



No Crystal Ball Required: Pitkin County Plans for 2026



Welcome to 2026!

We wish we could tell you what's going to happen this coming year but as everyone knows, no one can even guess what is happening day to day these days. If any of you have a crystal ball and you can forecast what's going to happen this coming year, please give us a call and we will be happy to pass along.

In Pitkin County, our response is not to wait for clarity, but to plan ahead and be prepared for the unexpected. In times like

these, it's not so much about being flexible as it is more about being capable.

As systems continue to shift, counties are often asked to fill gaps quickly. We're responding by focusing on the fundamentals that keep our community resilient and grounded in its sense of place including healthcare, food security, sustainable agriculture, and public lands.

Healthcare remains essential. Our priority is maintaining access for everyone, through everything from trauma care to everyday health needs. Our board allocates the taxpayer-supported Healthy Community Fund to public health, human services, and nonprofits supporting our community. Furthermore, investments like Mountain Family Health and the purchase of a mid-valley building to expand care across our rural and diverse region reflect that commitment. We have steered the Valley Health Alliance, made up of governments, business chambers, and healthcare providers to promote the health and well-being of

our communities by collaborating to provide healthcare that is accessible, affordable and high quality. We are also expanding our senior lunch program to include five days a week of breakfast and lunch, supported through a combination of in-kind contributions, Healthy Community Funds, federal dollars, and strategic gap-filling with general fund dollars.

We also continue to make sure food security and sustainable agriculture a priority cornerstone of our work. By leasing nearly 800 acres of county open space for sustainable agriculture, supporting local producers, and providing CSA shares for seniors, we are strengthening regional food systems at a time when broader supply chains feel increasingly fragile. The leasees are the stewards of the land benefiting our water rights, soil health and noxious weed programs.

Finally, public lands define our region and our way of life. Maintaining public access while conserving these lands for future generations requires strong partnerships and stable funding. Our working agreements with the U.S. Forest Service, including collaboration around the Maroon Bells, backcountry management, public safety, and education, exemplify how shared stewardship can protect and thoughtfully improve access to lands that belong to all. Among federal funding threats last year we allocated dollars for a backcountry community resource officer within our sheriff's department, and joined a coalition of sustainability and wildlands groups to create a public lands information campaign. This coming year we've committed to funding two backcountry resources officers to fill the continued gap in the loss of Forest Service employees.

Local governments don't have the luxury of waiting for certainty. We plan, adapt, and invest. Here's to planning ahead, being prepared for the unexpected, and meeting 2026 together.

Good Luck!

Patti Clapper, Pitkin County Commissioner and Vice Chair of NWCCOG (pictured on the left)
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Alycin Bektesh, Strategic Communications Manager, Pitkin County (pictured on the right)
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Energy Program Winter Training Highlights

During Energy Winter Training Week, NWCCOG Energy staff participated in two impactful training opportunities focused on safety, skill-building, and professional development.

Mental Health First Aid Certification (12/15/25)

All Energy Program staff completed Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training and earned nationally recognized certification from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. The training was led by David Galvan of Mental Health First Aid Colorado and hosted on-site at the NWCCOG Energy Program Training Center in Gypsum. This training equips staff with tools to recognize and respond to mental health challenges in the workplace and beyond.



Lead RRP Certification Training (12/16/25)

NWCCOG's Energy Program partnered with Housing Resources of Western Colorado (HRWC) to deliver an EPA Lead Renovation, Repair, and Paint (RRP) certification course, serving nearly the entire western region of Colorado. This marked the second successful collaboration between NWCCOG and HRWC on Lead RRP training.

The course was taught by Mike Benedetto of BetterCertify, a Colorado-based hazard training company founded by Danaya Wilson, a 2024 Denver Business Journal "40 Under 40" honoree and two-time Titan 100 recipient. Training also took place at the Gypsum Training Center.

Congratulations to our newly certified team members:

Charlie L., Gabe T., Adan L., Clay D., Favian A., Jacob J., Darcy O., Greg C., and Justin W.

The eight-hour EPA RRP Initial Certified Renovator course prepares contractors to safely work in environments where lead-based paint may be present. Trainings like these reflect NWCCOG's ongoing commitment to employee safety, career advancement, and delivering the highest-quality services to our communities.

Vintage Celebrates Another Successful Open Enrollment

MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT 2025



Serving Eagle, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, Routt, and Summit County

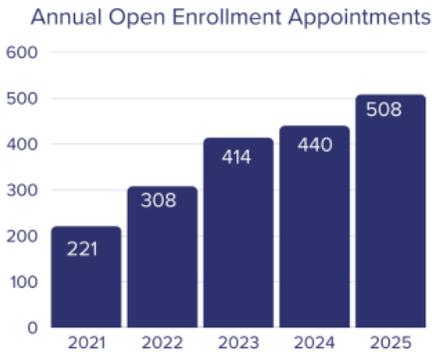
Medicare **Open Enrollment** appointments **508**



Medicare **yearly** appointments for 2025 **801**



We are pleased to conclude another successful year of Medicare Open Enrollment (OE). Supported by an outstanding group of volunteers and marked by continued growth.



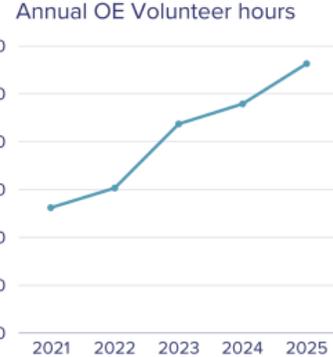
Many individuals come to us feeling confused & overwhelmed by Medicare. Through **education, personalized support,** & trusted guidance, we help **reduce stress,** often **saving them money.**

The **value of a volunteer hour** for 2025 in Colorado is \$38.74 x **563 OE Volunteer hours = \$21,810**



Our volunteers are invaluable and are the heart of the SHIP program. We can not do this work without them! A huge THANK YOU goes out to:

Bernadette Kromhoz Jeni Holloway
 Lorie Williams Joan Lucas
 Karen Eyrich Judy Hiester
 Ed VanWalraven Sherrie Ford
 Patty Kravitz Cindy Ptach
 Amy Eagertson-Throm Phyllis Harrelson



Navigating Medicare

For more information about the Medicare SHIP program contact
 Jonnah Glassman 970.315.1328 Jglassman@nwccog.org

Dana Wood Joins Colorado Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee



NWCCOG is excited to share that Dana Wood, Mobility Director, has been appointed to the Colorado Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee.

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, led by the Colorado Department of Transportation, supports projects and programs that help students safely walk and bike to school. This includes infrastructure improvements, safety education, and community-based initiatives that promote healthy, active transportation.

The Advisory Committee reviews grant applications and helps guide how SRTS funding is awarded across the state, ensuring projects have meaningful safety and community impact. Dana's participation brings valuable rural and regional perspective to this important work.

Congratulations, Dana, on this well-deserved appointment!

Upcoming Board Meetings

Thursday, January 22, 2026 – Gypsum Conference Room Energy Program Warehouse, 9:00 a.m.-12 p.m. [Council Packet](#)

Thursday, March 19, 2026 – Silverthorne Conference Room, NWCCOG Offices, 9:00 a.m.-12 p.m. [Council Packet available soon](#)

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