

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Dear EDCC,

I'd like to express my support for HB 24-1160, the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program (EDO Action Grant) set to play a pivotal role in advancing economic development initiatives across the state of Colorado.

As the CEO of Western Colorado Business Development Corp. Db a Business Incubator Center, and a recipient of an EDO Action Grant, I've witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of the grant program on economic development and positively impacting small businesses by helping Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) like ours build capacity in our rural and local communities.

My organization supports the bill's objective to create a sustainable grant program within the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). I believe that allocating \$2 million in grants to EDOs will undoubtedly enhance the capacity to implement and promote programs fostering a robust and resilient economy, as well as allow for long-term sustainable planning for resilient economic growth.

The success that the grant program has proved so far, including the creation of 33 new businesses, assistance to 612 businesses, and the creation of 268 new jobs, underscore the program's effectiveness. However, there's more work to be done, this bill will undoubtedly aid spur significant impact.

In light of the program's evident success and its potential to further empower EDOs in our mission, I endorse the continuation of the grant program through HB 24-1160. The stability and support offered by this legislation will allow EDOs to concentrate on improving economic conditions in our communities rather than diverting resources to fundraising efforts.

Thank you for your dedication to advancing economic development in Colorado. I look forward to seeing this crucial legislation pass and witnessing the continued success of EDOs in our state.

Sincerely,

Dalida Sassoon Bollig

Dalida Sassoon Bollig, CEO

Western Colorado Business Development Corp.
DBA Business Incubator Center



CITY OF CAÑON CITY

Economic Development

P.O. Box 1460 • 128 Main Street
Cañon City, CO 81215-1460
(719) 269-9011 • Fax: (719) 269-9017

February 20, 2024

Re: HB24-1160: Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

Dear Legislative Leaders;

I write today on behalf of the EDC's Government Affairs Committee in support of HB24-1160. As one of the oldest rural municipalities in the state, founded in 1860 and incorporated in 1872, we know firsthand the critical work our City economic development staff and our partnering EDO, Fremont Economic Development Corporation, provide to our community and region. We also know how critical economic development is to the entire State, and particularly the Southern Colorado region we serve through efforts in tech sector partnerships, our START initiatives in technology (TechSTART), wellness (WellSTART) and our newest agricultural incubator system, AgSTART. We also help strengthen the state and entire Southern Colorado region through shared efforts such as Southern Colorado Startup Week. All these efforts are very well supported by private industry as well.

With ever-growing dynamics and challenges tertiary to the traditional efforts of economic development – economic development is affected by literally everything in the economy – we find ourselves with staff being spread thin and financial resources falling short of a level necessary to fully support all the initiatives we would like. Weaknesses in the economy are continuing to leave large gaps of unfilled service need that we in economic development must address. As such, anytime we can find opportunities to spur action through catalyst grant, it allows us to take on an initiative, fund its development, and gives us time to sustain it. The EDO Action Grant program does just that.

In the cases of Cañon City and Fremont County, we are very proud of the interest that has been generated in our initiatives and responses to recent private investment in the community, as well as the support funding we've received. We are proud to have weathered the pandemic and are experiencing post-pandemic growth. One of the items the pandemic showed us, however, is just how tenuous some of our relationships with industry are – especially when they are struggling financially. Retention is one of the most important efforts we employ to benefit our businesses and community. With little state assistance provided to aid our efforts, we committed to expanding our retention efforts ourselves by launching a Small Business Liaison position with the simple mission of meeting our businesses where they work and asking how we can help. While that sounds simple, it in fact is hard in practice, as much trust still needs to be rebuilt. While we do rely on the expertise of others in the industry, we would welcome the opportunity to apply for grant funding to help in our rural efforts of retention and growth.

We believe this program will be a catalyst for many more organizations if funded – and in turn will lead to economic prosperity for more of our residents. If you have any questions about our community or have any other curiosities about all that’s happening in Cañon City, please don’t hesitate to give me a call at 719-429-8132. There is a lot going on here that will surely brighten your perspective of our rural community. Investment is leading the way with catalyst projects that are paving the way to future growth.

Thank you for passing HB24-1160!

Best regards,



Rick Harrmann
Economic Development Manager
City of Cañon City
rlharrmann@canoncity.org



February 20, 2024

The Honorable Representative Judy Amabile
Chair, Business Affairs and Labor Committee
200 E Colfax, Room 307
Denver, CO 80203

Subject: SUPPORT HB24 – 1160

Dear Representative Amabile:

This serves as a letter of strong support for **HB24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grants Program** from the Board and staff of the Economic Development Association for Black Communities. This bill provides critical capacity-building support for Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) to engage in the vital work of ensuring Colorado's competitiveness.

Colorado is in an enviable position with the TechHub designation, the National Science Foundation Regional Innovation Engines grant, and the benefits associated with the CHIPS Act. EDOs need additional support as they develop inclusive workforce and small business ecosystem strategies to capitalize on these transformational opportunities.

We urge you to vote in favor of HB24-1160 and to encourage your colleagues to do the same. This bill is a wise and necessary investment in the competitiveness of our state and local economies.

Thank you for your attention and your service.

Tricia Allen

Tricia Allen
Chief Program Officer
Economic Development Association for Black Communities



402 Valley Road, Canon City, CO 81212
Phone: (719) 275-8601, Email: brown@fedc.co

February 20, 2024

Attn: House Business and Labor Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC), I am advocating for HB 24-1160, which establishes the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program. We currently are recipients of the EDO Action Grant, which supports our initiative for a new business diversity program. This funding enables us to better serve our historically under-resourced businesses and foster a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive business environment in Fremont County.

Similar to many rural areas, Fremont County faces typical challenges associated with its rural and economically disadvantaged status. These challenges include limited financial resources to independently develop comprehensive business initiatives. The grant has allocated additional staff resources to FEDC, empowering us to implement tailored economic development strategies that address the specific needs of our community. These strategies are yielding positive results, as evidenced by the growth and resilience of a more diverse range of businesses and talent in our community, which contribute to the economic vibrancy and sustainability of Fremont County.

We humbly request the passage of HB 24-1160, which would secure desperately needed resources to support economic development throughout Colorado, specifically in local rural areas such as ours.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert V. Brown'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert V. Brown
Executive Director



HOUSE BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND LABOR HOUSE COMMITTEE

COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY
200 E. Colfax, RM 307
Denver, CO. 80203

February 21, 2024

Dear Representatives,

Please consider this letter an expression of the Eagle Chamber of Commerce's full support of HB 24-1160. The Eagle Chamber was awarded an EDO Action Grant of which is currently being implemented in our rural community. With affordable housing being the number one barrier to local business stability and growth, our Chamber seeks alternative solutions to hiring and retaining employees, despite the housing crisis. Our strategy is to identify opportunities to maximize local workforce within our already established population.

The EDO Action Grant we are currently implementing has given us the opportunity to identify an underserved portion of our population that lack the basic computer literacy skills needed in order to leverage their ability to compete in the local employment market. Our program aims to educate students with basic computer skills and then connect the students with local, under-resourced employers who are hiring. Under the current program, our first of two classes of students is set to graduate on April 16, 2024. Through student surveying, we've been able to identify desired jobs of the students. We will be producing a job fair during the graduation event that includes employers who are offering employment opportunities that align with the student survey results.

Our community engagement efforts indicate local businesses are keen to participate in some way. An example of this is our community engagement results with Comcast, who has donated sixty new laptops with pre-installed Microsoft Student packages. After students prove a commitment to the Computer Literacy Education, these laptops are gifted to them so that they may continue utilizing and augment the skills they gained from the classes and give them the ability to effectively apply for employment online and increase their level of qualifications as an employee into the future. Thirty of the sixty laptops are being used for the current EDO Action Grant, so we will have thirty more ready to be utilized for the next educational sessions - of which we do not yet have a funding source.

Continuance of this program will only increase community engagement as we work to foster a more qualified workforce, and, by default, improve the lives of individuals within our community, while developing a more attractive business environment. It is only because of the EDO Action Grant that we have been able to foster local support to implement this program. As a non-profit organization, our Chamber will not have the resources to continue the program without a future EDO Action Grant. It is for this reason that I urgently request for your support of HB 24-1160, so that we will have the opportunity to apply to continue our Computer Literacy Program through a future EDO Action Grant.

With sincere gratitude, I thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Morgan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

MICHELLE MORGAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

(970) 306-2262
100 Fairgrounds Rd., PO Box 0964
Eagle, Colorado 81631
www.eaglechamber.co
michelle.morgan@eaglechamber.co



February 20, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

Subject: Support for HB 24-1160 - Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

As the Executive Director of the Kiowa County Economic Development Foundation (KCEDF), I am reaching out to express our strong endorsement of HB 24-1160, which seeks to establish the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program within the Colorado Office of Economic Development.

This legislation marks a pivotal advancement in bolstering Colorado-based Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), such as KCEDF. It aims to provide grants that enhance our capabilities to tailor and execute community-specific economic development programs, aligning seamlessly with our mission to promote sustainable growth and improve the quality of life in Kiowa County.

The proposed allocation of \$2 million from the general fund to the Economic Development Organization Grant Program Cash Fund is critical. It will empower organizations statewide, including ours, to broaden and deepen our impact on economic development and community welfare.

In the context of Kiowa County, where resources are scarce but the need for development is great, this bill could be transformative. **Recently, due to financial constraints, my role was adjusted from full-time to part-time, limiting my capacity to serve the community. Additional jobs have become necessary to sustain my livelihood, further detracting from my dedication to KCEDF's objectives.** The passage of HB 24-1160 would provide essential support and resources, enabling us to further our efforts and, by extension, enhance the economic fabric of communities like ours throughout Colorado.

We appreciate your consideration of our support for this crucial piece of legislation and are keenly anticipating the positive changes it will usher in for economic development initiatives across the state.

Sincerely,

Cindy McLoud

Cindy McLoud
Executive Director

DOWNTOWN COLORADO

 inc.

February 21, 2024

RE: HB 24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Members of the House Business Affairs and Labor committee

My name is Katherine Correll and I serve as the Executive Director of Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI). I am writing today in support of HB 24-1160.

There are very few grants that economic development organizations (EDOs) and Title 31 special district members like Urban Renewal Authorities, Downtown Development Authorities, and Business Improvement Districts are eligible for. We also support small, rural economic development organizations who have no full time staff and besides our work, these funds have proven to be the only other resource to build their capacity without significant hurdles that are unfair burdens on the lowest capacity organizations in our state. The Economic Development Organization Action Grant opens the door for EDOs and interested quasi-governmental districts to build capacity and create new initiatives that are otherwise out of reach.

DCI was formed as a non-profit, member-based organization to provide advocacy and education around economic development in downtowns throughout the state, urban and rural, and we support communities in every region of the state. Our smaller communities, rural EDOs, and special district partners are eager for capacity building opportunities, recognizing the value of the investment in their local economic development programs. We love to partner with the State of Colorado, public, and private sector partners to empower our members, and we would highly encourage them to participate in the proposed EDO grant program to further develop their local economies. In rural communities in particular, the local downtown is often the center of economic activity, and the impact of prosperity serves stakeholders miles away.

Ongoing, predictable funding opportunities would allow DCI to educate our membership on regular funding opportunities, creating a more deliberate, thoughtful plan for executing the goals of the EDO grant program.

We strongly urge the approval of HB 24-1160. This is a tool that will strengthen EDOs, create jobs and increase economic wealth for communities and the State.

Sincerely,

Kat Correll

Katherine Correll
Executive Director

February 21, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

This statement from the Asian Chamber of Commerce Colorado is in support of HB 24-1160, Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program.

The Asian Chamber of Commerce Colorado (ACC) actively promotes concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing culturally competent economic development and business opportunities to our Members, Partners, Sponsors, and the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Small Business Community.

From 2020-2022, AANHPI Small Businesses in Colorado were severely impacted by the dual effects of COVID19 and anti-Asian hate. Due to false rhetoric blaming COVID on AANHPIs, many AANHPI small businesses statewide, particularly restaurants, realized a 30-40% decrease in revenue and patronage before the official “shutdown” in March 2020. AANHPI small businesses in Colorado reported acts of assault and vandalism (graffiti, property damage, even arson) which increased their losses. Unfortunately, cultural challenges and language access exacerbated the difficulties of applying for relief & recovery funding and traditional capital.

During this time, the Asian Chamber of Commerce Colorado was, and remains, the only agency dedicated to this unique demographic with the ability to make productive connections between corporate, government, NPOs and the AANHPI Small Business community. However, capacity issues (staffing, funding, etc.) impacted on our ability to provide support outside of the Denver Metro Area.

In May 2023, the Asian Chamber of Commerce was honored to be a recipient of a \$40,000 grant from the EDOAG Program. This funding has enabled the ACC to increase our staff and outreach to Colorado Springs AANHPI small businesses, providing 1-on-1 business counseling and making appropriate connections. The ACC has secured resources such as the Regional SBA, Pikes Peak Workforce Center, and the Colorado Springs SBDC. ACC has also connected with local elected officials and has participated in AANHPI cultural events. The EDOAG funding also enables the ACC to provide translation (into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean) of marketing materials from the aforementioned resources – including Japanese translations for Mayor Mobolade Office.

It is imperative that equitable outreach is made to underserved minority small businesses throughout the State. Therefore, the Asian Chamber of Commerce Colorado highly supports the passage of HB 24-1160 so that the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program can continue as an essential part of Colorado’s economic growth and opportunity. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Fran Campbell

President / CEO
Asian Chamber of Commerce Colorado



444 Sherman St., Ste DBC | Denver, CO 80203 | 303-595-9737 Office | 720-480-8310 Cell
fcampbell@acccolorado.org | www.acccolorado.org



February 20, 2024

Re: HB24-1160: Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Our Legislative Leaders,

I write today on behalf of the EDC's Government Affairs Committee in support of HB24-1160. As the oldest EDO in the state of Colorado (founded in 1955), we know firsthand the critical work our organizations provide to our communities. Additionally, we know that economic development is one of the core functions of government that the private sector willfully subsidizes through financial support.

With ever growing dynamics and challenges tertiary to the traditional efforts of economic development, we find ourselves with staff being spread thin and the resources not at a level to fully support all the initiatives we would like. Anytime we can find opportunities to spur action through catalyst grant, it allows us to take on an initiative, fund its development, and gives us time to sustain it. The EDO Action Grant program does just that.

In the case of the Jeffco EDC, we were proud to receive one of the pilot grants. One of the items the pandemic showed us was how shallow some of our relationships with industry were – when they were not in growth mode. Yet retention is one of the most important aspects to any community, yet no one at a local, regional, or state level was solely focused on retention. We launched a positions that is simple in theory – go meet our businesses and ask how we can help – but that is hard in practice as much trust needs to be built. Our metrics have grown exponentially as this money spurred our ability to launch this role and now we fully sustain it within our budget. Additionally it led to the launch of the bizhub.jeffcoedc.org – an online platform for primary employers. From this process, we are in the process building out the same platform that connects these businesses directly with the hundreds of resources available to them. Additionally, we will be standing up a native Spanish language site with the same information. Without this grant – these idea would still be on the shelf.

We believe this program will be a catalyst for many more organizations if funded – and in turn will lead to economic prosperity for more of our residents. I am happy to answer any questions on this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jansen K Tidmore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "T".

Jansen K Tidmore

President | CEO



Terry Schwindler, CEcD
Business Development Manager
Town of Windsor Economic Development
301 Walnut St., Windsor, CO 80550
tschwindler@windsorgov.com
970-388-5190

February 20, 2024

Dear House Business and Labor Committee,

I strongly endorse HB 24-1160, the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program, sponsored by Representatives McLachlan and Bird, and Senators Zenzinger and Kirkmeyer. This bill is vital for boosting economic development in communities across our state, particularly in small and rural areas.

The program, which provides grants to economic development organizations (EDOs), has proven effective in enhancing economic growth statewide. It empowers EDOs to attract, expand, and retain businesses, fostering a more robust economy.

HB 24-1160 is inclusive, benefiting all types of EDOs, whether public or private, including workforce centers, chambers of commerce, and small business development centers. Accountability mechanisms, such as mid and one-year reviews, ensure proper fund usage.

The program's success stories demonstrate its significant impact, from job creation to increased sales tax revenue. Supporting HB 24-1160 will equip EDOs with the resources needed for economic growth and job creation. I urge you to back this legislation for a brighter economic future for Colorado.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Terry Schwindler

Terry Schwindler, CEcD



Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
SERVING LINCOLN COUNTY, COLORADO

February 17, 2024

Colorado General Assembly
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB24-1160

Dear Members of the Colorado Legislature,

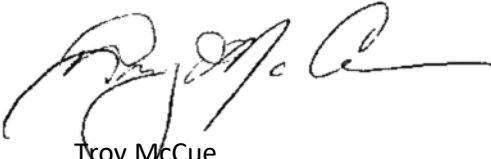
This letter is expressly written in support of House Bill 24-1160 establishing the Economic Development Action Grant Program. On its first year, we were one of the lucky organizations to be awarded this Action Grant, and we have put it to good work for the benefit of small businesses on the eastern plains.

Beginning with Lincoln County businesses, we launched a “Grow With Google” set of classes that is still ongoing through the month of May of 2024. We have had stellar participation and have impacted over twenty individuals representing 15 businesses across our rural county. Meeting monthly in Limon and Hugo, our Grow With Google classes have garnered regular, return participation and have received great reviews. In fact, it was popular and useful enough that neighboring counties of Kit Carson and Cheyenne have also asked to access the curriculum, and some introductory classes have been held.

The Economic Action Grant Program is a needed injection of robust programming for small business outreach on the rural plains. Bringing all our businesses current into the second decade of the 21st century, optimizing small business Google listings, websites, and marketing channels are helping our participant businesses to thrive and finally recover from COVID-era impacts.

Please consider this letter our full support for HB24-1160. This program has helped revolutionize our outreach, and codifying this program into the Office of Economic Development and International Trade will go a long way to keeping this viable program available to our small businesses and entrepreneurs in Colorado. Do not hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions.

Regards,



Troy McCue
Executive Director

February 21, 2024

House Business and Labor Committee
Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB 24-1160, Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

Dear Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Grand Junction Economic Partnership to express our full support for HB 24-1160. This bill represents a crucial step forward in fostering economic growth and prosperity, not only for the Grand Junction area but for the entire state of Colorado.

At the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, our mission is to promote sustainable economic development in the region by attracting and retaining businesses, fostering innovation, and creating quality job opportunities for our residents. We firmly believe that HB 24-1160 aligns with our goals and will significantly contribute to our efforts.

The provisions outlined in HB 24-1160 are essential for increasing the capacity of EDOs to implement and promote programs and initiatives that support the development of a robust economy, that will in turn attract, expand, and retain businesses in the regions across the state.

As representatives of the Grand Junction area business community, we have witnessed firsthand the challenges and opportunities facing our region. We believe that HB 24-1160 represents a significant opportunity to address these challenges proactively and create an environment where businesses can flourish.

In conclusion, we urge the members of the House Business and Labor Committee to support HB 24-1160 and advance this critical piece of legislation for the benefit of businesses, workers, and communities across Colorado. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require further information. Sincerely,



Curtis Englehart
Executive Director
Grand Junction Economic Partnership
122 North 6th Street
Grand Junction, CO 81501
curtis@gjep.org
970-245-4332 x5

February 21, 2024

House Business and Labor Committee
Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB 24-1160, Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

Dear Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Grand Junction Economic Partnership to express our full support for HB 24-1160. This bill represents a crucial step forward in fostering economic growth and prosperity, not only for the Grand Junction area but for the entire state of Colorado.

At the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, our mission is to promote sustainable economic development in the region by attracting and retaining businesses, fostering innovation, and creating quality job opportunities for our residents. We firmly believe that HB 24-1160 aligns with our goals and will significantly contribute to our efforts.

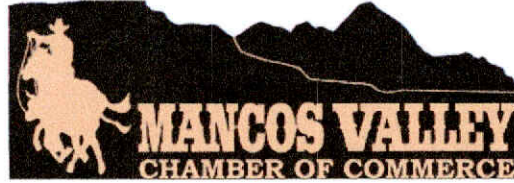
The provisions outlined in HB 24-1160 are essential for increasing the capacity of EDOs to implement and promote programs and initiatives that support the development of a robust economy, that will in turn attract, expand, and retain businesses in the regions across the state.

As representatives of the Grand Junction area business community, we have witnessed firsthand the challenges and opportunities facing our region. We believe that HB 24-1160 represents a significant opportunity to address these challenges proactively and create an environment where businesses can flourish.

In conclusion, we urge the members of the House Business and Labor Committee to support HB 24-1160 and advance this critical piece of legislation for the benefit of businesses, workers, and communities across Colorado. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require further information.
Sincerely,



Curtis Englehart
Executive Director
Grand Junction Economic Partnership
122 North 6th Street
Grand Junction, CO 81501
curtis@gjep.org
970-245-4332 x5



February 20, 2024

RE: Support for [HB 24-1160](#) Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce, who in partnership with the Town of Mancos and Mancos Creative District, was a recipient of \$29,000 in OEDIT grant funding in 2023. We strongly support passage of HB 24-1160 to ensure the sustainability of our rural economic development efforts.

We applied for the grant last year to prepare our creative industries businesses for the crucial tourist season and to strengthen signature events in June through December which draw thousands of visitors to our rural town. Receiving this funding was a game-changer. We were able to add strategic layers to existing events (BurroFest, Mancos Art Market and Olde Fashioned Christmas) that improved retailer salesmanship and raised public awareness which translated into shopping, dining and overnight stays. We were also able to revive a past event, Grand Summer Nights, which included music, art and food on Saturdays in July, driving foot traffic and retail sales to our downtown core.

With the funding, we held workshops for retailers, hired professional event managers and local musicians. We also created a multi-media ad campaign for print, radio and social media. Retailer participation, traffic and sales increased throughout the event season. For BurroFest alone, there were at least 2,000 people in attendance coming from all over the country and the world. Lodging was fully booked. Seventy-five percent of businesses surveyed reported that sales were either far above average or above average.

With the passage of HB 24-1160, rural economic development programs such as ours have an opportunity to become sustainable. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kimberly D. Campbell
Executive Director
Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce

Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce
101 E. Bauer Avenue
PO Box 494
Mancos, CO 81328
970.533.7434

<http://www.mancosvalley.com>

MI CASA
RESOURCE CENTER®

February 20, 2024

House Business and Labor Committee
Attn: Jennifer Cassell
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Cassell,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Board, staff, and community of Mi Casa Resource Center (Mi Casa) located in Denver, Colorado to support the Economic Development Council of Colorado's efforts to codify HB 24- 1160. Mi Casa fully supports the goal of the economic development organization (EDO) action grant that will increase the capacity of EDOs implement and promote programs and initiatives that support the development of a robust economy.

Mi Casa identifies and responds to the needs of low-income individuals and families to create pathways to opportunity. Since 1976, our comprehensive and community-focused programming has helped our participants to educational and economic success. As Denver's largest and longest-standing Latino-led and serving organization, we have earned community trust by providing culturally competent services grounded in community need. Mi Casa is Colorado's only Women's Business Center under the Small Business Administration and one of only a few organizations in the state that offers full-scale supports in English and Spanish.


Business Pathways at Mi Casa combines training, consulting, and wraparound services for underserved business owners and entrepreneurs at every stage. With Mi Casa's support, participants gain the skills needed to generate income, access to capital, and build wealth through business ownership.

Small businesses are a critical component of the United States economy. They generate essential revenue and jobs across the country. In the U.S., small businesses employ nearly half of the entire workforce, and account for approximately half of all sales. Additionally, small businesses create local jobs and impact. A majority hire at least one employee, most often from their local communities, directly impacting the health of individual counties and regions. They also tend to purchase inventory and equipment from other local small businesses, creating a network of economic support that ripples through the economy at large. Vulnerability for these small businesses translates into vulnerability for millions of workers and for the entire economy.

With the support of the EDO action grant, Mi Casa has been able to expand services to support small business owners in the Tri-Cities Corridor. Within a 6-month period, Mi Casa has served 23 business owners, of which 17 are women-owned. Mi Casa has offered individualized consulting services, training, and workshops to support these small business owners. Mi Casa, and many small business owners, is relying on the continued support of the EDO action grant to expand services and have a broader reach.

Please reach out to Mi Casa's Chief Executive Officer, Angeles Ortega, at aortega@micasaresourcecenter.org for any additional information.

Thank you,


Angeles Ortega, Chief Executive Officer
Mi Casa Resource Center



February 20, 2024

RE: HB 24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Members of the Business Affairs and Labor committee

My name is Sandy Head and I serve as the Executive Director for Montrose Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). I am writing today in support of HB 24-1160.

There are very few grants that economic development organizations (EDOs) are eligible for. The Economic Development Organization Action Grant opens the door for EDOs to create new initiatives that their limited funding does not allow for.

MEDC received a grant and we have been able to re-create our Manufacturers Association for that sector to meet. This is a retention effort to assist them in identifying ways to combine efforts to increase their profitability in today's challenging environment. We are also seeking ways to better educate local students about the career opportunities that exist within our local companies. The group has been meeting for three months and the energy is great, conversations are being conducted on how to overcome today's challenges.

We strongly urge the approval of HB 24-1160. This is a tool that will strengthen EDOs, create jobs and increase economic wealth for communities and the State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Head".

Executive Director
Montrose Economic Development Corporation
1601 Oxbow DR Suite 360B
Montrose, CO 81401
sandyh@MontroseEDC.org
970-249-9438



February 20, 2024

Colorado State Legislature
Members of the Business Affairs and Labor committee

RE: Support for HB 24-1160: Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Members of the Business Affairs and Labor Committee:

As the Director of the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) Economic Development District, I submit this letter in support of HB 24-1160: Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program.

NWCCOG EDD is in strong support of this bill which will earmark funding to support EDOs in developing capacity to support their local economies. This funding will increase the capacity of EDOs to implement and promote programs and initiatives that support the development of a robust economy, that will in turn attract, expand, and retain businesses in the region.

Funding to EDOs is extremely impactful in that EDOs need stable funding to focus on improving the economic conditions in their communities rather than fundraising for their existence. Local EDO's do the "boots on the ground" work in local communities including business retention and expansion, entrepreneurial support, and workforce development. Local EDOs have their pulse on the business community in their area. Thus, financial support to local EDOs strengthen local communities, which in turn will strengthen the statewide economy as a whole.

NWCCOG EDD is in strong support of HB 24-1160. If you have any questions, please contact me at 970.485.0513 or rtuyn@nwccog.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Tuyn

Rachel Tuyn
Director, NWCCOG Economic Development District
NWCCOG includes the counties of Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin and Summit

MEMBER

JURISDICTIONS

City of Glenwood Springs

City of Steamboat Springs

Town of Hayden

EAGLE COUNTY

Avon
Basalt
Eagle
Gypsum
Minturn
Red Cliff
Vail

GRAND COUNTY

Fraser
Granby
Grand Lake
Hot Sulphur Springs
Kremmling
Winter Park

JACKSON COUNTY

Walden

PITKIN COUNTY

Aspen
Snowmass Village

SUMMIT COUNTY

Breckenridge
Blue River
Dillon
Frisco
Montezuma
Silverthorne



February 21, 2024

Business Affairs & Labor Committee
Colorado House of Representatives

Re: Comment in support of HB24-1160, Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To the Committee,

The Parker Chamber of Commerce urges your SUPPORT of HB24-1160.

Economic Development organizations, including chambers of commerce like ours, do critical work to assist municipalities and counties to draw innovating job-creating businesses to our cities and towns. Some places have formal economic development operations that operate at a high level, while others depend on a small number of municipal staff, chambers, or other organizations to do the lifting.

With the immense impact of artificial intelligence and its impact on corporate efficiency, we are seeing industries and their workforce needs changing rapidly. Colorado is already stepping up to provide funding for the TRAINING needed to prepare our workforce. However, it's vital that we also invest in those who draw the most innovative technology and information companies to the state to provide those jobs. That happens with economic development.

There was a demonstrated hunger for these funds in the 2021 and 2022 grant programs. Within the community of statewide chambers, these funds enabled the creation of numerous programs in communities where other investment did not exist. Frankly, we believe investment in this area should be so much higher than what is proposed in this modest bill.

Organizations participating in economic development, at all levels, need a steady and dependable source of funding to encourage the long-range strategic thinking and planning that yields real results.

We urge you to support the funding for these grants so that organizations like ours can continue drawing in the businesses and entrepreneurs who lift up our workforce with higher-paying, higher-skilled employment opportunities.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration and support.

Respectfully,
Jon Rowlett, Government Affairs Committee
T.J. Sullivan, President & CEO

PRAIRIE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

COLORADO'S CENTRAL PLAINS



Box 202 • Stratton, Colorado 80836 • 719-348-5562 • FAX (719-348-5887) • www.prairiedevelopment.com

February 20, 2024

RE: Support of HB 24-1160 EDO Action Grant

Dear Business & Labor Committee:

Thank you for reviewing this letter in support of HB 24-1160 which establishes funding for Economic Development Organizations such as Prairie Development Corporation. Our board and I respectfully request your consideration to fund the work of EDO's like us to help build resilient and diverse communities on the eastern plains of Colorado.

Through past support, we were able to reach over 25 new or established women-owned businesses in Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties to date. We will have provided over 360 hours of professionally led, customized training to initiate and grow businesses in this rural area by May 2024 in just one new program developed. We continue to work with our partners like SBDC to develop more learning opportunities that fill gaps in establishing a business, growing a niche market and knowing your passion to make work more enjoyable for a lifetime. During the sessions, we had four new business startups involved in the professional development course provided from the funding. These new businesses include sandblasting, myofascial work, professional services, and entertainment operations.

A new business partnership was developed through the \$40,000 funding and that one partnership has helped over 20 women build their business network and increased their outreach through our networking during the events. Continuing the funding stream will improve business stability and strengthen their customer base.

As a business lender in these counties, we have learned that many businesses may not meet bank requirements for loans, and we can often help where traditional bank lenders have no flexibility or ability to lend. Using this Action Grant has increased our capacity to reach a larger market with specialized services. It has increased opportunities for their business to reach more people, which leads to a better economy in this region and eventually for Colorado as tax revenue increases.

We ask for continued support through the codification of the bill so that your great initiative will continue to build Colorado's future and grow businesses on the rural plains to support our economic development work. Thank you for the past funding award and please keep the support coming!

Sincerely,

Candace Payne
PDC Administrator



Wednesday, February 21, 2024

To Whom it May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam

I write this letter in support of HB 24-1160, a bill that will create the economic development organization (EDO) action grant program to provide grants to Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) across the state to increase the capacity of EDOs to implement and promote programs and initiatives that support the development of a robust economy, that will in turn attract, expand, and retain businesses in the regions across the state.

Prairie Rose Development is a rural-based economic development organization that facilitates the crowdfunded Kiva 0% loan program in Colorado.

No-cost Kiva loans of up to \$15,000 are available to otherwise financially excluded small business owners in the state. We have been using the \$22,000 EDO action grant we received in 2022 to primarily assist women and minority owned small business owners, many located in rural communities, and this grant will result in between \$132,000 and \$264,000 worth of new additional Kiva loans in Colorado during the 2022/2023 fiscal year.

Funds for Kiva borrowers in Colorado are almost exclusively provided by individuals, teams, companies and banks located in other states and even countries outside the United States. Our ability to use the EDO action grant program has made a HUGE difference to many small business owners in the state who otherwise would not have been able to start, grow and/or hire the employees they need to establish long term roots in Colorado.

If you have any questions about Prairie Rose Development and the work we do to advance small businesses in Colorado, please feel free to contact me at: mike@prairierosedevlopment.org or 719-751-3470

Sincerely,

Mike O'Donnell
Executive Director



Southwest Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs

February 20, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

Please accept this letter of support for **HB 24-1160, Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program.**

This grant program was vital for the Economic Development Organizations that were funded and SCAPE, the Southwest Colorado Accelerator Program for Entrepreneurs was a recipient.

SCAPE is familiar with the challenges that impact rural and small area economic development programs, and it was refreshing to see Colorado recognize the value of contributions to local communities. Communities with small populations have a great need for the offerings of the boots on the ground programs that are local and well aware of the areas needs and challenges.

Often the areas that need job creation efforts, workforce development, skills training, business mentoring, access to capital connections, and business support are not areas that have funding that can be derived from sales and property tax or corporate sponsors. It is also hard for established programs with small budgets to be eligible for federal or traditional foundation grant funding.

The first year of the EDO Action Grant was a success as it put resources into the hands of community programs that were well equipped to take actionable steps for economic resiliency.

The State of Colorado will benefit by continuing this vital program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Marsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Marsh
SCAPE Director
2615 Main Avenue
Durango, CO 81301
www.goscape.org
970-317-0880

February 21, 2024

House Business and Labor Committee

RE: HB 24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

To Whom It May Concern:

Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development, Inc. (SECED) submits this letter in support of the HB 24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program being pursued by the Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC).

SECED is a regional economic and community development organization, representing the counties of Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers and the municipalities within. We serve to support, grow and promote businesses, communities and programs and amenities that enhance the region and promote community vitality throughout. We work to assist businesses, new and existing, develop community growth through housing development, and encourage and promote tourism, outdoor recreation, and the conservation of the great assets that exist in our region. We are an organization wearing many hats and providing services to assist our counties and the municipalities to attract and retain businesses that reside within those boundaries.

EDCC's effort to apply for and continuing the EDO Action Grant Program is vital in that it provides valuable funding availability for EDOs across the state that helps increase capacity for EDOs to support and continue their work of developing robust economies in their respective areas.

As EDCC and OEDIT have crafted a viable, competitive program to disburse these funds to EDOs across the state. In the previous two funding cycles, it was overwhelmingly successful and popular, netting 82 awarded grants from the 163 application submissions. Over \$6.5M of need was identified and the funding went to urban and rural organizations of all budget sizes with the common thread being capacity building so they can continue to support and guide economic activity in their geographic area. Clearly, EDOs need stable funding to focus on improving the economic conditions in their communities rather than fundraising for their existence.

As this bill will continue the valuable work of the EDCC through a continuation of the grant program which has already successfully supported economic development activities across the state, we genuinely support their request for HB 24-1160 to continue the funding.

The impact to our small and rural communities is so valuable. This proven structure creates a sustainable grant program within OEDIT, who then contracts the program out to a statewide economic development organization, whose mission is to support and strengthen rural and urban EDOs by bolstering their efforts in developing a robust economy for their individual communities.

What is important to the Southeast, is that **ALL** EDOs are eligible. We have EDOs in the Southeast region operate on limited budgets, mostly with limited capacity (one-person offices), and so the potential of support from the EDCC, through this program, makes it possible for these organizations to continue and to potentially expand capacity. The result is then the ability to continue the valuable work of promoting economic and community development without added funding pressure to local and county governments who also have limited budgets.

For that reason, SECED is pleased to support HB 24-1160 and OEDIT and EDCC's efforts to have access to these funds. We believe it will provide valuable access to the economic development goals of our region.

Respectfully,



Stephanie Gonzales
Executive Director



February 20, 2024

Business Affairs & Labor Committee Members
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Honorable Business Affairs & Labor Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Vail Valley Partnership to express our strong support for [House Bill 24-1160](#), the Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program. Vail Valley Partnership is the regional chamber of commerce and economic development organization representing Eagle County, with over 770 members who collectively represent over 80% of the local workforce. We are dedicated to the ongoing vitality of our community, and as such we are focused on a variety of programming to support our business community and our workforce.

The establishment of the EDO Action Grant Program represents a critical step in bolstering the capacity of Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) throughout the state. By providing grants to Colorado-based EDOs, this initiative will enhance our ability to implement and promote programs and initiatives crucial to fostering a vibrant and resilient economy. These efforts are instrumental in attracting, expanding, and retaining businesses, which are essential components of regional economic vitality.

Vail Valley Partnership recognizes the importance of supporting initiatives that empower EDOs to drive economic development at a local, grassroots level. As a leading advocate for economic growth and community prosperity in the Eagle County region, we understand the significance of strategic investments in local economies. The EDO Action Grant Program aligns with our mission to lead collaboration to help cultivate a dynamic business environment and enhance the quality of life for residents and to support our businesses.

We commend the efforts of the bill sponsors and stakeholders involved in developing this legislation, as well as the Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC) for their role in administering the grant program. By codifying this initiative into OEDIT, we can ensure its continuity and effectiveness in advancing economic development statewide.

Vail Valley Partnership wholeheartedly supports HB 24-1160 and urges swift passage of this legislation. We believe that investing in the capabilities of EDOs is a strategic imperative for driving sustainable economic growth and prosperity across Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Romer", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chris Romer
President/CEO
Vail Valley Partnership



West End Economic Development Corporation

217 W. Main Street ~ PO Box 645 ~ Naturita, CO 81422 ~ 970-865-2499

www.choosewestend.org



February 20th, 2024

RE: HB24-1160 Economic Development Organization Action Grant Program

Dear Senators Zenzinger and Kirkmeyer and Representatives McLachlan and Bird,

West End Economic Development Corporation (WEEDC) has benefited greatly from the Economic Development Action Grant Program the last two years and encourages the Legislation to continue to fund the Program. WEEDC is located in the Southwest corner of Colorado, encompassing the Towns of Naturita, Norwood, and Nucla. The West End is also a Tier One Just Transition Community, losing our largest employer, the coal mine and power plant in 2019. WEEDC focuses on small business development, workforce development, community and tourism development, and more, serving approximately 2,800 people as a nonprofit.

Along with one-on-one and classroom instruction in small business development, we offer the West End Facade Improvement Grant Program. This Grant Program allows businesses to apply for a 50:50 grant to update their facades or signage, upgrade doors and windows for energy efficiency, or install new lighting to accommodate our new Dark Sky ordinances. Thus far, we have awarded 32 businesses over \$125,000 over two years. We were able to make this program successful in the first year with the support of the EDO Capacity Support Grant.

WEEDC also operates a workforce development program, including the West End Apprenticeship Program and a contractor that assists job seekers with applying for jobs. With the lack of workforce housing in the region, it is essential that we train our current and future workforce that currently lives in the West End to fit the needs of our community. The EDO Action Grant has allowed us to expand our Apprenticeship Program outside of the high school age range into all eligible workers. Currently, the Apprenticeship Program has 25% of the eligible students in the local high schools involved in multiple employers and businesses across the region as well as 4 apprentices in our new HVAC Technician program.

Because of the rural nature of our region and the few businesses available within our region, our organization is not sustainable from the support of our community alone. We are constantly seeking grant opportunities to make our organization and programming sustainable. Without an economic development organization working every single day to diversify the local economy, our region would not have survived the closure of the coal mine and power plant. We still have not returned to pre-closure numbers, but grants like the EDO Action Grant allow us to continue the programs that make our community a little more sustainable every day by providing essential capacity. It is my hope that the Legislature will understand the value this program brings to rural communities like ours and continue to support the Economic Development Organization Action Grant.

Sincerely,

Makayla Gordon

Makayla Gordon
Executive Director