



Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

## From the Director's Desk -

# Federal Support Welcome

I am excited to report NWCCOG is hiring a Regional Grants Navigator contract position for 2023 (and beyond subject to annual legislative appropriation) thanks to the four sponsors of SB22-15 including local Representative Julie McCluskie. Keep an eye out for that position posting at our [website](#) in late November. NWCCOG has worked with OEDIT to co-create these positions to be hired at each COG across the state. The very novelty of the situation is a sign that the state understands the historic nature of this federal funding as well as the unique challenge it poses for local governments.



That state bill establishes a fund to cover the “non-federal match” required for grants from the federal **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (IIJ or “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law”), noting that over 200 programs “may be relevant to Colorado.” The bill also sets aside 5% of the state’s allocation from the IIJ to assist with administration. This portion will fund this position and others like it at many state agencies. The fund, allocated with the permission of the Governor’s office flows through OEDIT to COGS to assist local governments in understanding what federal grants from either the IIJ or the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) they may wish to apply for over the next 5 years.

Yes, just explaining that much, without getting into the grant categories or terms is a challenge. It is a rare opportunity for federal grants to pay directly for a variety of local projects which is why the state is “leaning-in” to be sure that Colorado leverages every federal dollar it can. There is nothing simple about this opportunity for local governments that are already under-staffed with many organizations already operating beyond reasonable capacity; and federal dollars have not been made available directly to local governments for roughly two generations, meaning that most senior government professionals have not managed a federal grant in their entire careers.

It may come as a surprise—it is to a lot of new local elected officials-- that most local governments don’t often apply for grants because there are not many grant programs for the things they do. One exception is state lottery GOCO funding for parks and open space. Nearly all meat-&-potatoes local infrastructure is funded through local sales or property taxes or through fees collected (think water, wastewater, or garbage bills). As a result, applying for grants, especially federal grants, is not an established skillset for our members because there are rarely federal dollars allocated for infrastructure projects local governments do.

It has been a long time since Congress allocated and a President signed such significant funding for infrastructure. Some point for a comparison to FDR’s New Deal, or Eisenhower’s Federal Highway Act of 1956 which recently will soon turn 75. A handful of larger NWCCOG member



communities employ full-time grants specialists as well as an engineer or transit planner versed in the nuances of applying for state funds in those specialties. They may not need much assistance. Most though will take whatever technical assistance they can get and still struggle to find those with time or the skills to apply for federal funding.

Contrary to what many citizens may assume, federal dollars primarily support **individual services** such as Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP and Social Security (1935) for income or age-qualified citizens. These programs are regularly placed on the chopping block by Republicans who are threatening to severely cripple these direct aid programs if they take control of Congress. Social security has endured for 90 years while the other programs date to President Lynden Johnson's "Great

Society" and "War on Poverty" initiatives. These direct services continue to be very popular with voters.

Federal dollars also filter to other human support services through states and entities such as NWCCOG in cooperation with counties. These include many senior services including meals, caregivers, and other aging in place services. Weatherization assistance has been funded that way since the late 1960s and 1970s. NWCCOG also manages two emergency services grants to the region from federal funding. Federal dollars directly support major airports, major water diversion projects such as dams and irrigation projects that have made living in the arid west possible. The federal government does not fund roads other than those in the interstate highways system at 80%.

Federal dollars from the 1930s through the mid-1980s robustly supported regional and local infrastructure of the kind envisioned in the IJ and IRA bills as well as public housing. There is still some money for housing, but if the federal government took an active role in affordable housing, it could eradicate our national issue with affordable housing and homelessness. Instead, it leaves these issues primarily to local governments. Since "Cities Drop Dead" a quote President Gerald Ford denies having said and then President Reagan, funding for infrastructure has been left to states and local governments to figure out. That experiment in under-investing and shifting the burden of funding major projects onto the shoulders of local taxpayers to reduce the size of the federal government and "stimulate the economy" through supply-side economics (reducing taxes on corporations and the wealthy) has failed through the lens of aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance on that infrastructure. These two bills are a temporary infusion harkening back to those days—when the Federal Government had more tendencies of more socialist oriented European democracies.

In 1958, back when most people who nostalgically think back on America as having been "great," the top tax rate was 91% and the federal government was actively funding infrastructure and social programs. Today the tax rate is 21% for corporations, and corporate profits are at record highs in 2022 with profits not seen for seventy years... since the 1950s ([Bloomberg, CBS News](#)) which was the heyday of "big government." Meanwhile roughly 1 in 5 Americans lists the cost of goods (inflation) as the nation's biggest problem and those running for federal office point to cities as "failing" their citizens. In a sense, under this 50-year austerity experiment they are failing to solve some major issues, and without the federal government stepping up with ongoing funding like the IJ and IRA acts will do temporarily, conditions are likely to get worse overall. The [US Government Accountability Office reported](#) in 2019 that state and local governments will have "an increasingly tough time covering bills over the next 50 years" with revenues that "may be insufficient to sustain the amount of government service currently provided." As a result, America, collectively, has a major issue with aging infrastructure and underfunded maintenance in just about all sectors from transportation to energy to water and wastewater to roads. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) [scores American Infrastructure at a C-](#), for instance leaving 43% of public roadways in poor to mediocre condition, and water infrastructure that loses an estimated 6 billion gallons of water each day. Download Colorado scores [here](#). All that to say that the next few years is an opportunity to leverage federal funding through the IJ and IRA can make a dent in those deficiencies.

Five years is a very short window for local governments to go outside their regular skill sets to leverage this experiment which narrowly passed largely on partisan lines this summer. Voters are likely focused on shorter term economic trends and have largely accepted the rhetoric about "big government" being the problem. There is an election next month and another in two years that will likely return the federal government to its 50-year experiment in austerity and supply-side economics. In the meantime, there is this massive, complex infusion of money for infrastructure available.

Meanwhile, NWCCOG is working with OEDIT and other COGS to deploy these Regional Grants Navigators to assist local governments to take advantage of a historic opportunity. It may be another 75 years before we again decide the federal investment in infrastructure at all levels is necessary to support a thriving economy for main streets across Colorado. Let's get this right.

**Jon Stavney**

Executive Director - NWCCOG

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# Antedotum Inc. A Northwest Loan Fund Client

Antedotum Inc / **an(t)i, dōt əm /Antidotum-** a Latin word meaning powerful remedy or antidote.

Antedotum aims to provide plant-powered products that are both holistic and backed by science to protect skin from today's fast-paced life-style - from the high altitude to the urban jungle. During extensive research they discovered the cell-preserving and renewing properties of Aspen Bark. Using this as a cornerstone, Antedotum developed a line of products to restore and beautify skin in any condition.

President and Founder, Karina Lopez-Marconi, was asked how she became interested in this type of business. She replied, "Growing up in Puerto Rico, I had constant sun exposure. I was plagued by dark spots which were compounded by lingering, postpartum melasma after the birth of my daughter. I became very self-conscious of my melasma while working in the beauty industry and wouldn't leave the house without makeup. Years later, my family relocated to Aspen, Colorado where the unforgiving mountain climate — dry air, high altitude, wind, sun and cold — only intensified my skin conditions. If I was having these struggles, I knew others had to be also. I knew I had to do something!"



After spending 10 years at Chanel's corporate headquarters in NY, she decided to assemble a team of researchers and industry veterans to help develop products that would help heal her skin and give her confidence. And she wanted products she could share with anyone looking to transform their skin.

"I created Antedotum with the intent to cultivate skin health and happiness through regenerative, holistic products with the highest efficacy and results."

Karina and her husband and business partner, Christopher, found the NLF through the State of Colorado OEDIT newsletter. When they connected with Anita, they knew they'd met a kindred spirit. The NLF helped with multiple loans for working capital, staffing, inventory, and business growth. The NLF has also provided financing to assist with the acquisition of Antedotum's headquarters, in Snowmass Village, CO.

Antedotum's success enables the organization to live their values especially in terms of giving back. Karina said, "We believe people thrive most in a company culture that demonstrates thankfulness and prizes humility. Giving back, working to improve circumstances, and contributing to our community is at the core of what we value. We hold deep convictions for many causes which allows us to partner and donate to a wide network of organizations."

## Vintage's Steamboat Office Gets a Facelift Just in Time for Open Enrollment

One of the many exciting things about Routt County's inclusion into Vintage was the addition of a new office! The Steamboat Springs office was part of the Region 11 SHIP program and Vintage took over the lease when the transition occurred. Jonnah, Vintage's SHIP Medicare Coordinator and undercover decorator and furniture assembler, revamped the office and added a new, cozy look. The office is used most often during Open Enrollment



when Medicare beneficiaries meet one-on-one with Routt's fabulous, certified SHIP counselors.



## The NWCCOG Energy Program welcomes new employees



### **Jeanne Huggins – Outreach Assistant, Energy Department**

Originally from Mankato, MN, Jeanne has been in Summit County for more than 7 years. She previously worked in the Healthcare Marketing field, took a spin selling and servicing Crop Insurance, and was also involved with Property Management. Each of those previous positions relied on her organizational skills as well as her ability to communicate well with people from all walks of life. With that as a backdrop, she'll be most invaluable as an Outreach Assistant working with clients of the Energy Department.

When asked what she was most looking forward to about her new positions she answered, "Really making a difference for our clients by helping them receive beneficial energy upgrades, saving them money and in the bigger picture - helping with climate change."

Like most who live in the high country she loves outdoor activities including camping, hiking, skiing, reading, yoga, and SUP. But most of all she enjoys being a grandma to her first grandchild, a boy, born in April of this year.

### **Kevin Vermillion – Energy Efficiency Technician, Energy Program**

Kevin's a newcomer to Summit County with 2 years under his belt. HE grew up in Mason, OH. His work background is varied, having worked at the University of Alabama in outdoor recreation, being part of the staff and Philmont Scout Ranch, and an assistant Operations Manager at Breckenridge Mountain Management. He's now ready to take on his new role with the Energy Program. He says, "I'm looking forward to helping people and the environment by making their homes more energy efficient and starting in a line of work that's a little more humanitarian in nature."

While most of his activities are outdoor oriented like trail running, Snowboarding, cycling, mountain biking, and hiking, Kevin is also an accomplished baker. Maybe he'll be bringing some cookies in to the gang at the office.





### William Wright - Warehouse Manager, Energy Program

William could almost be considered a native, having lived in Eagle County for 42 years. During that time, he's gathered years of experience in the construction industry as Maintenance Supervisor with the Eagle County Housing department, acting as General Contractor of his own business, and before that having been a framing contractor for more than 15 years. That experience has made William uniquely qualified to fill the newly minted position of Warehouse Manager. He says he's always looking for more challenges and is excited about organizing a brand new facility and interacting with new team members.

His outside interests revolve around his three granddaughters (he swears he does not spoil them), fishing, golf, traveling and hockey to which he says, "Go AVALANCHE!"

### Next Council Meeting - October 27, 2022

#### ***Full Council Meeting, EDD Board Meeting***

Location: Zoom Conference Call, On-site location NWCCOG Offices 249 Warren Ave., Silverthorne

Time: Council 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM - EDD 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2023 budget; approve 2023 council meeting schedule; approve 3rd Quarter financials; approve August minutes

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