



Western Slope Rural Philanthropy Days Listening Tour Report

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Table of Contents

I.	<u>Introduction</u>	<u>3</u>
II.	<u>Western Slope Regional Characteristics</u>	<u>4</u>
III.	<u>Cross-Cutting Regional Themes</u>	<u>6</u>
1.	<u>Access to Healthcare and Mental Health Services:</u>	<u>6</u>
2.	<u>Affordable Housing</u>	<u>7</u>
3.	<u>Education Continuum from Cradle to Career/Workforce Development.....</u>	<u>7</u>
4.	<u>Effective Leadership to Affect Change.....</u>	<u>8</u>
5.	<u>Multi-use Transportation Support</u>	<u>9</u>
6.	<u>Senior Care</u>	<u>10</u>
IV.	<u>Next Steps</u>	<u>10</u>
	<u>APPENDIX A: Listening Tour Delegation</u>	<u>12</u>
	<u>APPENDIX B: Listening Tour Itinerary.....</u>	<u>13</u>
	<u>APPENDIX C: Listening Tour Attendance by County</u>	<u>14</u>

I. Introduction

The purpose of the Colorado Western Slope¹ Rural Philanthropy Days ('RPD') Listening Tour ('Listening Tour') is to learn more about the broad challenges and issues facing Western Slope communities. On November 28, 2012, at a Rural Funders Forum hosted by Sue Anschutz-Rodgers, funders identified the desire to understand the overarching needs of the region and the actions currently underway at the local level to address these issues prior to a RPD conference. The Listening Tour concept came about as a solution to address this information gap, so that grantmakers would arrive at RPD better prepared to collaborate and support local needs.

Bill Fowler, Senior Vice President of the Daniels Fund, and Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President of the El Pomar Foundation, co-chaired the Western Slope RPD Listening Tour, which took place March 18–20, 2013. Senior leaders from eight Front Range foundations, the Community Resource Center and the Western Slope RPD Steering Committee attended (see Appendix A). The goal of Listening Tour was for funders to hear from community leaders in open discussions about the character of the region, existing needs and current actions to address them. Two primary questions were asked at each meeting: 1) How would you describe the personality and culture of your community?; and 2) What do you see as a key issue or need in your community?

Leadership from four Western Slope Community Foundations organized the Listening Tour travel itinerary (see Appendix B) and selected community leaders across all sectors (government, nonprofit and for-profit) to attend (see Appendix C). The delegation met with approximately 100 people across the region in seven, two and one-half hour meetings. This report summarizes the community characteristics, issues and needs that were heard in those meetings. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all regional characteristics and needs.

¹ The Western Slope region is defined to include seven counties: Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel.

II. Western Slope Regional Characteristics

The region is characterized by:

- The acknowledged need for a 30,000-foot vision related to economic development. It is commonly perceived that there is a lack of *good jobs* in the region. Families need stable, two-income, year-round employment; yet few hold jobs that pay close to average household income needs. In Mesa County, 45-percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, while 57-percent qualify in Delta County. Montrose County has the highest unemployment level when compared to the state average. There is a 50 to 60-percent poverty rate within Montrose city limits. In neighboring Ouray County, local businesses have trouble finding qualifying help and must import workers. While San Miguel County has one of the highest concentrations of wealth in the State, it also contains some of Colorado's poorest communities.
- A high quality of life as it relates to an abundance of natural resources and a beautiful surrounding landscape. Many multi-generational farming and ranching families populate the region. There are many challenges related to water and natural resource conservation. Eighty-percent of Colorado's water resources are located on the Western Slope, while 80-percent of Colorado's population lives on the Front Range. There is a strong belief among some members of the population that natural resources should be conserved for future generations (GJ, D, SM, O²). Work to reduce carbon emissions and explore alternative energy is not progressing quickly (SM, O).
- A *boom-and-bust* economy that has left residents striving to develop more diversified and sustainable economies beyond real estate, construction and tourism. Examples include the Telluride Venture Accelerator; an emphasis on Heritage Tourism and year-round recreation services in Ouray County; and the numerous emerging Creative Districts throughout the region. Extraction-based industries such as mining, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing are also economic drivers. Consumer-based markets for these industries are often located outside of the region.
- Many local governments are heavily funded by property taxes. The Western Slope lags approximately two years behind Front Range housing valuation trends. Valuation is down 10 to 20-percent across the region and is expected to drop significantly each year until 2016. Example: Montrose County expects to lose 18-percent of its property value in the next two years. Property taxes support 50-percent of its general fund.
- The perception of distinct, heterogeneous cultures such as the *haves versus the have not's* (SM, G) or the *established residents versus the newcomers*. The population centers are more diverse, while more rural populations are comprised of mainly multi-generational residents that are wary of

² The following abbreviations note a specific community response: D - Delta, G – Gunnison, GJ – Grand Junction, M-Montrose, O – Ouray, RPD – conference workshop, SM – San Miguel, WE – West End.

newcomers (M). It is very difficult for community leaders across the region to determine how to effectively serve these diverse populations.

- Varying relationships with federal and state government agencies; however, there is consensus that decisions made at the state capitol may have unintended and far-reaching consequences for Western Slope communities.
- Small communities located in remote locations separated by distinct geographies and seasonal road closures. This pattern fosters a strong sense of place but also an intense feeling of isolation, individualism and inefficient, but sometimes necessary, duplication of infrastructure.
- A common lack of technological infrastructure, specifically a broadband internet network. Each community considers broadband critical to economic development.
- An increasing number of nonprofits serving the Western Slope, many of which compete for resources. For example, the number of nonprofits in Gunnison County doubled from 2009 – 2012. San Miguel County’s 7,000 residents are served by approximately 140 nonprofit organizations. The burden on the nonprofit sector to provide services is dramatically increasing as funding sources for social services at the federal and local level shrink.
- Rugged individualism, the most commonly used term to describe each community. Individuals are generous with their time and support one another in times of need. The development of nonprofit partnerships is not always an immediate response outside of crisis and is limited by resources.
- Active community foundations that often play a convening role around social change. They provide a neutral stance that bridges conversations in the respective communities they serve.
- Efforts to integrate and support Latino and other immigrant populations (GJ); however, these communities can still feel intimidated and marginalized (SM, GJ). There is a significant Burmese refugee population in the North Fork Valley of Delta County. Schools and churches often serve as the cultural liaison for immigrant populations. Many of the “English as a Second Language” classes in the region are taught by volunteers.
- Use of common words used to describe the character of the region’s communities: active, adventurous, collaborative, community-oriented, conservative, creative, depressed, entitled, entrepreneurial, facing change, family-centered, free-spirited, hard working, high quality of life, ideological intolerance, independent, integrative, isolated, outdoorsy, passionate, poor, quirky, resistant, resourceful, split personality, strong-willed, struggle with community involvement, unique, vibrant, volunteerism.

III. Cross-Cutting Regional Themes

1. **Access to Healthcare and Mental Health Services:** *What technologies, collaborations and resources would be most effective in improving the quality of and access to health care and mental health services across the region?*

Health Care

- There is a shortage of primary care and specialty physicians (M, D) and a need to streamline the system for licensure (M). Existing clinics are at or above capacity. There is a common concern that new federal health care legislation will greatly increase the number of people requiring service(SM).
- There is a common lack of transportation support for medical needs (D, SM, M).
- Mentoring and training opportunities are lacking within some rural facilities.
- The Uncompahgre Medical Center in Norwood is the second most rural medical clinic in the state and is classified as a “Frontier.” It serves an area in which the population density is three people per square mile.
- While primary care is the focus, there is a need for more preventive, specialty and urgent care services across the region as providers strive to shift from a reactive to a proactive model.
- In some communities the younger generation is focused on alternative health and wellness care rather than the traditional medical care spectrum (D, SM, O).
- Tele-medicine is an option to overcoming geographic barriers but will require broadband access.
- There is a common lack of access to dental care services (D).
- There is a common challenge to care for the region’s under and uninsured population. For example, 18-percent of the Montrose Hospital budget goes to charity care (M).
- Collaboration takes time and human resources that existing service providers do not have. Additionally, a collaborative model is at opposition with the fee for service model (SM).
- Positive examples of efforts to sustain operation by bringing in new services include:
 - School Based Health Clinics-Northside and Olathe
 - Montrose Medical Mission-Moved to FQHC-Olathe
 - Shift from health to wellness, such as the distinction of Montrose as a *Live Well Community*
- Emergency medical services will be impacted by assessed valuation decreases. These departments are often not in a position to ask for additional funding. However, the 2007 Montrose Mill Levy to fund emergency medical services was successful after four tries. The Paramedic Program at Colorado Mesa University has helped with staffing needs in a localized area.

Mental Health / Behavioral Health

- There are consistently not enough resources to meet expanding needs (M, D, GJ, G, WE). Mental health, substance and drug abuse services are lacking (M). Departments of Human Services often have limited funding for preventive and treatment programs. These programs are often outsourced.
- Hospitals generally do not treat mental health needs. However, rural medical professionals often wear many hats. Additional professional training is needed to meet this need (G).

- The lack of mental health services frequently results in emergency room treatment for mental health issues (M). Local law enforcement officers often provide an initial response, but lack the proper facilities to take people to for care (M, G, GJ).
- The treatment model is generally reactive rather than proactive. Fifty-percent of adult patients currently being treated at the West End's medical clinic have behavioral health issues. There is a need to 'break the cycle' and better support the social and mental well-being of the child, as it often positively impacts parent health (WE).
- A lack of access to transportation is often a limiting factor in the ability of rural, low income and elderly residents to seek treatment (D, WE).
- Colorado is rated 50th in the country for the number psychiatric beds available. Colorado West in Grand Junction has 32-beds and serves as the regional psychiatric care center. There is consistently not enough bed space at the facility to accommodate regional needs (M, GJ, G).
- There is a lack of early intervention with mental health issues across age demographics. The aging and young veteran populations need targeted assistance (GJ). Regarding youth, families often relocate to the region when times are tough and enroll children in schools with identified or untreated needs. There is a lack of Spanish speakers in the region's behavioral health system.
- There were 47 suicides in Mesa County last year.

2. Affordable Housing: *It is not uncommon for residents of the region to spend 50-percent or more of their income on housing. What can be done across the region to develop strategies for affordable housing?*

- A Montrose County needs assessment demonstrated that an average of 50-percent of income is spent on housing (M).
- There is a lack of senior housing on the West End (M, SM).
- The Montrose-Olathe school district has 195 homeless school aged children. Mesa County currently has 347 homeless children.
- Of San Miguel County's 7,500 residents, 54-percent live in affordable or deed restricted housing.
- Affordable housing clients in the region include: felons, the working and generational poor, seniors, single parents, those with mental health issues or physical disabilities, veterans, "couch kids" (age 14 – 25) and "river folk." (RPD)
- Many second homes sit open for much of the year.
- Where there is housing, there are not always jobs.
- Veterans may be challenged to re-establish themselves post-service.

3. Education Continuum from Cradle to Career/Workforce Development: *How can the region ensure an effective educational continuum from cradle (early childhood education) to career (K-12, higher-education, workforce development)?*

- Smaller schools are expensive to operate but are often a necessity due to regional geography.

- A recent state mandate requires technology and broadband internet resources that are not currently available in the more rural areas of the region (D, WE).
- The college-bound rate fluctuates across the region. For example, it is high in Delta County but low in Montrose County. The Delta County school system performs above state averages and offers free preschool for all residents (D). However, Montrose County is the lowest funded school district in the state and has a high remediation rate for students attending college. Its school district does not receive Mill Levy funding. Grand Junction has a pre-school waiting list of 300 children and a high school dropout rate of 3.6-percent.
- It can be challenging to pass Mill Levy increases for education in rural areas with large, agricultural land holders and/or large populations of retirees or second homeowners (WE, M).
- English as a second language services could be enhanced in schools, as there are large immigrant populations living throughout the region.
- Schools are commonly considered a mechanism for uniting communities (D, WE, SM).
- There are several higher education institutions in the region: Delta-Montrose Vocational and Technical College, Western Colorado Community College, Colorado Mesa University (CMU) and Western State Colorado University. These institutions can be disconnected from some adult learner populations but also provide effective and necessary specialized workforce training programs; e.g. Delta-Montrose Vocational and Technical College Mine Training Center and the CMU Emergency Medical Services Program.
- The economic downturn has broken down the model that schools can function alone. Some communities lack an education foundation to assist with raising funds.
- While some areas of the region do a good job of college readiness and acceptance, they find it hard to get youth to return to the region because of the lack of jobs (D). Due to the isolation of ‘West End’ communities, it is a challenge for educators to prepare those students for life ‘on the other side of the mountain’ (WE). The behavior of both parents and students must be modified for success, e.g. *How do you ask about homework? How do you be a friend?*

4. Effective Leadership to Affect Change: *How can the region more effectively coordinate and provide professional development and training to existing and emerging leaders?*

- Fostering young leadership is critical to the economic success of the region (D). Younger populations live in the area by choice, work hard and have strong opinions on community needs. For example, the median age is 34 years old in the City of Telluride.
- Leadership trainings are often hosted by a local chamber of commerce or municipality, generally do not expand across county lines or geographic barriers, or do not exist (M, GJ):
 - Montrose Area Chamber and Tourism hosts Montrose Leadership for young professionals and CLUB 6S, which is focused on expanding critical thinking skills in 6th grade class
 - Gunnison Valley Leadership Program
- Communities are more likely to be solution-oriented if ideas are presented in a neutral language that works across sectors of the population. Learning this skill is critical to removing barriers and

identifying common values and goals (D). For example, Mill Levy campaigns to fund education have failed in Montrose County. Technical assistance in developing an effective campaign could help leverage support from the agricultural land holders and retired residents.

- Many communities perceive a divide between the change-oriented and the old guard leadership. For example, the Montrose City Council considers themselves progressive while County Commissioners are more traditional.
- Community leaders are perceived as generous with their time and money (D, O, SM); however, given the limited leadership pool in small, rural communities, they wear many hats and suffer from a high level of burn out. Grant proposals are often written by volunteers (O).
- Communities noted a desire to collaborate on more projects, especially as it is required by more funding requests. The greatest constraints to nonprofit and government collaboration are the additional human and financial resource commitments needed for those efforts (D). Private business owners are often challenged by similar resource limitations (G,M), but targeted community projects can be very successful (SM).
- The region is geographically isolated from its' state and federal government. Citizens have varying relationships with federal and state government agencies. In some areas of the region, citizens feel they have limited input in the legislative process. There is consensus that statewide decisions may have unintended and far-reaching consequences for Western Slope communities.

5. **Multi-use Transportation Support:** *How can the regions' isolated communities work collaboratively to develop multi-use transportation solutions that overcome geography, generation and income gaps?*

- Many small communities on the Western Slope are located in remote locations separated by distinct geographies and seasonal road closures. This pattern results in isolation, individualism and inefficient duplication of infrastructure.
- The development of multi-use transportation support systems is commonly considered a solution that can solve many regional issues, including those related to health care and mental health services (SM, O, D). There is currently no comprehensive county and region-wide transportation infrastructure (D, M, SM).
- The region and its counties lack the funding and human resources to develop strategic transportation plans that take advantage of existing infrastructure. Communities within close proximity to one another often lack necessary infrastructure (D, G). For example, Gunnison County lacks public transportation between its airport and ski area. Maintaining daily access from outside the county to Western State Colorado University can be challenging in the winter months.
- There are four commercial airports in the region, which are located in Montrose, Grand Junction, Gunnison, and San Miguel counties. There is a desire to work in collaboration on a regional air organization.
- The 'West End' of Montrose and San Miguel counties (20-percent of its population) is separated from a population center by large public land holdings. In winter, there is one all-weather road that

links the 'West End' to services. This drive takes 2 ½ hours. There is no funding for public transportation to link the 'West End' communities with the cities of Montrose or Telluride.

- Montrose, the county seat, is the largest town that some 'West Residents' have visited, as many families have no means to leave and no exposure to influences outside the region.
- Greyhound discontinued its bus service from Telluride north, through Montrose and Delta, to Grand Junction.

6. **Senior Care:** *The region faces an aging population of locals and an influx of retirees. How can we work together to provide the essential senior care this sector requires? In what ways can senior populations be considered an untapped resource?*

- Many seniors have no means of transportation and lack access to required services.
- Health and human services are lacking for the region's older and aging population (O, SM). There are a limited number of Medicaid beds in assisted living facilities (D, M, WE). There are gaps in medical care for seniors with disabilities (D, M).
- Seniors suffer from abuse, neglect and dementia that may go uncared for (GJ).
- There is a lack of senior housing in the region, especially on the 'West End' (M, SM). Seniors living on the 'West End' have a 2 ½ hour drive to services in the winter. Seniors that are native to the more rural parts of the region often prefer to stay in those areas rather than relocate to more urban population centers for care.
- There is an increasing number of homeless elderly throughout the region (D, M, WE).
- The 'West End' has a trend of grandparents on a fixed income raising grandchildren. This limits participation in afterschool activities, as many seniors do not drive after dark.
- The region faces an influx of retirees. For example, 20-percent of Ouray County residents are retirees. Montrose has almost doubled in size because of retirees. Retirees are often vibrant and involved in their community; however, they usually vote against funding educational and other ballot initiatives that result in tax increases.

IV. Next Steps

Information collected on the Listening Tour is being used to structure the second day of the Western Slope Rural Philanthropy Days Conference³. There will be a stronger emphasis on facilitated conversations focused on identifying collaborative solutions to pressing regional needs. At the beginning of the second day, all attendees will participate in Community Solutions workshops focused on the preceding six cross-cutting themes identified as regional priorities. Participants from all sectors will be encouraged to attend these facilitated conversations. Foundation representatives that attended the Listening Tour will host the topic that most resonates with their funding priorities and interest. In a 90-

³ The 2013 Western Slope Rural Philanthropy Days conference will take place June 17 – 19 in Ouray, Colorado.

minute session, participants will discuss and summarize the regional challenges for their assigned focus area. They will also brainstorm opportunities to strategically invest in collaborative resources to address the identified needs. The workshops are designed to strengthen relationships and encourage dialogue across sectors. Information gathered through the Community Solutions workshops will frame an afternoon funder session focused on finding collaborative funding solutions to these pressing regional challenges. At that time, recommendations will be summarized and added to this report.

APPENDIX A: Listening Tour Delegation

Anschutz Family Foundation

555 17th St., Suite 2400

Denver, CO 80202

- Debbie Jessup, Executive Director
- Kumella Aiu, Program Officer
- Abel Wurmnest, Program Officer

A.V. Hunter Trust, Inc.

650 S. Cherry St., Suite 535

Glendale, CO 80246

- Barbara Howie, Executive Director

Boettcher Foundation

600 17th St., Suite 2210

Denver, CO 80202

- Tim Schultz, President and Executive Director

Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation

1666 S. University Blvd., Suite B

Denver, CO 80210

- Susan Steele, Executive Director

Caring for Colorado Foundation

4100 E. Mississippi Ave., Suite 605

Denver, CO 80246

- Chris Wiant, President and CEO

Community Resource Center

789 Sherman St., Suite 210

Denver, CO 80203

- Maria Fabula, Interim Executive Director
- Crissy Supples, Program Manager - Rural Philanthropy Days

Daniels Fund

101 Monroe St.

Denver, CO 80206

- Bill Fowler, Senior Vice President of the Grants Program
- Todd Lewton, Grants Program Officer - West Region

El Pomar Foundation

10 Lake Circle

Colorado Springs, CO 80906

- Matt Carpenter, Senior Vice President of Grants
- Devanie Helman, Program Associate

The Women's Foundation of Colorado

The Chambers Center for the Advancement of Women

1901 E. Asbury Ave., First floor

Denver, CO 80208

- Louise Atkinson, President and CEO

Western Slope RPD

- Brian Krill, President and Lead Consultant of Peak Non-Profit Consulting
- Mindy Baumgardner, Communications & Special Projects Coordinator for Montrose County School District

APPENDIX B: Listening Tour Itinerary

Sunday, March 17th

Arrive in Gunnison

- *Holiday Inn Express – 910 E. Tomichi Ave., Gunnison (970) 641-1288*

5:30pm: Reception

- *Lost Miner Ranch**

Monday, March 18th

8:30am – 11:00am: Listening Tour hosted by the Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley

- *Upper Gunnison River Conservancy District – 210 Spencer Ave., Gunnison*
- Grab-N-Go lunches will be provided

11:15am – 1:00pm: Travel time to Montrose

1:15pm – 1:45pm: Funders meet briefly with WS RPD Steering Committee

- *Montrose Library – 320 S. 2nd, St., Montrose*

2:00pm – 4:30pm: Listening Tour hosted by the Montrose Community Foundation

- *Christ's Kitchen – 2305 S. Townsend Ave., Montrose*

4:45pm – 6:30pm: Travel time to Telluride

- *Peaks Resort – 136 County Club Dr., Mountain Village, Telluride (970) 728-6800*
 - Telluride Foundation providing discounted rates

7:00: Dinner with Paul Major, Telluride Foundation

- *La Piazza – 117 Lost Creek Ln., Mountain Village, Telluride*

Tuesday, March 19th

8:00am – 10:30am: Listening Tour hosted by the Telluride Foundation, *Peaks Resort*

10:45am – 4:30pm: Travel time to Grand Junction

- *Norwood, CO - Lunch*
- *Naturita Library, Naturita, CO | Gateway, CO*

Arrive in Grand Junction

- *Hampton Inn Downtown – 205 Main St. (970) 243-3222*
- Note: dinner will not be provided

Wednesday, March 20th

8:30am – 11:00am: Listening Tour hosted by the Western Colorado Community Foundation

- *Linden Pointe Clubhouse – 1975 Barcelona Way, Orchard Mesa***

11:30am – 2:00pm: Working lunch Listening Tour with Delta County Leaders

- *Linden Pointe Clubhouse*

2:15pm: Depart for Denver

APPENDIX C: Listening Tour Attendance by County

Delta County

- Pam Bliss, Drug Free Delta County, Paonia Rotary; Community Leader
- Elaine Brett, North Fork Heart and Soul Project; Western Colo. Community Foundation Board
- Kami Collins, Delta Chamber of Commerce
- Kurt Clay, Delta County School District
- Melanie Hall, Montrose Community Foundation
- Kelli Hepler, Delta County Tourism Board
- Nancy Hovde, Delta Montrose Electric Association
- Tom Huercamp, Delta Economic Dev. Corp
- Susie Kaldis, Arts and Culture
- Sally Kane, KVNF Community Radio
- Cindy Rhodes, Western Colorado Community Foundation
- Neal Schweiterman, Mayor of Paonia
- Thelma Starner, Hospital Board, Community Leader
- Sarah Sauter, Western Slope Conservation Center
- Anne Wenzel, Western Colorado Community Foundation (Host)

Gunnison County

- Rick Besecker, Gunnison County Sheriff
- Renee Brown, Director, Gunnison County Health and Human Services
- William Buck, Mayor, Town of Crested Butte
- Gail Digate, President and Consultant, Leadership Learning Systems
- Sandy Guerrieri, Hay and beef producer
- Ellen Harriman, Mayor, City of Gunnison
- Marty Hatcher, Acting District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service
- Jay Helman, President, Western State Colorado University
- Jonathan Houck, County Commissioner, Gunnison County
- Aaron "Huck" Huckstep, Mayor, Town of Crested Butte
- Pamela Loughman, Executive Director, Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association
- Pam Montgomery, Executive Director, Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley (Host)
- Ellen Peterson, Director, Multicultural Resource Office
- Rob Santilli, CEO, Gunnison Valley Health

Mesa County

- Tom Acker, Grand Valley Peace and Justice
- Stacy Beough, Tamarisk Coalition; RPD
- Tillie Bishop, Community Leader
- Sister Karen Bland, Grand Valley Catholic Outreach
- Teresa Coons, Former Mayor
- Steve Erkenbrack, Rocky Mountain HMO
- Julie Hinkson, United Way
- Jeff Kuhr, Mesa County Health Department
- John Marshall, Colorado Mesa University
- Bonnie Peterson, Club 20
- Bill Prakken, Land Trust and Riverfront Foundation
- Cindy Rhodes, Western Colorado Community Foundation
- Steve Schultz, School District 51
- Michaelle Smith, Hilltop Community Resources
- Brigitte Sundermann, Western Colorado Community College
- Sue Tuffin, Work Force Center
- Anne Wenzel, Executive Director, Western Colorado Community Foundation (Host)

Montrose County

City of Montrose

- Mindy Baumgardner, Montrose County School District Re-1J
- Bill Bell, City Manger, City of Montrose
- Kjersten Davis, President, Montrose County School District,

- Carol Freidrich, Department of Health & Human Services
- Jon Gordon, Director, Center for Mental Health
- Melanie Hall, Executive Director, Montrose Community Foundation (Host)
- Dave Hambel, CEO, Montrose Memorial Hospital
- Tim Heavers, Director, Housing Authority
- Kaye Hotsenpiller, Regional Director, Hilltop Community Resources
- Mark MacHale, Superintendent, Montrose, County School District
- Peg Mewes, Director, Department of Health & Human Services
- Joey Montoya-Boese, Director of Montrose Campus, Colorado Mesa University
- Paul Palidino, Director, Montrose Library District
- Tad Rowan, Montrose Fire & Ambulance
- Scott Stryker, Owner, Ridgeway Valley Enterprises
- Eva Vietch, Adult Services Coordinator, Region10
- Francis Wick, Publisher, Montrose Daily Press

City of Naturita

- Steve Bollinger, Principal, Naturita Elementary School
- Jeffery Hopfenbeck, Project Coordinator, Telluride Foundation
- Debbie Lear - Town Treasurer, Naturita
- Carol Legge - FamilyLink
- Diana Reams, Nulca – Naturita Area Chamber of Commerce
- Susan Rice, Naturita Community Library (Host)
- Stacy Smith - Town of Nucla
- Allie Sutherland, West Montrose Economic Development
- Missy Taucher, Early Childhood Specialist
- Tom Taucher, Superintendent / High School Principal

San Miguel County/ Ouray County

Cities of Mountain Village, Ouray, Ridgeway, and Telluride

- Jen Coats, Ridgeway Town Manager
- Stu Fraser, City of Telluride Mayor
- Dan Jansen, City of Mountain Village Mayor
- Jesse Johnson, Telluride Foundation Board Member / Telluride Venture Accelerator Organizer
- Paul Major, President and CEO, Telluride Foundation (Host)
- Joan May, San Miguel County Commissioner
- Lynn Padgett, Ouray County Commissioner
- Kyle Shumacher, Telluride School District
- Pat Willits, Previous Ridgeway Mayor / Past Ouray County Commissioner

Norwood Meeting

- Andrya Brantingham, Executive Director, Wright Stuff Community Foundation, Norwood School District Board
- Karen Bellerose, Financial Operations, Uncompahgre Medical Clinic, Norwood Parks and Recreation District Board
- Jennifer Dabal, Norwood Public Schools, Norwood Parks and Recreation District
- Dr. David Homer, MD, FAAFP, Uncompahgre Medical Clinic (Host)
- Jeffrey A. Hopfenbeck, Project Coordinator, Telluride Foundation
- Marty Schmalz-Hollinbeck, San Miguel County planning and zoning
- Kelly Truelock, Member, Norwood School District Accountability Committee, Norwood Volunteer Fire Department