



# Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Grow Your Own Part 3



## Cultivating Local Talent for a Thriving Workforce

### INTRODUCTION TO THE GROW YOUR OWN WORKFORCE SERIES:

In an era marked by dynamic economic shifts and evolving job markets, the concept of "Growing Your Own Workforce" has emerged as a transformative approach to building thriving communities. This series of articles aims to explore this innovative concept from various perspectives, highlighting examples of regional organizations that have successfully implemented the "Grow Your Own" philosophy to strengthen their workforce from both community and organizational standpoints. Herewith our findings:

### PART 3: Growing Our Own: A Community-Oriented Approach to Policing in Snowmass Village

"Forecasting Justice: The Evolution of a Weather Kid to Police Officer"



In the scenic town of Snowmass Village, the concept of "grow-your-own" workforce has been embraced by the local police department, fostering a strong and community-oriented approach to law enforcement. Brian Olson, the Chief of Police, has witnessed the success of this approach firsthand during his 35-year tenure. With a deep understanding of the area and a commitment to the community, the [Snowmass Village Police Department](#)

(SVPD) has consistently drawn its officers from the local population, resulting in numerous benefits for both the department and the community it serves.

Olson explains that the decision to prioritize local candidates stems from their inherent connection to the Roaring Fork Valley. The individuals who live in the area understand the unique lifestyle and are passionate about both their community and the prospect of a fulfilling career. "Drawing from the local community – we typically know the people we are cultivating. These are people who live here, know they want to be here to take advantage of the life-style, and they want a career that enables them to grow and support that life-style." Olson affirms,

## **"Local candidates are by far, the best choice because of their connection to the Roaring Fork Valley."**

Hiring locally not only bolsters the department's workforce but also forges deeper connections within the community. Officers who live in Snowmass Village become well-known among their neighbors and are actively involved in grassroots community outreach initiatives. They participate in local boards and homeowner associations, fostering a sense of trust and familiarity. This organic integration cultivates positive relationships and facilitates effective law enforcement. Additionally, local officers possess a deep understanding of the area, its residents, and its unique challenges, allowing them to serve their community with compassion and understanding.

While other departments may encounter difficulties with hiring, the Snowmass Village Police Department benefits from a stable workforce. By prioritizing local candidates who are committed to the community and its values, the department experiences minimal turnover. Olson proudly states, "We normally don't have hiring problems as others do." This stability allows the department to maintain a cohesive team and build strong working relationships with local residents and visitors. "With officers who are part of the community, we work to treat violators with compassion and understanding, remembering we are likely to run into them in the grocery store the following week. It's a community-oriented style that is organic and has served us well."



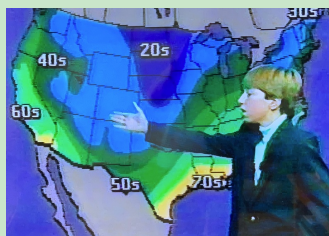
When asked about a recent article in this space entitled [High Speed Chase, Police Wage Shopping](#) detailing the movement between police forces, Olson explained, "When an officer gets a great opportunity to move to another force, especially if it enables the officer to expand his/her skill-set, we are very supportive of their move. We have a pipeline of new candidates, and by helping officers move to other locales, this enables us to bring another person from the pipeline into the force." Overall, they have little turnover and a high success rate – in large part, because the people they hire have already been fully integrated into the community. (Story continues below.)

## **"Forecasting Justice: The Evolution of a Weather Kid to Police Officer"**

### **In the words of Brian Olson:**

Officer Franz Zedlacher grew up in Snowmass Village. He is our most senior officer as a "Police Officer III" just beneath the rank of sergeant. Franz has been on the department 16 years.

From a young age he exhibited talent and maturity well beyond his years. At age 12, he was the "Weather Kid" on the local TV channel that serviced Aspen and Snowmass Village. He spent time as a volunteer firefighter, attended American University in Washington D.C. and was working as a grocery store manager in Snowmass Village when we hired him at age 24. Franz brought with him a young perspective, amazing intellect, and an outstanding work ethic. Franz exemplifies the "Locally-grown" concept and its inherent success.



Advice he might offer to others looking to replicate their success, Olson offers valuable advice for implementing a "grow-your-own" approach. His top tip is to identify individuals within the community who show interest in pursuing a career and invest in their own development. By planting the seed early and nurturing these candidates, a pipeline of local talent can be cultivated. Additionally, Olson emphasizes the importance of conducting oneself





as an organization that creates a positive reputation, one that attracts individuals who genuinely want to work with the department. Being an active and involved part of the community is paramount, aligning with [Sir Robert Peel's famous principle](#) that "the police are the public, and the public are the police."

The Snowmass Village Police Department's commitment to investing in the local workforce has proven to be immensely rewarding. By aligning career opportunities with the community's unique lifestyle and values, they have fostered a dedicated and enthusiastic team of officers. This approach not

only enhances law enforcement capabilities but also strengthens the bonds between the department and the community it serves. The Snowmass Village Police Department serves as a shining example of how investing in the local workforce can yield significant benefits for both organizations and the community at large.



This series was conceptualized and initiated by Jon. The content presented here includes interviews and stories which were created by me. The editing of the series was primarily performed by Jon, with valuable contributions and collaboration from the interviewers involved in each story. However, any errors or inaccuracies that may be found within the series are solely my responsibility .

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*Photos in the story courtesy of TOSV Website and Brian Olsen*

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