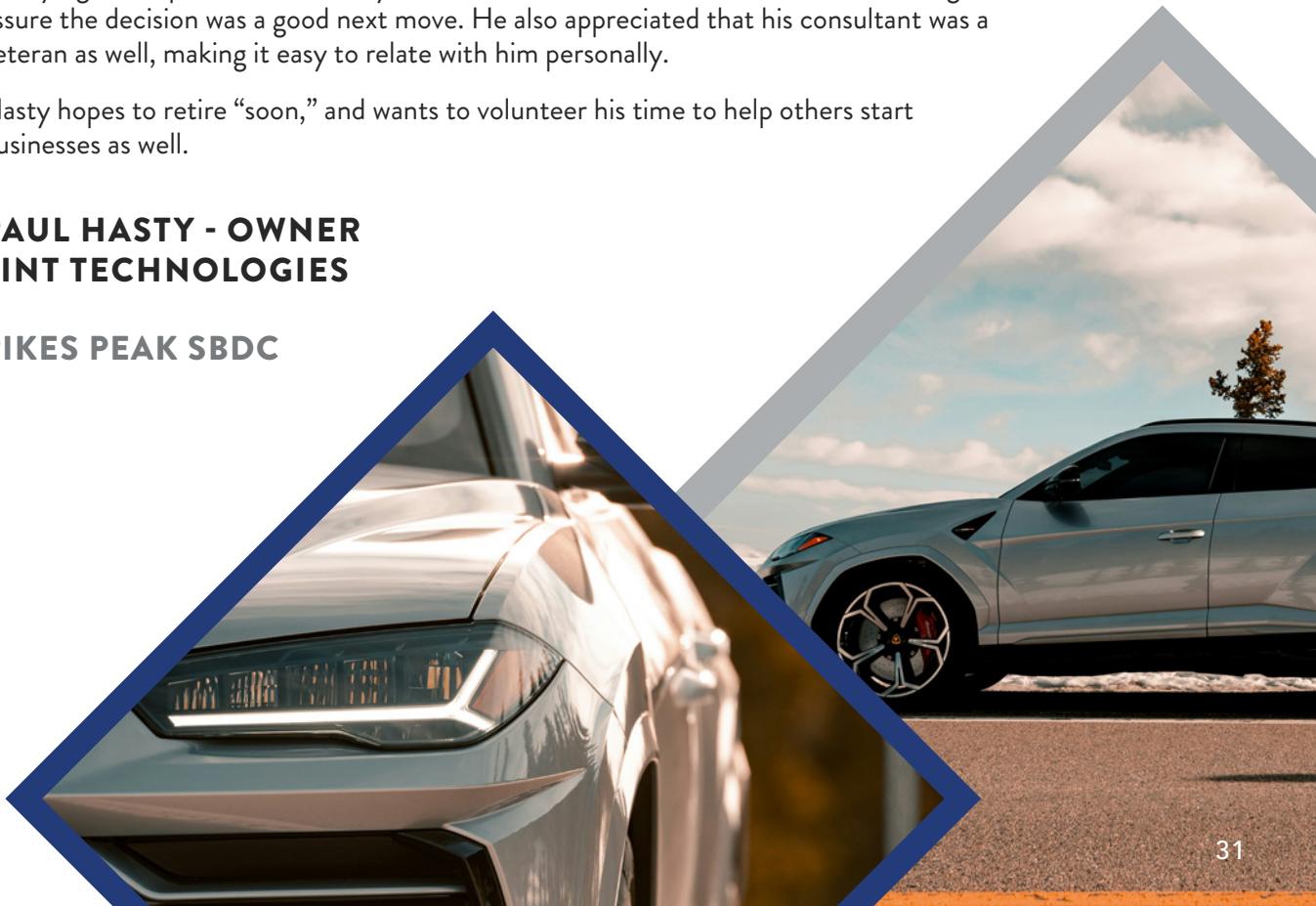
When asked why he got into the business, Hasty said with a laugh, “it looked easy initially.” Being from Detroit, however, it’s no surprise that he grew up with a love for cars. He started off installing minor car accessories and grew into working with bigger improvements, finally landing on window tint because of the importance he saw it had with car owners.

Hasty credits the SBDC for part of the growth and success his company Tint Technologies has seen, saying, “The SBDC helped me to focus on growing my business instead of working in my business.” He said it was valuable that he could have someone to talk to about his ideas for areas such as growth planning, marketing, and hiring employees. When he’d be mulling over the idea of buying a new piece of machinery, he could turn to his SBDC consultant to strategize and assure the decision was a good next move. He also appreciated that his consultant was a veteran as well, making it easy to relate with him personally.

Hasty hopes to retire “soon,” and wants to volunteer his time to help others start businesses as well.

## **PAUL HASTY - OWNER TINT TECHNOLOGIES**

### **PIKES PEAK SBDC**



# BULLFROGS AND BUTTERFLIES

“This could not have happened without FSWB and the support from the San Luis Valley SBDC. The SBDC has helped me with resources and a sounding board regarding marketing and general support. They have helped me feel like I am not doing this alone. The resources help me feel knowledgeable and confident.”



Relocating to Alamosa, Colorado in August 2022, Amie Hazlett is a wife, a mother to two daughters, and a proud owner of two dogs, seven chickens, and seven goats. Hazlett had been a wedding and family photographer for 10 years, photographing over 400 weddings. She realized that wedding photography was behind her, and wanted to fulfill her dream of owning a children's clothing store.

In February 2023, with the help of the San Luis Valley SBDC, she opened a photography studio inside of The Wet Paintbrush. Hazlett shared "The Wet Paintbrush was so kind and willing to sublet to me and my growing business."

"I found out about the FSWB (First Southwest Bank) Community Fund Loan through the San Luis Valley SBDC. I gathered more information about the FSWB Community Fund Loan and was impressed with how easy it seemed to attain. I was able to gather the paperwork and submit the application within a few weeks. It was an impressive process and honestly rather simple," said Hazlett.

She began ordering items wholesale and set up a booth at First Fridays in downtown Alamosa. The feedback from the public was nothing short of welcoming. Hazlett noticed a growing opportunity and said, "A children's clothing store wasn't just a want, but a need for the community."

Hazlett's store, Bullfrogs and Butterflies opened its brick-and-mortar location in November 2023, ideally situated on the main street in Alamosa. Devoted to her customers, Hazlett is always willing to meet someone at the store for a private shopping trip. Additionally, Bullfrogs and Butterflies offers a professional photography studio, available for other photographers to rent. "I have always believed that a strong community supports and helps others," Hazlett shared.

She plans to continue to grow and provide an inventory that will meet her community's needs. Hazlett also recently successfully launched an online store.

Hazlett stated, "This could not have happened without FSWB and the support from the San Luis Valley SBDC. The support from the community is what keeps small businesses thriving! The SBDC has helped me with resources and a sounding board regarding marketing and general support. They have helped me feel like I am not doing this alone. The resources help me feel knowledgeable and confident. I have never felt the kind of support in my business before moving here."

## **AMIE HAZLETT - OWNER BULLFROGS AND BUTTERFLIES**

### **SAN LUIS VALLEY SBDC**

# KAT FOX DESIGN LLC

“I went from trying to find a client here and there to running a successful, full-time business thanks to the SBDC.”



Kat Fox, the founder of Kat Fox Design LLC, never envisaged a career in web design until her natural affinity for computers and art merged seamlessly during her formative years. Experimenting with HTML in kindergarten, tinkering with social media, and showing an initial interest in art and jewelry design, Fox went on to solidify her skills in the digital realm.

Her trajectory took an unexpected turn, however, when she attended jewelry school in New York City, where she adeptly incorporated graphic design tools into her craft. Despite the school's emphasis on traditional techniques, Fox found herself leveraging design software to streamline her work, recognizing its efficiency and time-saving capabilities.

After relocating to Canyon City, Colorado, Fox fully embraced her inclination toward marketing, website design, and graphic design, and in 2020 she transitioned her skills into the full-fledged business venture, Kat Fox Design LLC.

As she ventured into freelancing, Fox explains that her "big break" came through her work with the Southern Colorado SBDC. According to Fox, "I went from trying to find a client here and there to running a successful, full-time business thanks to the SBDC."

Specializing in website design tailored for e-commerce and brand identity development, Fox focuses on empowering small businesses to establish a strong, online presence. Her commitment lies in simplifying the process for clients while ensuring their online platforms resonate with their target audiences.

The growth of Kat Fox Design has been remarkable, and her vision for the future includes continuous learning, multitasking, and serving as a go-to resource for businesses.

Fox's commitment, resourcefulness, and innate ability to navigate the evolving landscape of digital entrepreneurship has yielded small business success.

**KAT FOX - FOUNDER  
KAT FOX DESIGN LLC**

**SOUTHERN COLORADO SBDC**



# CHOICE ATHLETICS

“They connected me with Bob Jagdfeld. He helped me get a business plan together and gave me a spreadsheet to work on projections and financials. We had several meetings, and Bob helped me fine tune the plan so I could get a loan from Region 9.”



For years, Dennis Dempsie watched local baseball teams in Bayfield and Durango, Colorado struggle to stay competitive because of the short practice season afforded by local weather. For young athletes with aspirations to play college or even professional ball, this was a huge disadvantage.

He realized teams desperately needed an indoor training facility, so he reached out to the SBDC to get information about starting a business. “They connected me with Bob Jagdfeld. He helped me get a business plan together and gave me a spreadsheet to work on projections and financials. We had several meetings, and Bob helped me fine tune the plan so I could get a loan from Region 9.”

It took about two and a half years for Dempsie to find the right location. He looked at numerous facilities but struggled to find one that was reasonably priced and didn’t need extensive work to get up to code. Toward the end of 2022, he found a 5,000-square-foot training facility in the nearby Grandview area. He began ordering all of the equipment in January 2023, and by May, Choice Athletics opened its doors.

The facility features batting cages with hand-fed or automatically operated machines, 3,200 square feet of turf space, a large indoor golf simulator, and tons of high-tech equipment. “Our technology allows players to track and manage pitching, hitting, and more. Our golf simulator features a 16’ x 10’ curved screen with more than 55 pro courses. It’s superior to anything in the area.”

The space can also be rented out for parties. The simulator has more than 30 games including bowling, horseshoes, corn hole, alien shooting, and more.

The Fort Lewis Girls Softball Team recently signed an agreement to use the facility several nights a week and Dempsie hopes other teams will soon follow suit. The dynamic facility could help carry teams and athletes to continue, no matter the time of year or weather, which has been integral to Dempsie’s vision from day one. In the coming years, his expansion plans include offering an athletic training area complete with space for weight training, stretching, and more.

In offering advice to aspiring small business owners, Dempsie suggests to “Do your research. Reach out to the SBDC and other business owners. Even if they aren’t in your industry, there are plenty of tidbits you can pull from. Start talking to anyone, and you will find local support.”



## DENNIS DEMPSIE - OWNER CHOICE ATHLETICS

### SOUTHWEST SBDC

# SOM FOOTWEAR

“The consultant from SBDC was invaluable to helping me understand whether or not this was a good business decision and a viable business to invest in. They also helped me refine my business plan so that I can really hone in on the aspects that will drive the business to success.”



An avid runner for many years, Sense of Motion (SOM) Footwear founder Olivier Marchal was stopped in his tracks by back pain. Seeking solutions, he removed his running shoes and set out barefoot on a Colorado dirt road, inspired by the minimalist footwear and incredible long-distance running feats of the Tarahumara Indians chronicled in Christopher McDowell's book "Born to Run."

When Marchal slipped out of his running shoes, the pain was gone. Underwhelmed by the minimalist footwear on the market and discouraged that all options were from overseas, he set out to make shoes for runners and people seeking casual shoes that put as little between feet and the ground as possible. A metal worker by trade, Marchal was emphatic about fully crafting the shoes in the United States.

Every pair of shoes are designed, cut, sewn, shaped, laced, and boxed in the SOM Footwear factory in Montrose, Colorado, and are sold both online and at their factory outlet store. Customers are invited to try SOM shoes risk-free, and the results are favorable with more than 50% of customers returning to purchase additional pairs. Through lightweight and flexible materials and barefoot-inspired design, SOM shoes improve balance, movement, and strength by allowing people to step naturally.

Marchal serves as CEO, manages production, creates new shoe models, and improves existing products. His wife, Nathalie Bouchard, oversees customer service, marketing, and finances as CFO and describes starting and growing a footwear company as "a beautiful roller coaster."

The couple attended classes about pricing, business planning, and human resources through the West Central Colorado SBDC, and took part in Sounding Board sessions with other business owners. In addition, they sought the advice of SBDC consultants regarding financing new shoe molds, pricing, and marketing.

"We appreciate the people at SBDC because they are always there to answer questions when time is critical. Their network is very precious and becomes handy at any given moment. SBDC is the first source we had as business owners to find resources," Bouchard shares.

Starting a business and helping it grow also is very rewarding. Bouchard says "Over the years, we've always appreciated our customer's feedback and constructive reviews."

**OLIVIER MARCHEL - FOUNDER & CEO  
NATALIE BOUCHARD - CFO  
SOM FOOTWEAR**

**WEST CENTRAL SBDC**



**Thank You To Our**

# **Host Organizations**

The Colorado Small Business Development Center Network would like to sincerely thank each of our host organizations throughout the state. Because of your effort, support, and community dedication, Colorado's economic development continues to thrive. We are looking forward to an amazing 2024 together!



**CITY OF AURORA**

**AURORA-SOUTH METRO**



**CITY OF BOULDER**

**BOULDER**



**CHAFFEE COUNTY**

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**DENVER METRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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**BUSINESS INCUBATOR CENTER**

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FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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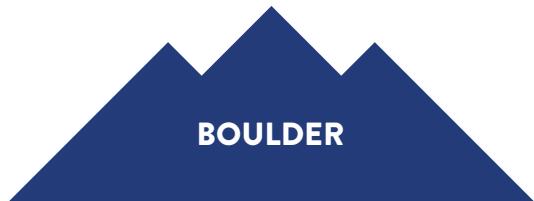
SOUTHWEST  
COLORADO



REGION 10

WEST  
CENTRAL

# Colorado SBDC Network Locations & Websites



## BOULDER

1500 Pearl St., Suite 300  
Boulder, CO 80302  
[bouldersbdc.com](http://bouldersbdc.com)



## DENVER METRO

1445 Market St.  
Denver, CO 80202  
[denversbdc.org](http://denversbdc.org)



2591 Legacy Way  
Grand Junction, CO 81503  
[grandjunctionsbdc.org](http://grandjunctionsbdc.org)



## AURORA-SOUTH METRO

15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. #2300  
Aurora, CO 80012  
[aurora-southmetrosbdc.com](http://aurora-southmetrosbdc.com)



## CENTRAL MOUNTAIN

The Sherman Building Lofts  
123 G Street, Suite 29, Salida, CO 81201  
[centralsbdc.org](http://centralsbdc.org)



## EAST COLORADO

800 17th St, Kepner Hall #0025  
Greeley, CO 80631  
[eastcoloradosbdc.com](http://eastcoloradosbdc.com)



## LARIMER

4616 South Shields St,  
Blanca Peak 151  
Fort Collins, CO 80526  
[larimersbdc.org](http://larimersbdc.org)



## **NORTH METRO DENVER**

3645 W. 112th Ave.  
Westminster, CO 80031  
[northmetrosbdc.com](http://northmetrosbdc.com)



## **NORTHWEST COLORADO**

500 Broadway  
Eagle, CO 81631  
[northwestsbdc.org](http://northwestsbdc.org)



## **PIKES PEAK**

Catalyst Campus  
559 East Pikes Peak Avenue, Suite 101  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903  
[pikespeaksbdc.org](http://pikespeaksbdc.org)



## **SAN LUIS VALLEY**

ASU School of Business  
208 Edgemont Blvd, Alamosa, CO 81101  
[slv-sbdc.com](http://slv-sbdc.com)



## **SOUTHERN COLORADO**

121 W City Center Drive, Suite 150  
Pueblo, CO 81003  
[southerncoloradosbdc.org](http://southerncoloradosbdc.org)



## **SOUTHWEST COLORADO**

Fort Lewis College Center for Innovation  
835 Main Ave – Suite 225, Durango, CO 81301  
[sbdcfortlewis.org](http://sbdcfortlewis.org)



## **WEST CENTRAL**

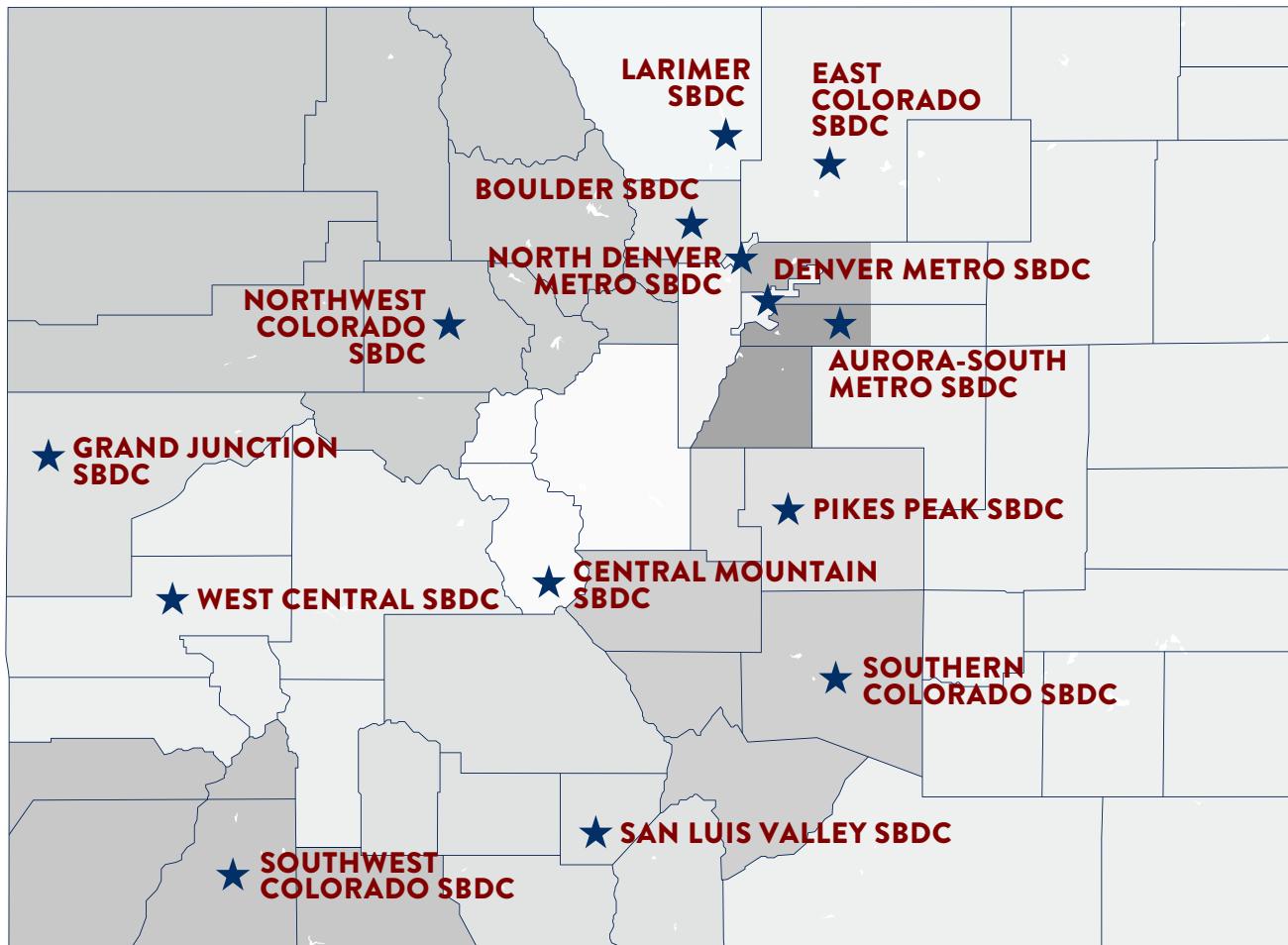
145 S Cascade Avenue  
Montrose, CO 81401  
[r10sbdc.org](http://r10sbdc.org)



Small Business Development Center Network

## Colorado Small Business Development Center Locations

SBDC.COLORADO.GOV  
303-860-5881 | [sbdc@state.co.us](mailto:sbdc@state.co.us)



★ Full-time SBDC Center (advising and training)