

Chaffee County Economic Development Corporation

339 E Highway 50, Suite 103
Salida, Colorado 81201
Phone: 719-239-2018



Public Policy Committee Pillar Position Statement

Date: August, 2022

Issue: Recreation/Arts & Culture

Background:

In today's economy, quality of life and culture draw talented people, which in turn create and attract a vibrant business community. Thus, communities thrive when they welcome and embrace a variety of cultural offerings for residents and visitors. For Chaffee County that is particularly evident in community support of arts, culture and recreation.

According to a local Chamber of Commerce, the arts took hold more than 40 years ago when the mining and energy economy faltered, leading to high unemployment, business closures and vacant downtown storefronts. With low rent and real estate prices, and abundant outdoor recreation and natural beauty for inspiration, the arts in Salida gained a foothold. In recognition of its numerous art studios and galleries, in 2012 downtown Salida was named one of Colorado's first Creative Districts.

More recently, Colorado Creative Industries awarded \$15,000 in grant support for an original one-woman theater-in-education production – "White Bear Woman" – that tells the story of 23 year old Lori Piestewa, the first Native American woman to lose her life as a member of the US military.

Additionally, live music is a draw in Chaffee County which can bring a sizable economic impact. For example, one recent local Festival provided economic benefit to both the public and private sector. A report commissioned by Live Nation in November 2019 showed the three-day 11,404-person festival created a \$13.6 million economic impact and supported 144 jobs, delivering \$1.25 million in state and local taxes.

Outdoor recreation is a way of life in Chaffee County. For some it is their business, for others it is a passion, and for many it is both. Travelers choose Chaffee County as a tourist destination based on the recreational offerings provided. This industry is foundational and here to stay, as evidenced by the creation of the Chaffee County Outdoor Recreation Management Plan which outlines the goal of "protecting our

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community's natural resources, maintaining exceptional outdoor experiences and sustaining the economic benefits of tourism."

In 2015 the State of Colorado created the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) a central point of contact, advocacy, and resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses, and communities that rely on the continued health of the outdoor recreation economy. Chaffee County is currently involved in a Regional OREC Sector Partnership is hosting a OREC "listening tour" in Summer of 2022.

Additional Data Points:

- While not apples to apples, according to the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) 2019 Economic Impact Study, arts and culture created an \$860 million economic impact in Metro Denver during that time frame. While numbers were down in 2020, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the total impact was still sizable at \$435 million.
- Colorado's outdoor recreation industry accounts for \$9.6 billion in value-added (GDP) annually and contributed 120,000 direct jobs in 2020. According to the 2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan report, 92% of Colorado residents participate in outdoor recreation each year. Colorado's outdoor economy contributes to a higher quality of life, making people and communities happier and healthier.

Position:

Arts, culture and recreation are foundational to Chaffee County's past, present and future. The EDC encourages policy measures and actions that help these sectors to grow and thrive in Chaffee County that enrich the experiences of residents and visitors.

Rationale for Position:

- Arts, culture and recreation are foundational to our past, present and future.
- Tourism is Chaffee County's largest economic driver.
- Access to recreation and arts/culture are often noted by employees as key benefits when asked what draws them to a job.