



# 2026 NWCCOG Regional Economic Summit

## Speaker and Panelist Bios

Thursday, May 7, 2026

### Opening Comments & Welcoming

#### **Jon Stavney | Executive Director | NWCCOG**



Jon is a leader passionate about improving local government through information sharing, innovation and best practices. Since being hired in November of 2016, Jon has worked closely with program directors at NWCCOG to develop clear goals and maintain the highest possible scores from the state and federal agencies which review each program, and to increase the visibility of services and of the organization. Jon learned public service on the job over more than twenty years in various roles. Elected to the Town of Eagle Board of Trustees in 1998, 2002 and Mayor in 2004, he served on the Board in Eagle until 2008. Jon served 5 years as an Eagle County Commissioner from 2008. Jon stepped down as Commissioner in 2013 when he was hired to serve as Town Manager in Eagle.

970-471-9050 – [jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org)

### Session 1: Regional Demographic & Economic Overview, State Perspective



#### **Kate Watkins | State Demographer | Colorado Demography Office**

Kate leads the State Demography Office within the Department of Local Affairs. The State Demography Office produces population and economic estimates and forecasts for use by the business community, nonprofits, and state and local governments. Kate has two decades of experience analyzing economic and demographic trends in Colorado and beyond. Her career history includes serving as the Chief Economist for Colorado’s General Assembly, as an economist at the Denver Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, and as a private sector consultant. Kate holds a Ph.D. from Cornell University.

303-503-1063 – [kate.m.watkins@state.co.us](mailto:kate.m.watkins@state.co.us)

### Session 2: Results of Regional Statistical Analysis Project

#### **Brian London | Managing Director | Insights Collective**

I publish Destination Marketing Today, a regular briefing that tracks how destination marketing is changing — in real time. The focus is on how destinations govern tourism, fund it, limit it, and live with the consequences. The work follows shifts in authority, accountability, and responsibility as tourism intersects with quality of life, economic development, and public policy. Stories are drawn from cities, regions, and countries around the world. Different destinations are at different moments, but the direction of change is increasingly clear.

[blondon@LondonTourismPublications.com](mailto:blondon@LondonTourismPublications.com)



**Carl Ribaudo | President | Insights Collective**

Years of racing motorcycles have taught me that success hinges on the ability to read changing terrain and competitive situations, coupled with the agility to make tactical adjustments. These lessons have shaped my approach in guiding organizations and destinations to develop effective strategies. With experience consulting in over sixty destinations, I specialize in transforming the competitive landscape. I'm genuinely captivated by the dynamics of competition and the creative ways people travel and reinvent themselves. This passion drives me to assist destinations and tourism organizations in elevating their strategies, fostering a stronger sense of place, creating a differentiated market position, and enhancing visitor connections, ultimately boosting their competitiveness and success.



[www.linkedin.com/in/carl-ribaudo-1ab0648/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/carl-ribaudo-1ab0648/)



**Susan Rubin-Stewart | Secretary/Treasurer | Insights Collective**

I have more than 20 years leading and transforming contact centers in hospitality, including Vail Resorts and Alterra, where I launched virtual call centers that cut call abandonment by 30 percent and increased customer satisfaction by 20 percent. I use data and analytics to guide decisions, not just report on them. In the last few years I have added focused AI skills. I completed a Google AI agents intensive with a capstone project, a prompt engineering certificate from Vanderbilt, Agile training, and Python and analytics coursework. My expertise includes strategic planning, process improvement, and implementing technology that fits a company's unique needs. I believe a well-managed contact center can truly impact the business and create value, not just for customers but for the entire organization.

[linkedin.com/in/susanrubinstewart](http://linkedin.com/in/susanrubinstewart)

**Speaker Speed Round – 15 MINUTES EACH**

***CareerWise Youth Apprenticeship – Creating Measurable Value for Businesses and Educational Partners***

**Erik Williams | Director of Community Development | Vail Valley Partnership**

Erik Williams serves as the Director of Community Development for the Vail Valley Partnership, where he works daily to connect businesses and community members through Vail Valley Works and other collaborative initiatives. His work focuses on aligning people, purpose, and opportunity to strengthen the region as a whole. He partners closely with local schools and employers on career-based initiatives, including CareerWise Youth Apprenticeships and Career Plus nationally registered apprenticeships. Deeply passionate about this valley and the people who call it home, Erik is driven by a genuine desire to serve others and make a lasting impact. With a diverse background in ministry and television and more than 25 years in the valley, Erik is a familiar face on local stages. Erik is married and the proud parent of three incredible children, along with two sled dogs. When he's not working, he can usually be found searching for adventure with his family and soaking up everything this remarkable place has to offer.



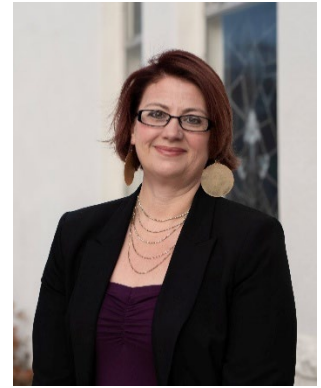
**970-477-4000 – [erik@VailValleyPartnership.com](mailto:erik@VailValleyPartnership.com)**

## State Economic Planning, Work Nested in Regional Planning

### Kami Collins | Rural Opportunity Representative | State of Colorado, OEDIT

Kami Collins works for the Rural Opportunity Office, a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Located in Delta, she serves 16 Western Slope communities, including Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, and Summit counties, through the Rural Opportunity Office. A Colorado and Western Slope native, Kami has worked in community building, local government and rural economic development for over 15 years. She started in the Rural Opportunity Office in 2024.

970-361-8905 – [kami.collins@state.co.us](mailto:kami.collins@state.co.us)



## Session 4: An Interactive AI Workshop: Building Regional Strategy Live



### Facilitator: Stephen Kuban | CEO & Principal | Kuban Transit Solutions

Stephen Kuban, founder and CEO of Kuban Transit Solutions (KTS), is an emerging thought leader on the future of the post-AI workplace. A 2025 Mass Transit Magazine "40 Under 40" honoree with over a decade leading America's most well-known transit technology companies, his mission is to help public sector leaders shatter their glass ceilings. Stephen's work has been featured in major national distribution channels. His sessions are known for teaching immediately actionable techniques, leaving audiences energized, equipped, and thinking differently about their role in a rapidly changing landscape.

[Stephen@KubanTransit.com](mailto:Stephen@KubanTransit.com)

### Panelists

#### Jason Blevins | Co-Founder | Colorado Sun

Jason is a co-founder and reporter at The Colorado Sun who has been covering businesses, communities and characters on Western Slope of Colorado for nearly 30 years. He lives in Crested Butte with his wife and a dog named Gravy. Sign up for his free weekly newsletter at [coloradosun.com/outsider](https://coloradosun.com/outsider).

[Jason@ColoradoSun.com](mailto:Jason@ColoradoSun.com)



#### Jacob Zook | Economic Development Specialist | City of Glenwood Springs



Jacob serves as Economic Development Specialist for the City of Glenwood Springs, a role he has held since 2024. His work centers on translating economic and tourism data into tools that businesses, city leadership, and regional partners can actually use — including a growing set of public-facing dashboards aimed at deepening the information available to the local business community. Jacob partners closely with the Glenwood Springs Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority on shared initiatives. He holds a Bachelor's in Urban Studies and Economic

Data Analysis from the University of Pittsburgh. When he's not crunching numbers at city hall, you'll find him on his dirt bike somewhere in the Colorado backcountry.

**970-384-6465 – [Jacob.Zook@cogs.us](mailto:Jacob.Zook@cogs.us)**

**DiAnn Butler | Economic Development Director | Grand County, Colorado**

DiAnn Butler is an experienced economic development leader in Grand County with over 30 years of local experience. After two decades plus as a business owner, she became Economic Development Director of Grand County in 2012, focusing on building a resilient, diversified economy that reflects the character of mountain communities. She leads a wide range of initiatives and has secured over \$8 million in grant funding through strong partnerships. She's also an advocate for the creative economy, playing roles in projects like the Space to Create initiative, which combines affordable housing with creative workspaces. DiAnn emphasizes community-driven development and holds leadership roles on regional boards, including chairing the NWCCOG Economic Development District (EDD).



**970-531-1343 – [dbutler@co.grand.co.us](mailto:dbutler@co.grand.co.us)**

**Mathew Mendisco | Town Manager | Town of Hayden, Colorado**



Mathew was born and raised on the western slope of Colorado spending 10 years as a management consultant before arriving in Hayden where he has been the Town Manager for the last 10 years. During Mathew's tenure, Hayden has become one of the fastest growing rural communities in Colorado. He has helped foster over 206 affordable housing units in 3 years (Hayden will hit the Prop 123 requirements), launched a new light industrial business park, and is building one of the first of its kind Geothermal Network's for the Northwest Colorado Business District (also developed by Hayden). He serves on the Rocky Mountain Health Foundation Board of Directors and is the Secretary for the newly formed Yampa Valley Regional Transportation Authority.

**970-276-3741 x15 – [mathew.mendisco@haydencolorado.org](mailto:mathew.mendisco@haydencolorado.org)**

**Mia Vlaar | Economic Development Director | Town of Vail, Colorado**

Ms. Mia Vlaar serves as Economic Development Director for the Town of Vail. Ms. Vlaar joined the Town in December 2017. Her work in tourism business development and marketing has included resort, corporate, government, technology and non-profit sectors, including the Vail Valley Foundation. She most recently served as Director of Sales and Marketing for East West Hospitality, a property and vacation rental management company. In her role leading the Town of Vail's economic development office, Ms. Vlaar is responsible for marketing, research and special events initiatives with the goal of retaining and attracting business to Vail, enhancing the guest experience, and growing Vail's year-round economy.



**970-479-2454 – [mvlaar@vail.gov](mailto:mvlaar@vail.gov)**