

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

Catalyst

Connector

Champion

Convener



**BUILDING
COMMUNITY**

Fort Collins Area
Chamber of Commerce

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Your Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce is the trusted business champion, catalyst and convener in Northern Colorado, creating shared economic prosperity. We had an amazing 2024 and were able to continue to move the dial on key regional issues that are important to business.

Our calendar continues to be filled with conversations with key appointed and elected officials across the region. As well, we are gathering insight from business leaders on an almost constant basis. These meaningful connections allow our team to Build Community Through Business.

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce work plan centers around four catalytic initiatives that yield regional economic growth:

- **Driving Economic Success**
- **Attracting, Retaining and Aligning Talent**
- **Inspiring Regional Transportation Solutions**
- **Advancing a Business-Friendly Environment**

The Chamber, on your behalf, is driving and influencing these issues each and every day. Your investment in the Fort Collins Area Chamber is inspiring the following success for our region:

- We launched the Fort Collins Area Economic Round Table with our friends at the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County. We have been without an intentional, industry-focused economic development conversation for too long. This collaborative effort will allow us to bring a strong business voice to our economic vitality-focused work across the county.
- Your Chamber has been utilizing state and local grant dollars to prove concepts that we believe move the dial related to the creation of talent for business. That successful proof of concept work is now part of our organization with the official addition of Sector Partnership management and Work Based Learning resources at the Chamber. We are connecting businesses of all sizes to the framework to grow the future workforce, to create training pathways within their organizations, and to connect with youth and adults – our future workforce. This white-glove, industry-based work will help businesses grow in Northern Colorado.
- We continue to be the Champion and Advocate for a high-quality, well-connected transportation system that serves the entire region. I-25 is well on its way to completion. We know that the new cone zones are challenging – but they signal the full funding and completion of this important spine to our transportation system. As well, we are leading efforts, alongside elected and appointed leaders across the region, to create new funding streams to take on the next important connections in our transportation system.
- Finally, your Chamber has continued its role as Northern Colorado's lead voice of business. We spent the last year diving deep to understand your neighbors, colleagues, and elected officials' perceptions of business. I'm happy to report that small businesses are valued in our community. Housing remains a key pain point, and citizens believe our community is business-friendly. We will be able to use these insights to align systems and processes to actually be business-friendly, to take on the key issues of the day, and to create economic opportunity for all.

Thank you to the 1,164 business owners that have made an investment into the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce. Your investments make this work possible and allowed us to host 167 experiences in 2024, connecting with 8,250 attendees across signature, mid-sized and small format events.

We are honored to lead this work on your behalf and look forward to an exciting and productive 2025!

Sincerely,
Ann Hutchison, President & CEO
ahutchison@fcchamber.org

GOAL 1 – Driving Economic Success



Goal Statement: In collaboration with regional partners, the Chamber will lead the development and implementation of a plan that addresses the short, medium and long-term economic challenges facing area businesses, institutions, local governments and the total community.

2024 SUCCESSES:

The Chamber serves as a Champion for economic opportunity in Northern Colorado and a Convener that helps to connect the dots across the economic development ecosystem.

- We are four years into serving as a data hub for our business community. Working in partnership with Larimer County, Alexander and Associates and the Common Sense Institute, we are **identifying and sharing economic insights** to help our community understand the current state of affairs as well as trends that can be impactful to business. In 2024, we released **12 Recovery Dashboards, two State of Business reports, multiple Common Sense Institute reports** and were part of more than 30 presentations to various audiences sharing economic insight with our larger community.
- The Fort Collins Area Chamber is a key partner in the Regional Business Retention and Expansion effort. Alongside government economic developers across the region, we are gathering data and feedback from businesses to **understand pain points and to accelerate opportunities for businesses to grow** and create good jobs, great amenities and economic opportunities.

Finally, we are excited to announce the **Q4 launch of the Fort Collins Area Economic Roundtable** – alongside our partners the City of Fort Collins Economic Health Office and the Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development office. The Chamber, thanks to the investments of our NCP 2.0 partners, is co-creating a regular opportunity for our government-embedded economic developers to share insights with our business community and to gather private industry opportunities as we align our proactive economic development efforts – including retention and attraction.



GOAL 2 – Attracting, Retaining and Aligning Talent



Goal Statement: The Chamber will implement a variety of strategies to support employers in attracting and retaining the talent they need; our purpose is to ensure a competitive advantage for area employers through quality workers and for workers through quality jobs.

2024 SUCCESSES:

Sector Partnerships

The Chamber along with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) sponsored the first Northern Colorado Sector Academy facilitated by John Melville, Collaborative Economics, developer of the Next Gen Sector Partnership model.



Construction – Construction Con event provided hands-on, immersive experiences in construction with a job fair for 750+ attendees. Construction also focused on mental health, brain health and recovery-friendly workplaces. See videos here:



Health Care – Opportunity Now Planning Grant for re-launch after 11 years. Three new focus areas for 2025: *Collaborating on Retention and Recruitment, Better Serving the Aging Population and Strengthening Legislative Advocacy.*



Financial Services – Launched Partnership in October of 2024.

Manufacturing – Hosted NOCOM Trade Show for 375+ attendees who experienced a job fair and education panels. Insite industry tours, coffee socials, and networking happy hour events deepen their connections.



Hospitality – Formed three action teams to support Retail, Food & Beverage and Hotel industry leaders. They helped create curriculum and supported the Hospitality Career Advancement Program.



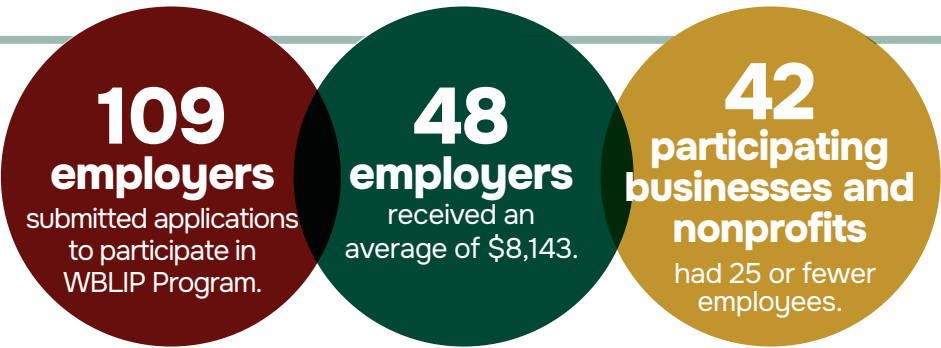
Nonprofit – Developed website to strengthen communication and resource sharing for B2B connections. Five committees working on sustainable funding, board development, improving your organization, community awareness, and workforce.



GOAL 2 – Attracting, Retaining and Aligning Talent

Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeships

The Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce is a Qualified Apprenticeship Intermediary for the Colorado State Apprenticeship Agency. Developing a work-based learning plan is the first step to building and cultivating a talent pipeline. Work-based learning (WBL) opportunities offer individuals hands-on work experience by allowing employers to help them explore potential careers and short-term work experiences.

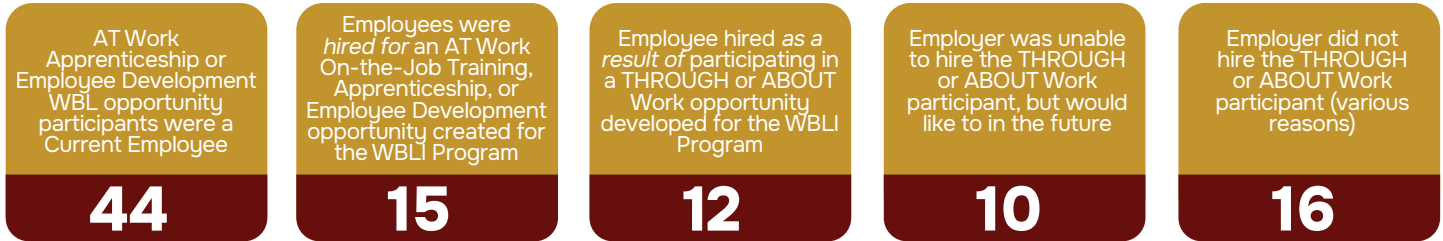


Employer participation categories (based on the Colorado Work-Based Learning Continuum)



Impact of WBL Programs on Employer Hiring and Employee Advancement

Based on 48 employers that engaged 97 participants in WBL opportunities



Employer Participation Based on Existing WBL Opportunities

Based on 48 employers



Northern Colorado Industry Sectors Represented by Employers Participating in the WBLI Program (48 employers)



“ *Stories of Impact*

FiberLok was a recipient of a Work-Based Learning Incentive Program grant and collaborated with Heather at the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce to **develop and staff an internship to bring a Graphics Manufacturing Intern on board for a 4 months**. Developing the curriculum, structure and feedback mechanisms around this student’s participation created a framework to offer other subsequent interns an **enriched experience of successive departmental rotations, weekly dialogue with managers and experience-sharing**, culminating in a presentation to the leadership team. Feedback from our intern and sharing outcomes with other local high schools led to a **significant bump in applicants for our summer internship opportunity** and an improved candidate pool overall for our temporary work opportunities. We are grateful for the chance to build out this kind of work-based learning infrastructure that translates into a better-skilled workforce in Northern Colorado.



– **FiberLok Technologies**, a manufacturer of products used to address environmental, safety, and health hazards based out of Fort Collins

I wanted to share some exciting updates [about AEI Learning]. I met with Aims Community College board of directors on October 24, 2024. They want to move forward with the integration of the AEI Learning curriculum into their institution. I have also started background checks and paperwork with Poudre School District to integrate [the curriculum] with them as well. Both are in the infant stages, but we are pushing the ball



public launch! I want to thank Heather for all her help with everything so far. We would not be anywhere near where we are now without her [support] and guidance, so THANK YOU!

– **American Electrical Innovations Ltd**, a Northern Colorado electrical contractor that specializes in residential, commercial and industrial electrical services. Cam Tietz, owner of AEI Ltd. developed the AEI Learning Electrical related instruction curriculum platform with funds from the Work-Based Learning Incentive Program grant. This curriculum was approved by the state of Colorado as part of AEI Ltd’s Registered Apprenticeship

forward a little bit at a time. **We received our first student enrollment request form the public** for the AEI Learning January semester! Huge milestone! **Current ‘test’ classes are going well, and we have been refining our systems for a smooth January 2025**



“ *Stories of Impact*

[Heather was] helpful, insightful, supportive and positive. People today are so rushed and direct; **it was nice to have someone who was there to answer questions and provide timely feedback**. Immediately after learning about the W-Based Learning Incentive program, I was intrigued by the idea of potentially **helping someone gain new experience and skills while also helping my own business find opportunities to grow**. This was a fantastic opportunity to not only look at what my business needed for potential employees but evaluate what the best use of a potential employee. My goal was to come up with a [work-based learning] plan and to evaluate what my business needs were. **That goal was absolutely met**.



– **Dawn Wilson Photography**, professional nature photography based out of Estes Park, received one-on-one support from Heather to build a new work-based learning program

As a small business going through an expansion, it was a great time to take advantage of the [Work-Based Learning Incentive Program] grant as I always intended [to try work-based learning] so it was amazing to be able to have me and my staff work on a plan and be able to execute it easily with Heather’s



support and resources. We will continue to offer work-based learning programs because **we see the need and value in our community**. It’s been wonderful to witness interest in our field from younger folks. It has ranged from **“this is what I want to do for a living”** to “I’m here for a school project only.” The latter reason is totally okay because you never know what may spark someone in the process. **I’ve enjoyed mentoring our youth, answering questions, and encouraging them to build relationships with the children.**

– **Playcrafter Kids**, a play-based preschool and performing arts program for children age 3-12 in Fort Collins



The Work-Based Learning Incentive program encouraged us to **expand our existing but limited internship program** to be something that could add 4-6 additional months of help to the organization. With limited staffing and a limited budget, this program allowed us the resources to create the documentation for the expanded position and advertise it with potential intern programs. This **expanded our position from being only nutrition- focused to also having broader nonprofit leadership training opportunities**.



Working with Heather made it so easy as she gave us all the tools and guidance to take it one step at a time but to keep moving forward. We were able to secure a spring intern and start to implement this work right away.

– **The Vegetable Connection**, a Fort Collins nonprofit offering multiple programs to assist and support disadvantaged populations with limited access to nutritious food

GOAL 3 – Inspiring Regional Transportation Solutions



Goal Statement: The Chamber will continue to lead a comprehensive, multi-year lobbying and communications campaign to secure the additional \$500M necessary to widen North I-25 to three lanes each way between Berthoud and Longmont, and the \$555M needed to complete 43 regional feeder road projects.

2024 SUCCESSES:

The Fort Collins Area Chamber is a Champion of a high-quality, well-connected, transportation system that serves the entire region.

- Because of the investments of our Northern Colorado Prospers partners, the Fort Collins Area Chamber has been, and continues to be an advocate for the expansion of North I-25. The Fort Collins Area Chamber and a multitude of government and business partners took collective action, so we now enjoy a **beautiful, free-flowing, three-lane expanded I-25 that is moving goods, services, and people** throughout the region on North I-25 Segments 6, 7, and 8.
- We have **new cone zones on Segment 5** – which we know are painful – but they signal the active completion of the final segment of North I-25 to assure that we are connected to an international airport, the urban center of Colorado and each other. The \$500M for the design and construction of this segment is fully in place thanks to the ongoing, intentional lobbying of the Chamber, area businesses and our regional government partners.
- This last year we've returned our focus to the regional connections. The Chamber joined the staff and Commissioners at Larimer County and our partners at the Loveland Chamber to understand and **create a vision for our County transportation system**. County roads and connectors are vital to a functioning system and the Fort Collins and Loveland Chambers proudly supported the referral of a .15% sales tax to the November 25 ballot to create a reliable funding stream. While we were not successful in passing the issue, we have already begun conversations with Larimer County on the next steps required to educate our local voters to be successful in 2025.
- In addition to roads and the system that functions on those roads, your Chamber is directing our energy and curiosity to the Northern Colorado Regional Airport. The airport could serve as a dynamic economic driver – with the right vision, enhancements and political support. You will see the Chamber lead several intentional conversations about a business vision for this important part of our infrastructure.

GOAL 4 – Advancing a Business-Friendly Environment



Goal Statement: The Chamber will continue in its role as the lead “voice of business” articulating the perspective of business and ensuring public officials and residents understand the importance of a thriving business community to total quality of life and the impact of the environment on business location decisions.

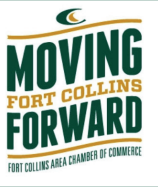
2024 SUCCESSES:

We expanded our impact and set the stage for even greater influence and business success.

- In 2024, we spent time understanding the perspective of our local citizens related to business. We gathered insights through focus groups, small group conversations and polling. The feedback was remarkable. – **Small business is valued above all else in our community.** Citizens are dedicated to supporting and encouraging small business success. Your Chamber will use this insight to continue to advocate for business solutions that help our small business partners thrive.
- **Citizens are also highly concerned about housing availability for all income levels across the region.** Your Chamber has been, and will continue to be, a key advocate for breaking down the barriers that limit the creation of housing across the region.
- **Citizens also believe that our community is business-friendly.** Perception is oftentimes not reality and we'll be using these new insights to lead efforts to align the business-friendly perceptions of our community with the reality of systems, processes and narratives that limit the ability of business to thrive.
- We've taken on a number of issues in 2024 that we know are important to business. We are advocating for and leading efforts to make the **creation of housing easier** across the state of Colorado. We passed **changes to our local land use code and to state-wide laws**. We've also led efforts to update our understanding of the **barriers to economic opportunity for citizens** – releasing with NoCo Works the External Barriers Report.
- The fostering of meaningful relationships with local elected and appointed officials and policymakers remains a key part of the Chamber's success in 2024. We have **created intentional opportunities for business leaders to interact with these leaders** and to understand the importance of a business voice in decision-making and regulation. We've **opened the door for businesses to lead conversations** around energy solutions, transportation needs, solid waste, infrastructure, land use codes, legacy decision making systems, regulation and more. This intentional connection is showcased by more than 400 meetings and conversations hosted by Chamber staff and volunteers.

The Fort Collins Area Chamber continues to support the creation of an environment for authentic, civil discourse and engagement on policies and issues that matter to you with 16 CIVIC conversations, a Land Use Code Phase Two Kick-Off, a State of Business event and our Regional Issues Summit.

2024 Impact and Value of the Fort Collins Area Chamber



\$526,888 raised during 2024 Moving Fort Collins Forward! Campaign

115 new members joined the Chamber during the campaign

Chamber 2024 Membership and Events Summary

1,164 business owners that have made an investment into the Fort Collins Area Chamber in 2024

The Chamber hosted 167 experiences

Connected with 8,250 attendees

Fort Collins Chamber Sector Partnership data: Email Participation

CONSTRUCTION	HOSPITALITY	NONPROFIT	HEALTH	FINANCIAL SERVICES	MANUFACTURING
455	176	144	492	111	800

\$357,820 Grant dollars brought into the Chamber in 2024 for workforce and talent efforts

Chambers Matter!



Chambers are Trusted: 81% of U.S. adults agree that their local chamber is a trusted resource and partner for businesses. 90% feel that their local chambers has an impact on growing the local economy.



Chamber Membership Strengthens a Business's Reputation: 64% of adults who are familiar with their local chamber are more likely to purchase goods and services for a business that they know is a member of their local chamber. 63% of these adults are more likely to recommend that business to someone else.



Chambers Serve Businesses and Communities: 76% of U.S. adults agree that local chambers are stewards of a strong local economy. 74% believe local chambers create jobs and promote local community development. 72% believe local chambers play a key role in addressing community challenges.



Business Owners See the Value: 65% of business owners see their local chamber as an advocate for initiatives and policies that are in the best interest of their business. 62% believe the chamber supports the growth and prosperity of their business.



People Want to Learn More About Their Local Chamber: 70% of U.S. adults wished they knew more about the work their local chamber does in the community. Specifically, they are most interested in learning more about the type of impact local chambers have in their community (49%), more general information about chambers of commerce (43%), and which local businesses are members (42%).

Stats provided by The Harris Poll - September 2024

THANK YOU 2024 STAFF & BOARD

Staff

Ann Hutchison, President & CEO

Yvonne Myers, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives

Kim Medina, Vice President of Development & Operations

Kevin Jones, Business Advocacy Director

Taylor Kuehn, Business Relations Coordinator

Ryan Loberger, Communications Coordinator

Mary Shore, Member Engagement Coordinator

Betty Cloud, Talent Coordinator

Heather Everett, Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship Manager

Stefanie Merrell, K-12 Work-Based Learning Business Manager

Suzanne Miller, Welcome Coordinator

Carol Zick, Welcome Coordinator

Lindsey Coyle, Welcome Coordinator

Chamber Interns:

- Danielle Mason
- Caroline Sullivan
- Sarah Withey

Board

- 2025 Board Chair, Josh Guernsey, Way Point Real Estate
- 2024 Board Chair, Miles Kailburn, OTM
- Treasurer, Brett Kemp, Flood and Peterson
- 2023 Board Chair, Ryan Schaefer, NAI Affinity
- Executive Committee, Sheri Ridgeway, Ridgeway Group Innovations
- Executive Committee, Lauren Storeby, Snack Attack
- President & CEO, Ann Hutchison, Fort Collins Area Chamber
- Darin Atteberry, Elevations Credit Union
- Kate Baker
- Clay Bartlett, Coan, Payton & Payne, LLC
- Carrie Baumgart, Markley Motors Inc.
- Kristin Candella, Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity
- Mat Dinsmore, Wilbur's Total Beverage
- Carrie Gillis, Somerset & New Colony Apartments
- Brandon Grebe, UpLift Development Group
- Jennifer Guerro-Johnson, The Light Center
- Nick Haws, Northern Engineering Group
- Kyle Henley, Colorado State University
- Brent Keele, Keele & Parke
- Patrick McMeekin, Hartford Home
- Amy Pezzani, Food Bank for Larimer County
- Dan Provaznik, Woodward
- Dan Soukup, Soukup, Bush & Associates, P.C.
- Kevin Unger, UCHealth Northern Colorado Region
- Brandon Wells, The Group, Inc

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Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce

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