

# *Colorado SECTORS Initiative: Sustainable Manufacturing Industry Alliance of Colorado*

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**Prepared for:**

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# COLORADO'S SECTORS INITIATIVE

In May 2009, The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) jointly awarded funding to super-regions throughout the state. Funding was provided to regional workforce partnerships to plan a sector strategy, and many of these grantees received additional funding for the implementation of these activities. Since 2009, ten grants have been awarded to target industries including aerospace, healthcare, manufacturing, renewable energy, and water/wastewater management. Sector initiatives are developed through local public-private partnerships, are industry focused, and include workforce development, economic development, education and other stakeholders to address high priority workforce challenges within an industry.

## BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Manufacturing Industry Alliance of Colorado (SMIAC) is unique among the sector partnerships. It is not only a joint project of two counties, Adams and Weld, but the partnership was co-convened by Upstate Colorado Economic Development and Brighton Economic Development Corporation and has been administered by Upstate, with Employment Services of Weld County acting as the fiscal conduit.

SMIAC grew out of a sector planning grant (2009) that identified strategies and created an implementation plan to address employer needs in sustainable manufacturing and agriculture advanced manufacturing in Weld and Adams counties. The partnership of the two counties reflected the common economic base in manufacturing, parallels in population growth,<sup>1</sup> and similar challenges from unemployment rates.<sup>2</sup> Information collected and insights gained during the planning grant led to the decision to make Upstate Colorado Economic Development the initiative's lead agency. The public/private non-profit economic development corporation had deeper existing relationships with regional manufacturers than either of the county Workforce Centers, and had established its legitimacy in supporting the preservation and growth of local businesses. In addition, given some historical negative attitudes by employers toward government entities and processes, Upstate was perceived as a business-friendly alternative. Upstate was considered to be the perfect entity to facilitate implementation of the sector initiative and to provide structure for sustainability beyond the grant. The Board of Weld

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<sup>1</sup> Population growth between 1997 and 2007 for Adams County was 27.1% and for Weld County 50.9%.

<sup>2</sup> 9.2% and 8.7% respectively, compared to the state average of 7.9% (October 2009). Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?survey=la&map=state&seasonal=s>

County Commissioners applied for, received, and was responsible for the grant funds, while Employment Services of Weld County became the project manager fiscal conduit.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Sustainable Manufacturing Industry Alliance were: a) to address employer needs in sustainable manufacturing practices and b) to create and promote a culture of sustainability among existing and potential manufacturing firms. These included the workforce system, secondary and postsecondary education, other training providers, and the broader business support community.

To improve sustainability and promote growth, SMIAC's objectives included the following:

- To help employers specify, prioritize and measure skill development needs in the workforce (prospective and incumbent) and to facilitate more lean production, greater efficiency, and higher product quality;
- To identify key learner populations and the gaps in their skills and competencies;
- To close industry wide skill gaps by expanding industry-specific education and training offerings by developing and delivering non-credit, certificate and/or degree programs training;
- To establish a working alliance to include economic development, workforce development, educational institutions (Aims and Front Range Community Colleges), Colorado Association for Manufacturing and Technology (CAMT) and regional manufacturers;
- To engage in continuous assessment and respond to gaps in education and educational resources to meet current and future needs;
- To develop and/or implement "a coherent yet flexible strategy" to leverage new resources and programs to sustain and grow the manufacturing sector.

## PARTNERSHIPS

An active network of partners was at the core of the Sustainable Manufacturing Industry Alliance's Implementation Grant. Independently and collectively they believed that for existing businesses to thrive and to attract new industries into the region, planning and service delivery must involve the sharing of resources and collaborative efforts.

Partnerships existed in the two counties prior to the grant. For example, partnerships already existed between the workforce centers and educational institutions, some businesses, and

Upstate Colorado Economic Development members. However, the sector grant enabled the establishment of a more formal structure, the SMIAC, which brought additional partners to the table. SMIAC established a regular monthly meeting to exchange information, engage in strategic planning for immediate and future needs, and discuss resource sharing. The meetings did not usually have a set agenda but were rather an “open conversation.” This allowed for flexibility and responsiveness to real-time concerns by industry.

SMIAC was composed of many different economic, workforce system, and educational partners throughout the region, as well as a number of manufacturers (See Appendix A).

Despite some initial concerns about the unique interests of Alliance members, SMIAC quickly developed a common vision and a commitment to meet the needs of area manufacturers.

## **IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES**

### ***Outreach and Recruitment***

The Alliance’s mission was to “create an environment that attracts companies and allows those here to expand.” Sustainability was the explicit focus. However, sustainability embraced more than lean manufacturing and/or green technology. It included attracting new workers, the development of the workforce, the growth of company profits through increased productivity, waste reduction and energy conservation and an increase in the region’s economic well-being. It also recognized the need to grow “structures that were not dependent on a single grant.”

In interviews, Alliance members spoke of shifting the paradigm and developing a “transformative model.” SMIAC was “to listen” to what manufacturers wanted and needed.

SMIAC used the contacts of Upstate Colorado Economic Development and reached out to regional manufacturing companies asking for an hour of their time. They then sent out teams composed of representatives from the WFC, CAMT, Upstate Colorado Economic Development and the educational institutions. The team asked the company what “sustainability” meant to them, and what they needed in order to move forward improving workforce skills and overall operations. They then discussed an array of services that could be made available to the company, including customized incumbent worker trainings. SMIAC replaced an old “suitcase” of products and/or services, with a new one filled with opportunities and resources.

Over the course of the project, SMIAC contacted over 40 businesses and the grant team met with 23 businesses. Some companies shared that they were not aware of the array of resources available to them. Some were very specific about their training needs and others were less sure but knew they could use something. In these latter cases, the educational partners helped the company understand some of its own system and/or skill needs. In each situation, the educational representatives worked with the company to develop trainings that would

specifically address identified system issues and/or gaps in employee skill sets. They focused on efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce and management teams.

Trainings conformed to worker shifts, including midnight shifts. Companies provided wages for training hours and space for the training sessions. A total of 12 companies requested and received incumbent training. After the first trainings, some companies such as Abound Solar, Elkay Wood Products, Bach Composites, and Spartan Medical Systems requested additional trainings for the same group of workers and/or another group. Some employees thus received multiple trainings. At times, trainings included employees from multiple companies.

It should be noted that at the end of SMIAC trainings, employees received certificates of completion, not national industry certifications of competency.

## *Training*

SMIAC trainings focused on a variety of topics including:

**Lean:** CAMT has a long history of providing lean training to its member companies. They became the lead for such training under SMIAC. Trainings included all ranks of employees from entry level to management.

**Six Sigma:** These trainings were provided by Aims Community College (Aims), Front Range Community College (FRCC) and/or CAMT.

**Production systems:** One of the critical issues that emerged from the Alliance's meetings with regional manufacturers and also noted in trainings, was employees' failure to appreciate the process of which they were a part. Often segregated in their own service units, workers frequently did not know upstream and/or downstream functions that contributed to the transformation of raw materials into a finished product. Naturally, this affected production efficiencies, quality and outcomes.

**Soft skills:** Many companies requested soft skills training for their employees. They commented: "we can train the hard skills on the factory floor but we can't do the soft skills" (see Lessons Learned below). The content of developed trainings included: communication skills, giving and accepting constructive criticism, conflict resolution, critical thinking, problem solving, and/or strategic planning.

**Train the trainer:** Companies sent supervisor and senior management to trainings that focused on leadership and how to best train workers. These workshops increased the capacity of a company to train its own workers and promoted business expansion.

**Attracting new companies to region:** In the past, Upstate Colorado Economic Development has met with a company's site selectors to discuss the company's space and workforce needs and the WFC staff was included to provide labor supply information. Under SMIAC, these meetings expanded to include representatives from the community colleges, WFC staff promoting and

enrolling workers in training programs, industry partners, as well as representatives from municipal services such as the fire department. SMIAC partners not only responded to questions about local talent, but provided information about regional resources and the available services. Further, the prospective company heard testimonials from local companies about incumbent worker trainings and the benefits of the sector partnership.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the biggest accomplishments of SMIAC has been its paradigm shift: “Not selling a product but meeting a need.” The presentation of the SMIAC “suitcase” of opportunities and resources to a site selector was given as the reason a company chose Adams County over Portland, Oregon to locate a new plant. This company will now bring 200 new jobs to the region. Additionally, Weld County was selected over other sites by a modular housing manufacturer because of training resources, bringing 256 jobs to the region. The company received training funded by the grant.

During the planning grant, SMIAC worked with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL analyzed regional skill sets and tracked the region’s gaps and assets. CAEL’s research was an important resource for SMIAC as it moved forward with an action plan that addressed challenges, built upon strengths, and created new economic and educational opportunities.

In 2007, Employment Services of Weld County worked in collaboration with Aims Community College under a Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant to develop curriculum to meet the needs of manufacturers and the oil and gas industry. The result of that collaboration was the development of the Multi-Industry Systems Technician (MIST) program at Aims Community College. The sector project manager from Employment Services of Weld County also sits on the Aims Advisory Board for the MIST program. During the course of the sector initiative, the project manager relayed information from meetings with employers. The training provided by CAMT, Aims, and FRCC to incumbent workers was also taken back to the MIST program for modification to the existing curriculum. Training providers also individually and/or collaboratively developed different types of trainings tailored to a company’s specific needs, including lean manufacturing, Six Sigma, Total Productive/Maintenance (TPM), Inventory Management, train the trainer, and leadership skills.

Over the past three years, SMIAC has trained 298 people through a total of 18 trainings (See Appendix B). A number of companies requested and received multiple training sessions on a variety of topics. Of significance, growing demand signals the reputation of SMIAC’s trainings. SMIAC is no longer able to respond to all the training requests from manufacturers (see Sustainability below). In addition, as word has gotten out, SMIAC is now also vetting training requests from a new sector – oil and gas.

Aims Community College worked with Golden Aluminum to produce a training video that details how to work with Golden's unique equipment in the manufacture of rolled aluminum. The video focuses on the operation of specific equipment as well as interviews with line workers and managers. While the video needs to be streamlined, it has established a template for future training videos. SMIAC retains rights for the template.

## **IMPACT / RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)**

There are a multiplicity of factors which can impact workforce capacities and productivity. It is therefore not easy to calculate the return on investment for incumbent worker training and/or the provision of support services. Nonetheless, hard skill competencies tend to be easier to measure than soft skills. The halo effects on morale, given any intervention, have to be separated from actual changes in attitudes and behaviors as the result of a specific intervention. SMIAC did attempt to collect ROI data through a survey they sent to companies after the completion of training. This survey (attached as Appendix C) asks questions regarding retention, jobs creation, cost savings, increased sales, etc. Anecdotally, companies reported changes in worker morale, productivity and quality of product. For example, BACH shared that its acceptable product rate went from 30% to 90% after worker training. After lean training, a cabinet company shifted from batch to individual assemblage. This system change increased the quality of each product (e.g. consistency of stain), and reduced the number of damaged pieces in the assembly process. One company sent a single worker to training and then monitored his productivity. Subsequent to the training they found that rework costs – which can reach as high as \$8,000 per month – were only \$100 for this worker. This was an incentive to have all workers trained and helped the company dramatically improve its bottom line.

A final example of quality improvement was Rocky Mountain Prestress, a maker of formed cement walls. The recession/recovery slowdown of the construction industry significantly impacted this company. Employee training through SMIAC helped to improve RMP's product and therefore the company's ability to remain competitive in the gradually recovering market.

Company management reported that as a result of SMIAC's assessments and trainings, they now more frequently sought input from line workers. One company, whose workforce included many individuals of Central American ancestry, discovered that the work platform was too high for its employees' shorter-than-U.S.-average stature. As a result, the company modified the platform heights making it much easier for line workers to attend to their functions, and subsequently raising worker morale.

Reflecting findings from Toyota and other management studies, a good work environment is as important as salary for workers' satisfaction and productivity. And, an investment in workers improves morale and workers' willingness to give back.

Not surprising then, a common observation was the increase in workers' morale after trainings. Workers perceived the trainings as management's commitment to expanding their skills–

especially significant in a troubled economy. As a result, workers felt more secure, hence more committed to their employers. Further, trainings of employees up and down the line resulted in a shared terminology, better communication skills and less bickering when an inadequate “product” was received down the line.

A final example of impact comes from Sparton Medical. This company, fairly new to the region, acquired two local firms in 2011 gaining 15 new customers. In a year’s time the company grew from 100 to 250 employees. Needing help to orient and absorb so many new employees, the Human Resource Director met with the SMIAC team. From SMIAC she learned about the large array of services and resources available to support Sparton’s rapid expansion. She subsequently tapped into the SMIAC network and successfully integrated the company’s many new employees.

## CHALLENGES

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment’s grant initiatives are usually administered through local or regional WFCs. Upstate Economic Development and Brighton Economic Development (BEDC) were identified as the projects co-conveners in the original SMIAC implementation proposal in July 2010. However, the proposal was initially rejected and SMIAC submitted a revised proposal including further rationale for the choice of Upstate and BEDC and other data. In November 2010, SMIAC was awarded a sector grant of \$50,000. Based on its accomplishments from November 2010 to June 2011, additional sector funding was awarded in July 2011 and in total SMIAC was able to receive \$225,000.

The delayed start date of the grant pushed the project to accomplish what should have taken 12 months in only 7 months’ time. Further, project funds were only received after the first of the Sectors’ Academies. This resulted in the project lead, Susan House, missing the Academy, which provided background and context for the sectors initiatives. She also missed hearing critical details about documentation and procedures.

A number of fiscal challenges emerged over the course of the project including: a) grant awards were approved and funded each year; and b) grantees need to spend down to the penny or lose the unspent federal monies that expire each fiscal year. These realities made it difficult for SMIAC to respond to new and emerging needs. For example, a newly located company requested training for all the workers it was about to hire. The company wanted to start production in March. However, by the time the company’s request was made, all SMIAC’s training dollars had been allocated. SMIAC offered to do the training in May when additional grant monies would become available, but this was unsatisfactory to the company.

The original SMIAC proposal was for job seeker training. However, as a result of the deepening recession it became apparent employers were reluctant to hire new employees. As SMIAC met with employers it became clear that for employers to stay competitive, profitable, and meet changing demands in an already difficult economy, they needed incumbent worker training.

Thus, the focus of the project switched from training job seekers to training incumbent workers. Job seekers were not trained under the SMIAC partnership.

As SMIAC worked with companies it was able to collect some employee data and some best practices, but it did not access wage data and promotion schedules. This limited the capacity to track ROI.

Initially many companies were only willing to set aside 1-2 days for incumbent worker training sessions. SMIAC wanted to accommodate this schedule so trainers tried to condense content into two days. This was not ideal for trainees, however, who had too much content to absorb in a short amount of time. It also proved very challenging for training instructors to provide adequate instruction due to time constraints.

A major problem for SMIAC in setting up training sessions for companies was the CDLE's requirement that all workers have their eligibility verified, e.g. birth certificate, visa, social security cards etc. Under federal law every company has to complete I-9 forms for new hires so this requirement seemed to be redundant and illogical; "typical of government's endless paperwork." It confirmed and exacerbated existing negative attitudes towards government bureaucracy.

At times it would take a company and its employees more than two weeks to gather the correct documentation. This process was especially cumbersome, if not embarrassing, for companies to pursue with workers who have been in their employ for many years. A number of companies, e.g. aerospace, stated that the procedures they had in place to clear workers for sensitive positions was far greater than what was being asked of them – so the process seemed especially ironic. Employers felt that they were "good stewards" of tax dollars and obeyed labor laws. Time and money could be saved if employers' signed affidavits of eligibility. Some companies decided the time was not worth it and withdrew their request for training (although after some streamlining of the process, two of the companies reactivated their requests). SMIAC worked to streamline the application process as much as possible with CDLE within the constraints of reporting requirements.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Partnerships:** SMIAC found that maintaining open communication and sharing resources benefited all. "Egos have to stay out of the equation." Shared commitment is the bottom line. Collaboration rather than competition is a better model to maintain and expand the region's economy. Meeting without a set agenda facilitated greater dialogue among the partners and resulted in less hierarchy.

No single entity is adequate to get the job done. One needs diversity of expertise and resources at the table and in the field. Complementation is important – not everyone can do or should do the same thing.

The presence of the colleges and CAMT at the table resulted in SMIAC's enhanced understanding of training mechanisms and resources. At the same time, the colleges became more cognizant of the needs of industry. The community colleges rethought the "what and how" of their program offerings beyond the more structured academic degree programs and timetables. They increased their flexibility regarding incumbent training and developed new certificate programs. The collaborative dialogue between industry and education also fostered discussions about developing new pathways and pipelines for the manufacturing industry.

**What is manufacturing?** The definition of manufacturing and its "products" was expanded. Alliance members realized that making bottles for beer, creating cement walls and processing milk for dairy products share many common elements. One of these is that PLC qualified workers are needed by all. SMIAC also learned that the closest PLC training programs were in Oklahoma and Utah. This needs to be changed. Local PLC training sites should be developed.

**Respond to industry needs:** The "bedrock" for this sector project was asking from the very first meeting "what are the company's needs?" In other words, listen rather than assume. Companies are goal oriented; therefore the bottom line is the focus – whatever can enhance a company's capacity for sustainability, if not growth, is of interest. If businesses are more profitable, they will expand and will need additional workers. This creates new jobs in the region. Companies have often struggled with the dilemma of whether or not to hire new employees for specific jobs or to train (and retain) existing employees instead. This sector project chose the latter and focused on incumbent worker training, saving companies money and increasing their bottom line. Flexibility of training workshops is essential to meet the needs of employers. Training needs to be developed to meet a company's specific requirements. Schedules need to meet work shifts, not an academic calendar.

All trainings need to be developed in close collaboration with company personnel and must include an assessment of current skills as well as systems. Trainers can then target their instruction as well as provide expertise regarding alternative strategies to increase and/or enhance efficiency and product quality and /or help the company set priorities.

**Investment post experience:** Companies need evidence that training makes a difference before they commit more in-kind resources and/or funds. SMIAC started with a low cost share rate of 10%. Over time, however, satisfied customers were willing to pay a higher share of training costs (See Financial and Leveraged Resources section).

Experience with a service increases interest and legitimacy resulting in requests for more service and a larger investment of resources into it.

**Training costs:** Training costs should be worked out per training and not presented as a fixed menu or formula of costs. This demonstrates flexibility and creates greater dialogue. In this context, companies perceive training as more than a single event, but rather as an investment over time, tailored to changing needs and resources.

**Lean training:** “Lean processes optimize power, materials and water, time and energy, reducing waste and creating a safe and efficient workplace improves their bottom line.” Companies share similarities in the ways they can benefit from lean operations. At the same time, lean strategies can be targeted to specific areas of production. Trainings need to combine the general and the specific.

**Soft skills training:** Many workers lack effective communication and other soft skills, e.g. critical thinking. These are transferrable skills and need to be addressed both in academic/certificate programs and through incumbent worker training.

**Payment schedules:** It was more effective if companies pay their designated share, e.g. 10%, to SMIAC. Post training, SMIAC directly pays the training provider, e.g. Aims, CAMT. This simplifies the process, and reduces the need for the company to lay out funds beyond its percent share.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Work collaboratively to create a global vision, regardless of industry sector, will create an environment of growth.
- Reach out to business to let them know what resources are out there and what can be provided in the short term, e.g. job fairs, loan funds, incumbent workers’ trainings, network partnerships up and down the manufacturing “food chain.”
- Bring to existing companies, as well as meetings with site selectors, a diverse set of partners to share ideas and resources, engage in joint planning, and showcase the collaborative work that has already taken place. Schedule the introductory meeting at the convenience of the business, and limit the meeting to an hour.
- Economic development works best if one doesn’t act as a firefighter (reactively), and instead is more proactive. Research is needed to better understand changing industry needs and future trends.
- Sector academies are helpful in bringing national perspectives and best practices to the state. They facilitate sharing of lessons learned as well as creating the context for new cross-sector partnerships.
- To learn what works, and to guide future practice, it is important to get both immediate and downstream (e.g. 6 months post) feedback from employees who have been trained, as well as from their supervisors.
- Videos that include interviews with line workers can be an excellent training tool. They can visually inform employees about the reasons for each process and how each stage in

the production cycle makes a contribution. This helps workers recognize that there are both internal and external consumers for any product.

- One size does not fit all; use creativity and consider multiple factors when making contracts with regional industries. For example, having a large company at the table early on, even if they were not willing to pay 50% of training costs at that point, can provide important legitimacy and promote the work of the sector partnership.
- The absence of federal guidelines that mandate cost per training creates greater flexibility and makes it easier to develop arrangements with companies based on their specific needs and current resources.

## FINANCIAL AND LEVERAGED RESOURCES

SMIAC received a total of \$225,000 over the course of 2 ½ years. A total of \$94,697 funds were leveraged by the Alliance over this same period.

Bach Composites and OI contributed 20% of \$9,250 for their combined Green Belt Certification training; Northwest Pipe contributed 50% to the \$14,400 costs of its TPM Implementation, Advanced TPM, and Inventory Management trainings; and Elkay Manufacturing contributed 90% towards the \$7,500 cost of its Lean Management System training.

## SUSTAINABILITY

SMIAC has attended to the issue of sustainability through its attention to the share of actual training costs companies are asked to pay. As indicated above – companies increasingly pay a higher percent over and above the in-kind contribution of wages.

In addition to using WIA funds, SMIAC is utilizing the H-1B technical skills training grant program to help subsidize training costs.

Ted Long of Weld WFC stated “SMIAC sees its work with a company not as an event but as a process.” As such, there is a logical progression from the provision of lower level skills training to training focused on advanced technical skills and knowledge. Long noted, however, that it is too early to see what continued training investments companies will make.

SMIAC is exploring other possible funding streams to further build its capacity to meet the training and service needs of its constituent industry base.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Procedural Manual:** The provision of a procedural guide that details the process for budget modifications, procurement and payment requests would be very helpful.
- **Evaluation:** The introduction of the evaluation framework, access to evaluators and knowledge of evaluation metrics within the first six months of a grant project would facilitate the collection of needed data and documentation. It would also allow projects to use ongoing feedback to revise or refine project activities and thereby develop better projects and be more successful in achievement project goals.
- **Pipeline for new generation of workers:** There needs to be more education of students in primary and secondary schools that careers in manufacturing “are a good future.” Today, most manufacturing jobs are far removed from the dirty assembly line work of past decades and require high-tech skills. Better understanding of work opportunities in manufacturing, and its competitive salaries would help create new pipelines to fill the workforce needs of the future.

# ABOUT

Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR) is the leading source of expertise on the world of work, building effective and sustainable organizations, and the changing employment relationship. The school is comprised of two departments—one focused on all aspects of strategic human resource management and the other dedicated to the social science specialties related to labor studies and employment relations. In addition, SMLR provides many continuing education and certificate programs taught by world-class researchers and expert practitioners. For more information, visit [www.smlr.rutgers.edu](http://www.smlr.rutgers.edu)

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# APPENDIX A

## *SMIAC Partners*

- Upstate Economic Development
- Employment Services of Weld County
- Brighton Economic Development Corporation
- Adams County Workforce & Business Center
- Colorado Association for Manufacturing and Technology
- Aims Community College
- Front Range Community College

## APPENDIX B

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TOTAL PLANNED</b>	<b>TOTAL ACTUAL</b>	<b>% OF GOAL</b>
<b>Entered training</b>	45	301	669%
<b>Completed training</b>	40	298	745%
<b>Earned certificate or industry credential</b>	35	298	851%

# APPENDIX C

## SMIAC Employer Survey

Upstate Colorado Economic Development is committed to evaluating success based on the training offered through the Sustainable Manufacturing Industry Alliance of Colorado (SMIAC), with funding provided through the State of Colorado SECTORS initiative. Please help us provide you with more effective services in the future by sharing your feedback with us. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

1. What were the *two* most important factors for your firm choosing to work with the Aims Community College?

- Center/staff expertise
- Cost/price of services
- Fair and unbiased advice/services
- Reputation for results
- Knowledge of your industry
- Specific services not available from other providers
- Lack of other providers nearby
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/Declined to answer

2. In addition to Aims CC, has your company used any other external resources/providers to address business performance issues over the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      Who? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/Declined to answer

3. Over the next 3 years, what do you see as your company's 3 most important strategic challenges?

- Product innovation/development
- Identifying growth opportunities
- Ongoing continuous improvement/cost reduction strategies
- Employee recruitment and retention
- Financing
- Exporting/global engagement
- Sustainability in products and processes
- Managing partners and suppliers
- Technology needs
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know/Refused to answer

4. Did the services you received directly lead to an increase in sales at your establishment over the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

5. Did the services you received directly lead you to create any jobs over the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      How many? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

6. Over the past 12 months, did the services you received directly lead you to retain sales that would have otherwise been lost?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

7. Did the services you received lead you to retain any jobs over the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      How many? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

8. Did the services you received directly result in cost savings in labor, materials, energy, overhead, or other areas over what would otherwise have been spent in the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

9. As a result of the services you received, has your establishment increased its investment over the past 12 months in:

a. Plant or equipment?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

b. Information systems or software?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

c. Workforce practices or employee skills?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

d. Other areas of business?

- 1) Yes                      How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

10. As a result of the services you received, did your establishment avoid any investments or save on any investments in the past 12 months?

- 1) Yes                      How much was saved/avoided? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No
- 3) Don't know/ Declined to answer

11. Based on the benefits that resulted from the services provided, how likely would you be to recommend FRCC to other companies, assuming they are not direct competitors?

1 (Not at all likely)  $\longleftrightarrow$  8 (Very likely)                      # \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you have any suggestions or comments for Upstate Colorado or FRCC?

13. For analytical purposes, we would like to verify who completed this survey.

What is your job title?

What is your name?