



## **Economic Development Solutions for Colorado On the Road to Making Colorado Synonymous with Innovation**

**Hickenlooper for Colorado Values:** To retain, expand and attract business across the State, making Colorado the strongest economy in the nation. Colorado can and should be synonymous with innovation.

"We are on the road today to making Colorado synonymous with innovation."  
--John Hickenlooper

### **Background**

The number one job for Colorado's next Governor will be job creation and economic recovery. No doubt about it. Starting a business, meeting a payroll, balancing budgets and growing jobs are issues Colorado's next Governor should know. As the owner of Denver's first successful brewpub and as the Mayor of Colorado's largest city, practical experience in creating jobs, attracting investment and expanding economic opportunity has been at the core of our record.

Part of successful economic development is establishing the right brand. We want people from other states to visit and enjoy Colorado, and we want to attract good-paying jobs. In an increasingly competitive global economy, where Colorado farmers, engineers, architects, women and minority owned businesses, and other workers are competing globally with China, India and other parts of the world, we want investors and entrepreneurs to know that Colorado is not only open for business, we are an advantageous place to do business.

Leaders in economic development point out that some aspects of successful job creation are true no matter where you live. These include: keeping taxes low, affordable housing, efficient transportation and infrastructure, having a predictable and fair regulatory environment for business and, perhaps most important of all, having a strong education system. These are guideposts for economic recovery and must frame any agenda for stimulating job growth in Colorado.

It is also important to understand how we are different from other states so we can build on what we know best. Aerospace, energy, biosciences, agriculture, information technology communications (ITC) and tourism, for example, are five of our long-standing base industries that are largely responsible for much of our "primary" job creation in Colorado. That means jobs producing revenue from outside Colorado. The more primary jobs we have, the greater our foundation for expanding economic growth, balancing our State budget and investing in public resources like transportation, schools and higher education that, in turn, lead to more job creation.

Colorado is also unique because we enjoy an unparalleled quality of life. Many businesses want to relocate or start-up here because of our climate, life-style, environment and recreational opportunities. Colorado also has a highly-educated workforce; Colorado has a diverse energy sector that makes us a leader, not only in traditional energy sources but also in new renewable energy; Colorado has a strong small-business sector. By cluster, our economy has important building blocks in place for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These industries are on the cutting edge of global competition. If we are effective in government, we can help these sectors thrive.

**Core Economic Development Clusters in Colorado: And the List Keeps Growing!**

Aerospace/Aviation	Agriculture	Bioscience
Creative Industry	Education	Energy
Financial Services	Defense/Military	Healthcare
Outdoor Recreation	Small Business	Sports
Telecomm	Tourism	Venture Capital

We know it takes more than talking about jobs to actually retain, sustain and attract them. As any successful entrepreneur will explain, a strong business plan is the key to success. Any successful plan begins by engaging customers. In this case it is the people who live and work in Colorado, and that is why we are listening to voices from across the State for ideas and solutions for an economic recovery plan that fits Colorado.

**Strategies & Solutions**

Instead of waiting for Election Day we are organizing the campaign to support the development of a strategic plan for economic recovery now.

**Planning and Regional Collaboration:** Every business, large and small, starts with a well thought out business plan. The State of Colorado is no different. We must develop a solid plan for economic recovery on the local, regional and statewide level. Every effective plan begins by actively engaging the people who are the closest to the issues. Those who tell you they can solve problems from a distance never ran a small business or felt the pressure to meet payroll. Local communities and business leaders across the State must be engaged to identify the best ideas for creating jobs and building a stronger economic base. Our approach will develop an economic plan which will be practical and have the greatest impact on retaining and creating jobs across the State. That is why our campaign is organized around meeting chambers of commerce, businesses and workplaces.

**Economic Development Roundtables:** This campaign will start by launching a series of economic development roundtables across the State designed to seek ideas and input from local business leaders, educators, political leaders and local residents. We will focus first on taking care of our existing businesses and community institutions to make certain they continue to play a vital role across the State. We will also seek out ideas on how to build our economy for the long term including strategies to retain, attract and expand great companies. The roundtables will form the basis for developing a statewide economic development plan as well as a plan for each of nine regions around the State. We expect that these discussions will occur in board rooms, classrooms, living rooms and dining rooms as we move across the State of Colorado. The plans will reflect:

- Collaboration & Key Constituent Buy-In
- Regional Needs

**Resources for Small Business:** As important as government can be, it really is the private sector that creates and sustains jobs. Sometimes the key to private sector creativity is for government to get out of the way. But there are also ways that State and local government can help. Currently, the State's small business initiatives are within various departments and divisions. We could consolidate these programs and focus on the entire lifecycle of a small business from creation, capital development and counseling to incentive programs and procurement assistance. However we do it, we need to make it easier and more understandable for Colorado's entrepreneurs to access a number of important programs:

- Colorado Small Business Development Network and Minority Business Office
- Small business incentive programs, including the Colorado Credit Reserve Program
- The new Procurement and Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)
- The Colorado Business Express Portal
- Colorado FIRST/Existing Industry and Customized Job Training Program
- Colorado's Tourism Marketing Matching Grant Program
- Venture Capital Authority
- Colorado Enterprise Zone Program
- Colorado's Innovation Investment Tax Credit

We listed these programs for any small business owner who is interested now. However, our goal in government will be to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with information on these programs and assistance in accessing them, while at the same time soliciting their feedback on how to make them more effective.

**Banking and Small Business Summit:** Our Statewide efforts must focus significant time and attention on making sure small businesses have access to credit and capital. Early in the new administration, we will convene a meeting of banking leaders and small business owners to discuss ways we can help small businesses secure capital. As simple as it sounds, sometimes the most difficult problems can be resolved if there are regular channels of communication and dialogue. We will look to make these links a signature of our administration.

**Streamline Services:** Colorado must be a State with a reputation for being a place where it is easy to do business. We must streamline State services so that government is viewed as facilitating the efficient and effective use of our collective resources. For example, we will task our Small Business Development Centers to help small businesses more efficiently access government resources. This project will be similar to the Office of Information Technology's recent consolidation efforts, which not only streamlined State services but also resulted in significant budget savings.

**Commitment to Colorado's Main Streets:** The National Main Street Program is a proven approach that helps to advance economic development in small towns and neighborhood business districts throughout America. Main Streets are the historic heart and soul of our communities, homes to local independent businesses, showcases for events that celebrate our heritage and gathering places that bring our communities together. During the past ten years, the Colorado Main Street program has assisted about a dozen communities. We will make it a priority that we strengthen and expand the Colorado Main Street program by supporting collaboration between the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), the State Historic Fund and non-profit organizations.

## **Long Term Growth and Economic Development**

**Retention, Attraction and Expansion:** While the livelihood of the majority of Coloradans comes from small businesses, thousands of Coloradans work for companies that have located in Colorado. These large businesses help create primary jobs, which in turn, support small businesses and local communities. Retention, attraction and expansion for these anchor businesses should be a priority for Colorado State government.

Tax incentives can be helpful, but they are more often a tiebreaker than an economic driver for many companies weighing whether to locate in Colorado. In the short term, we will continue to support successful programs created in the last several years, including the:

- Job Growth Incentive Program
- Colorado Credit Reserve Program
- Bioscience Research and Evaluation Grant Program

These programs help spur economic growth throughout the State and continue to create and retain jobs. Investments in infrastructure and transportation are also important. As airlines trend toward consolidation, Denver International Airport (DIA), in partnership with our regional airports and our State and regional connections, can be a more attractive and logical destination for international trade. Doing business in America should mean doing business in Colorado as a prime location.

Colorado is also home to key military facilities and defense contractors. States like Alabama and Texas have created strong bonds with the military, industry, local chambers and their federal delegation to support their national defense economic mission. There is no reason Colorado cannot do the same.

**International Trade & Tourism:** In an increasingly global environment, jobs can be created and sustained by encouraging exports to other countries as well as tourism from abroad. That is why building Denver International Airport (DIA) was so important for the entire State. In order to further such an environment, Colorado needs to define its brand and market itself to the world. Many states have set-up local offices in other countries in order to market their products. However, given the expense of such offices, we would engage with Colorado-related firms and individuals living in other countries that feel an allegiance and stake in our State and would voluntarily serve as “economic ambassadors” in their respective regions.

Colorado could work to formulate a marketing strategy for each region of the world in conjunction with the relevant agriculture export and tourism groups. Finally, we need to continue to leverage the investments we have made in infrastructure and transportation so that our State and regional connections can be a more attractive and logical destination for international trade. Doing business in America should mean doing business in Colorado as a prime location.

**Education & Work Force Development:** The quality of our labor force is our number one economic asset. In addition to improving the quality of primary education for our kids, our economic future depends on our support for the institutions of higher education that we rely on to train the next generation of the labor force. A successful plan for job creation requires an equally effective plan for sustaining and improving P-12 and higher education (P-20). Colorado’s universities, colleges, and vocational training institutions are the incubators for homegrown ideas and innovations. Opportunities for apprenticeship programs via interface with the private sector must be explored.

**Colorado = Innovation:** Finally, part of successful economic development is establishing the right brand. If we can establish a reputation for a high quality of life and an environment that fosters innovation, we can rival any place in the world for economic investment. We want people from other states to visit and enjoy Colorado, and in turn we want these visits to ultimately attract good-paying jobs. In an increasingly competitive global economy, we want investors and entrepreneurs to know that Colorado is not only open for business we are a place where it is to your advantage to do business.

Colorado is a great place to visit; but when you are here we want you to think about whether you would ever consider opening up a business here!

**In Conclusion:** Colorado is a hotbed for the entrepreneurial spirit. Economic development experts have tracked it and reported upon it. A long list of patents, venture capitalists and single employee businesses start here. That's why we believe Colorado can become synonymous with innovation and lead the country as we come out of the current recession. Colorado is in a great position to take advantage of the current economic climate and by working together more collaboratively across clusters and across the State, we can collectively rise to the top.

We are ready to engage Coloradans in an important conversation about how to build an international reputation for investment in our State. Colorado is a great State, and our economic development plan has to begin with you helping us to make this known locally, nationally, and globally.