



For Immediate Release

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RCEDP, NWCDC and Local Businesswoman Selected for Inaugural Economic Recovery Corps Fellowship

Routt County, CO - The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) officially announced the launch of Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellowship, a new, collaborative initiative designed to support long-term economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERC Fellowship supports distressed communities and regions throughout the U.S. by increasing capacity to advance new ways of doing economic development that promote economic resilience and transformative change.

“By investing in capacity building and leadership development, facilitating knowledge sharing and partnerships, the ERC program will set the stage for the future of economic development and a new age of collaboration in the economic development field,” said Nathan Ohle, President & CEO of IEDC.

The ERC initiative selected a collaboration between Routt County Economic Development Partnership (RCEDP), serving as the local ERC host organization, and the Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWCDC). As the ERC host, RCEDP is supporting the NWCDC and its stakeholders spanning Routt, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties with added capacity.

“We are honored to be chosen as one of 65 communities and regions out of 500 host applicants from across the nation,” said Tim Redmond, NWCDC Chair and Routt County Commissioner. “We thank Routt County Economic Development Partnership who stepped up to host the ERC Fellow, Sasha Nelson, who was chosen from more than 1500 candidates. Sasha, who is a local leader and small business owner, will bring much-needed capacity to our region to implement our Roadmap Transition Plan to diversify our regional economy and to enhance our quality of life. As part of her ERC fellowship through IEDC, Sasha will receive training toward getting her economic development certification. As a result, Northwest Colorado gains a Certified Economic Developer who lives and works in our region.”

“RCEDP is happy to collaborate with and support NWCDC to be selected to participate in the ERC initiative,” stated John Bristol, RCEDP’s executive director. “Thankfully ERC matched Sasha with our region to quickly add capacity ahead of the looming transition in the coal-fired power generation industry impacting Routt, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties.”

Nelson, who was born in Steamboat Springs, and graduated from Moffat County High School, Colorado State University Pueblo, LaTrobe University, Victoria, Australia, and The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, is excited to continue a legacy of service to her home region and help communities of Northwest Colorado facing economic transition.

“I believe in the strength, character, and skills of folks in our rural communities,” said Nelson. “We are natural innovators having learned to create what we need when resources are not readily available. We understand how to collaborate by helping our neighbors. We are resilient in the face of hardship. And we are learning that not only are we able to grow our own beef,



lamb, pork, and other agricultural products, we are also growing the human capital we need to power our economy. I'm grateful for this opportunity to be among the first 65 Economic Recovery Corp Fellows and work in our region while also deepening my skills and qualifications as an economic development professional."

The Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellowship program aims to build capacity in economically distressed areas across the U.S. while cultivating the next generation of economic development leaders. The program connects 65 host sites nationwide with diverse practitioners and leaders with the passion, skills, and vision to create new ways of doing economic development. The ERC Fellowship was launched in 2023 through a \$30 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). It is led by the International Economic Development Council and supported by 6 other national economic development organizations.

ERC projects represent the interconnectedness between economic development and the pressing needs in communities of all sizes, including workforce development, entrepreneurial ecosystem building, housing, childcare, climate resiliency, broadband, and access to capital. Each project across the U.S. receives a dedicated fellow (fully funded for 2.5 years from the ERC program) who serves as a field catalyst to enhance, strengthen, and coordinate relationships and local efforts alongside the host community.

"ERC is more than a fellowship; it is a testament to the power of collaboration and strategic partnerships deeply needed to produce lasting social and economic impact," said Ohle. "By joining forces with national partners, host organizations, funders, and practitioners eager for new models and practices, ERC will build capacity in places of need while supporting the next generation of economic development leaders all while driving more equitable economic outcomes."

Project Description:

The Roadmap to Recovery Plan led by Routt County Economic Development Partnership (RCEDP) and Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWDCD) was created to address the challenges posed by the diminishing coal-fired power generation industry to ensure a balance of economic stability and growth in the region through industry diversification strategies. The ERC Fellow will play a crucial role by focusing on small business development and technical assistance, entrepreneurial ecosystem building, and economic diversification in potential industries spanning clean energy, agriculture, technology, tourism, healthcare, or manufacturing. Complementary to these strategic efforts, the ERC Fellow will support existing business retention and expansion initiatives and regional coordination and collaboration, further uplifting Northwest Colorado communities.

About ERC:

The Economic Recovery Corps Program (ERC) is a multi-year, collaborative initiative designed to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in distressed communities and regions throughout the U.S. by connecting organizations with the talent and capacity needed to advance new ways of doing economic development that promote economic resilience and transformative change. The ERC Program matched 65 Host sites nationwide with a dedicated Fellow, fully funded for 2.5 years, who will act as a field catalyst to build, strengthen, and coordinate relationships and local efforts alongside their host community. Fellows will receive robust



professional development and training, equipping them with the network and tools to usher in a new era of economic development centered on equity.

The ERC is funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) under the CARES Act and led by the [International Economic Development Council \(IEDC\)](#) in partnership with six leading national organizations:

- [Center on Rural Innovation \(CORI\)](#)
- [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#)
- [National Association of Counties Research Foundation \(NACo RF\)](#)
- [National Assn. of Development Organizations Research Foundation \(NADO RF\)](#)
- [National League of Cities Institute \(NLCI\)](#)
- [RAIN Catalysts](#)

Website:

<http://www.economicrecoverycorps.org/>

Interview Opportunities:

Bristol is available for interviews at 970-846-9061 or john.bristol@rcedp.org

Nelson is available for interviews at 970-629-5138 or snelson@economicrecoverycorps.org

We would be delighted to work with you to provide any additional information or facilitate interviews. Please let us know if there's anything specific you would like to explore further.

Thank you for considering our news for coverage. We appreciate your time and attention.

About NWCDC

Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWCDC) is an intergovernmental agreement between Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt Counties and the member communities, Craig, Hayden, Meeker, Oak Creek, Rangely, Steamboat Springs, and Yampa. Together these communities work collaboratively to diversify the regional economy and to support workforce development, affordable housing, access to child care, and regional transportation.

About RCEDP

Routt County Economic Development Partnership (RCEDP) believes in thinking differently and challenging the status quo to positively influence the trajectory of our local economy towards long-term sustainability while thoughtfully balancing the quality of life and economic well-being across our Routt County community. Our unique approach is to simply focus on the diversification of local businesses and jobs via entrepreneurship, retention and expansion of existing businesses and jobs, targeting support towards key industries, and engaging businesses relocating to Routt County. RCEDP is the 501c(3) nonprofit economic development organization (EDO) serving all of Routt County and governed by a board of directors and advised by the Economic Development Council. To learn more please visit RCEDP.org.

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