



NWCCOG Announces Peer Groups for Managers and Planners

NWCCOG proudly announces the formation of two facilitated peer cohorts for town managers and planning staff that will meet through 2027. Facilitated by Cathie Pagano, Founder/Principal of Abundance Community Advisors, these monthly one-hour groups are designed to be a safe space for high-level professionals to meet virtually, discuss the challenges of their work and evolving situations, and share personal approaches and professional practices. One group is exclusively for municipal and county managers; the other is for planners and community development staff. Topics will be defined by the groups. Managers and planners interested in joining can contact Cathie or me; details are at the end of this column.



Why is NWCCOG doing this? The region is experiencing high turnover in these roles. Many people stepping forward have less conventional professional experience than their predecessors, many of whom had decades of experience in these roles. New leaders face tremendous pressure, and their success is integral to the success of our member jurisdictions. New leadership is both a risk and an opportunity. I've been an eager, young Town Manager, and I cultivated mentors and supporters outside the organization who were integral to my sanity and success. When I began my MPA studies three years ago, I studied the impact of manager turnover on organizations through various projects. In 2024, there were few leadership transitions; only a handful come to mind. John Crone took on the Town Manager (TM) position in Keystone after five years as TM in Grand Lake. Steve Kudron, the Mayor of Grand Lake, stepped down to take the position. In the INSIGHTS series, I reflected on the Grand Lake transition, which I facilitated ([Mayor to Manager](#), [Perils of Hiring a Manager](#), and [To Interim or Not to Interim](#)). That year, Samantha Martin, who had been an Assistant County Manager (ACM), became County Administrator for Jackson County, which had a short term manager after Kent Crowder retired following 15 years there. Historically, most town managers had decades of experience under their belts, and

average manager tenure in the region was about six years, close to the 6.9-year national benchmark for the profession. My research shows it has since fallen to 4.1 years, with turnover up 47% decade-over-decade. By the time I graduated this spring, it was apparent that only a handful of “career” managers remained. The region was in a generational wave of change at the manager position. Today, 18 managers, more than half of NWCCOG’s 31 member jurisdictions, are new to post between 2024 and 2027, and there have been 20 manager changes since the start of 2023. Red Cliff has announced that Melissa Matthews is passing the baton to current clerk Chris Brown in January 2027. Please join me in welcoming these new colleagues (TM = Town Manager; CM = City/County Manager; ATM/ACM = Assistant Town/City/County Manager).

New in 2026

Chad Hull, TM Blue River

Kara Silbernagel, CM Pitkin County (a decade of experience as Pitkin County ACM)

Gloria Kaasch-Buerger, TM Basalt (experience as TM Silverton)

Melissa Daruna, TM Eagle (experience as ATM for 3+ years)

Sarah Catanzarite, TM Fraser (experience as ATM for 3 years)

Ray Tinkum, TM **and Mayor** Hot Sulphur Springs

Greg Camp, TM Silverthorne (two decades of experience as TM in Missouri)

Ryan Hyland, TM Carbondale (a decade of experience as TM in Silverthorne)

Jon Peacock, TM Winter Park (more than two decades of experience in Pitkin and Mesa Counties)

Vacant, TM Dillon (Public Works Director serving as interim)

Vacant, TM Granby (Mayor Josh Hardy is overseeing town operations while managing search)

New in 2025

Jen MacPherson, TM Kremmling (rich and varied experience in the private sector)

Steve Kudron, TM Grand Lake (formerly Mayor of Grand Lake)

Rob Gutierrez, TM Minturn

Pete Strecker, CM Aspen (longtime Aspen Finance Manager)

Tom Leeson, CM Steamboat Springs (experience as ACM under Gary Suiter in Steamboat Springs)

NWCCOG believes a lane exists for a peer network group such as this to fill in the gaps of other key resources. For instance, each winter, managers meet for three days at the Colorado City and County Management Association (CCCMA) retreat without board members or mayors in a time that has become gratifying, edifying and reinforcing of values. Colorado Municipal League (CML) conferences include elected officials and serve a larger educational and networking purpose. CML also offers an invaluable listserv where managers can ask questions that are answered by peers. A number of our region’s counties have “Mayor/Manager” groups or manager-only groups that meet regularly, usually to confer on local issues, though also creating peer relationships. In talking to many new managers and having been one myself, I know the demands of the job do not allow for many opportunities to let one’s guard down and talk frankly about common challenges.

That brings me to the Planners Peer group. NWCCOG once facilitated regular meetings among planners and planning agencies in its role as a regional convener. Planners across the region share plenty of common cause, from best practices to evolving state policy, and this group may grow into that role again over time. Planners have perhaps the most difficult job in small towns and counties. They are the gatekeepers of local land use regulations and zoning. They sit at the center of competing pressures: a developer with sunk front-end costs, a ticking financing clock, and a limited window to complete and profit from a project; a public that often accuses them of advocating for the developer (when their job is to deliver a complete, compliant file to the approving body); engineering and public works colleagues with their own input; and a manager whose boss is the elected body, often as divided over change as the community itself. I have observed that the longtime planner, who confidently knows the lay of the land, the politics of the community, and their board’s general direction, and who can make common-sense judgment calls, is becoming rarer as that generation retires.

The planners stepping into these roles today often bring strong technical training and fresh energy. New to their communities, they understandably prioritize getting things right and hewing close to the letter of the regulations. What only time can provide is the local knowledge that lets a planner read the intent behind the code, and until then, the system can inadvertently make them part of the proverbial red tape. It is an employee’s job market for planners right now, and when things get difficult, the market makes it easy to move on before that knowledge has a chance to take root. In my humble opinion, one of the best things NWCCOG could do for economic development, for housing, and for good governance is to help local planners grow into professionals who feel they are shaping their community, meeting strategic objectives and aligned with diverse stakeholders. That lofty goal starts with a peer network.

I have come to believe that the impact of public manager turnover on an organization’s forward progress, stability, and culture is much deeper and longer lasting than the 4.1-year figure alone suggests, and than many of us realize when we part ways with a manager. I also believe that planners are often a rare mix of idealists and practical thinkers who can have a tremendous impact on a place when they have the chance to put down roots. I am thrilled that this project, which I have simply lacked the capacity to stand up alone, is finally coming to fruition with Cathie’s help. To join either group or learn more, contact Cathie at cathie@abundancecommunityadvisors.com or me at jstavney@nwccog.org. We will also reach out to member managers and planners directly in the coming weeks.

About Cathie Pagano

Cathie Pagano is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP) with nearly 25 years in Colorado local government, most recently as Assistant County Manager for Community & Economic Development at Gunnison County. She supervised staff across planning, building, environmental health, and sustainable tourism, and currently facilitates DOLA's Regional Planning Roundtable Commission.

Jon Stavney

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NWCCOG's Energy Training Program Exhibits Progress and Certification Success



Gypsum, Colorado is now home to one of the country's newest Weatherization and Home Performance training programs. This training program also now has an experienced full-time trainer, Mark 'Morgan' Currie, to cover certification needs for Energy employees, other agencies, as well as private sector contractors seeking BPI Certifications. In early 2026, NWCCOG's Energy Program completed construction of a model home training laboratory, accredited by the Building Performance Institute (BPI) for certifying building science professionals. This is the only such facility on the West Slope.

In June 2026, NWCCOG's Energy Program was awarded \$130,000 in workforce development grants from Xcel Energy's Clean Energy Careers Program. These funds will support new training curricula, state-of-the-art diagnostic tools, and hands-on air sealing and insulation props. Working alongside partners at Energy Smart Colorado, the program will expand its capacity to certify Building Analysts, Energy Auditors, and IDL-credentialed contractors — professionals equipped to diagnose and install critical home performance upgrades.

Since launching in March 2026, the program has delivered over 30 training, review, and examination interactions in support of workforce development and professional certification. Participants have come from 5 organizations across Colorado, representing communities including Longmont, Gypsum, Grand Junction, Silverthorne, Rifle, Almont, and Sterling — with many trainees drawn from NWCCOG's own staff.

Trainees have advanced through multiple BPI credentials, including Energy Auditor, Infiltration and Duct Leakage (IDL), and Quality Control Inspector (QCI) certifications. The program combines classroom preparatory learning with hands-on field diagnostic testing, culminating in proctored written and field examinations.

The results speak for themselves: 24 of 25 interactions with recorded outcomes were successful — a 96% success rate.

These results reflect more than individual achievement. By strengthening the skills of professionals across multiple organizations, NWCCOG's Energy Program is helping expand Colorado's qualified workforce and build greater regional capacity for high-quality energy efficiency services. The result: area residents benefiting from skilled, certified contractors — and living in more comfortable, safer homes with lower energy demand and reduced utility costs.

By the Numbers:

- 1 BPI-Accredited Test Facility
- 30+ Training and testing interactions
- 25 Individuals trained
- 5 Organizations across Colorado
- 96% Success rate
- \$130,000 In grant funding secured

Medicare Open Enrollment is October 15 through December 7

Prefer a warm smile when talking about complicated issues? NWCCOG has a troop of volunteers trained in Medicare coverage who are actual people, who can meet you in a physical location across the region and counsel you in the complexities of this Federal Health Insurance program.

We promise it can be more interesting than reading an insurance handbook! During this time, people with Medicare have the opportunity to review their coverage and make changes for 2027. Plans can change their monthly premiums, prescription drug coverage, provider networks, and other costs from year to year, so even if you love your current plan, it's worth giving it a quick annual checkup. Think of it like getting good tires on before winter, maybe everything is still in great shape, but you'll be happy you checked before you need them.

That's where Vintage's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) comes in. Our state-certified counselors provide free, unbiased Medicare counseling throughout the six-county NWCCOG region. During Open Enrollment, we help hundreds of community members compare plans, understand changes, and sort through the alphabet soup of Parts A, B, C, and D without trying to sell you anything. Whether you're a Medicare pro or the words "donut hole" still make you think of breakfast, we're here to help.

Want to learn more about Medicare?

We offer one-on-one appointments or join us at one of our Medicare presentations happening throughout our communities in October 2026.

To learn more or schedule a one-on-one Medicare appointment, visit yourvintage.org or contact Jonnah Glassman, SHIP Coordinator for Vintage at 970-315-1328 or jglassman@NWCCOG.org.



October 2026

Date	Time	Location	Address	County
Friday, October 2	9:15 AM – 9:45 AM	Aging Well Expo El Jebel Community Center	20 Eagle County Dr, El Jebel, CO 81623	Eagle/Pitkin
Tuesday, October 6	12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	Granby Library Lunch and Learn	55 Zero Street, Granby, CO 80446	Grand
Thursday, October 8	12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	Edwards Field House	450 Miller Ranch Road, Edwards, CO 81632	Eagle
Monday, October 12	1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Pitkin County Senior Center	275 Castle Creek Rd., Aspen, CO 81611	Pitkin
Monday, October 12	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Aspen Police Department	APD is 540 E. Main St. Aspen, CO 81611	Pitkin
Tuesday, October 13	1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Golden Eagle Senior Center	715 Broadway St, Eagle, CO 81631	Eagle
Wednesday, October 21	3:30 PM – 4:30 PM	Kremmling Library	300 S. 8th St., Kremmling, CO 80459	Grand
Tuesday, October 27	6:30 PM – 7:30 PM	Bud Werner Library	1289 Lincoln Ave., Steamboat Springs, CO 80487	Routt

Welcome, Monica Nielsen!

Please join us in welcoming Monica Nielsen, NWCCOG's new Administrative Assistant, based in the Silverthorne office! Monica started this past Tuesday and is looking forward to getting to know the team and learning the ropes.

Originally from New Jersey, Monica has called Colorado home for 23 years, with most of that time spent in Breckenridge. Before joining NWCCOG, she worked at High Country Oxygen. Outside the office, Monica enjoys reading, camping, and skiing, and can often be found catching a show at Dillon Amphitheater. She also loves taking her Shiloh Shepherd, Millie, on adventures with her husband, Greg.

Welcome to the team, Monica!



FREE E-Bikes for COG Communities

NWCCOG's Mobility Program has 26 FREE ebikes that are in need of homes around the region! These ebikes are through the Colorado Accelerated Mobility Program (CAMP) through the Colorado Energy Office. Ebikes are currently being installed in Eagle and Silverthorne.

We are looking for neighborhoods and properties that are multi-family, workforce, affordable, low income, Habitat for Humanity, or LIEHTC. The ebikes are private, so only for those that live at the properties. The grant covers the installation, maintenance, insurance, and app fees for the bikes for 2 years and properties will provide monthly in-kind time towards the project. After the 2 years, properties will purchase the ebikes at a depreciated value and assume the ongoing costs. [Boomerang Fleets](#) is ready to install now, and the goal is to get the remaining ebikes installed before November 1st.



Please reach out to Dana Wood, Mobility Director (dwood@nwccog.org) if you are interested or can connect her with properties that might be interested.

NWCCOG Welcomes Newest Elevator Inspector!



Please join us in welcoming Louis Quinones, NWCCOG's new Elevator Inspector! A Denver native, Louis is excited to begin this new chapter with the organization.

Before joining NWCCOG, Louis spent the better part of the last decade with the Denver Fire Department — an experience that shaped both his career and his deep commitment to serving others.

Outside of work, Louis is happiest fishing or playing soccer with his son. He's truly grateful for the warm welcome he's received and is looking forward to getting to know everyone and becoming part of the NWCCOG family.

Welcome aboard, Louis!

Upcoming Board Meetings

[Monday, October 12, 2026, 1-4pm](#) – Silverthorne Conference Room, NWCCOG Office
2026 NWCCOG Budget Workshop
Schedule Executive Committee Meeting for Executive Director's Annual Review

[Thursday, October 22, 2026](#) – Silverthorne Conference Room, NWCCOG Office
Full Council & EDD Board Meeting AND Executive Committee Meeting
Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2026 budget, approve 2027 meeting schedule, approve Q3 Financials; EDD Board meeting

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