

THE ACUMEN

April 2024

BRAVERY, BOLDNESS, & COMMUNITY SERVICE

A Conversation With The
Montbello Organizing
Committee's Khadija
Haynes

BY DR. ANGELIC COLE

HOME IS JUST THE
BEGINNING
BY TIANA PATTERSON

STORYTELLING AND
CONNECTIONS
BY GERRI GOMEZ HOWARD

BEST-IN-CLASS
SERVICE IN CO
BY VANESSA BEASLEY

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Seeking Submissions

for Article Features



Would you like to share your story with a broader audience? Submit a 2,000–5,000 word article about your business or industry to be included in a future issue of The Acumen, a CBCC monthly e-magazine publication.

**Need more details?
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President's Corner

Celebrating Black Women's History and the Impact of Women Entrepreneurs

Dear Reader:

While Black History Month is celebrated in February, it is important to recognize that the contributions of Black women to American society are so significant and multifaceted that they cannot be contained within a single month. This is why April has been designated as Black Women's History Month.

April is the perfect time to celebrate the legacy of Black women in America. Not only does it coincide with spring and a season of renewal and growth, but it is also a time when the country recognizes the contributions of women during National Women's History Month.

The celebration of Black Women's History Month in April highlights the intersectionality of race and gender and recognizes the unique challenges that Black women have faced throughout history. It is an opportunity to honor the contributions of Black women who have been instrumental in shaping American society, and to recognize their struggles and achievements.

One such trailblazer is Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress. During her tenure, she championed issues such as racial and gender equality, education, and healthcare. She also ran for President in 1972, becoming the first Black person to seek a major party nomination for the presidency.

Another important figure is Dorothy Height, who was a leader in the civil rights movement and advocated for the rights of women and minorities. She served as the president of the National Council of Negro Women for over 40 years and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994.

Black women have also been pioneers in the arts, with notable figures such as Nina Simone, Audre Lorde, and Zora Neale Hurston. Their work has



had a profound impact on American culture and has helped to shape our understanding of race, gender, and identity.

Black Women's History Month in April is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of Black women to American society and to acknowledge their unique experiences and struggles. It is also a time to reflect on the progress that has been made towards equality and to recognize the work that still needs to be done.

As we celebrate Black Women's History Month in April, let us take the time to honor the legacy of Black women who have paved the way for future generations such as Khadija Haynes featured in our April issue. Let us also recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of achieving equality and justice for all.

Dr. Angelic Cole

President & CEO
Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own."

Michelle Obama

Bulletin Board

We invite you to learn more about the dynamic CBCC board members.



Meet Mark Brown

Board Member

Nearly five years ago, Brown left the Atlanta area and headed west to work for Comcast – a company that proudly cares about connecting people to moments that matter. He believed in the company's vision, strong culture, and reputation for being an active part of the community. Brown is responsible for overseeing and implementing state regulatory and public policy strategy across 13 states for Comcast's West Division. He collaboratively works with state Government Affairs colleagues to find resolutions to state regulatory proceedings that impact the company's ability to deliver broadband services to residents and businesses.

Brown has spent a successful career in the technology and communications industry working in leadership roles for industry leading companies including Charter Communications, AT&T, Qwest and BroadRiver Communications. Working in the government affairs and legal arenas is his sweet spot. In addition to serving as General Counsel for BroadRiver, Mark has held senior counsel and vice president roles in Government and State Regulatory Affairs for Comcast and, previously, Charter Communications in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. As part of his professional responsibilities, he has sat on numerous industry boards, including Governor appointment to the Alabama 911 Oversight Board; Co-Chair of the Atlanta Chapter of the Federal Communications Bar Association; and the state Cable Association Boards in California, Texas, and Michigan.

He enjoys developing state regulatory strategy, working through compliance and legislative matters as well as fortifying relationships at work, in the community and in his personal life. Brown earned his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College, where he was an honors graduate and Senior Fellow, and his law degree from Harvard Law School. He also pursued graduate study in Economics and International Relations at the University of Stockholm as a Rotary Graduate Fellow. He enjoys sharing his professional experiences to make a difference for Comcast and wherever he serves.

Brown has proudly sat on the board of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC) for the past year and has appreciated the opportunity to support its mission, including its national search for the CBCC's new President and Chief Executive Officer, Angelic Cole. When he learned about the CBCC and how it aligned with his own

passion for encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit within the African American community, he knew he wanted to be a part of the organization.

He has enjoyed learning about the African American business landscape in Colorado and understanding the hurdles that businesses face. He hopes to be a positive influence on the Chamber so that its business members can continue to make a positive impact on the community.

Brown would tell you that the greatest experience he had at Harvard Law School was meeting his wife of 37 years, Cheryl. Together, they have two adult children that equally make an impact where they live and work. One son, Matthew, is a D.C.- based journalist for the Associated Press and his other son, Kaiden, works in Psychiatric Patient Care at the University of Colorado's Anschutz facility. Mark is a jazz aficionado and welcomes recommendations for great places to enjoy the music in Denver.

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Date & Time

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Location

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Guidance on Call

**A Conversation with The
Montbello Organizaing
Committee's Khadija Haynes**
By DR. ANGELIC COLE



YOU
make a
Profound
DIFFERENCE

Images: McBoat Photography



SHE WHO MUST
BE OBEYED



Photo: McBoat Photography

Cole: What would you say is the primary motivating factor behind your leadership?

Haynes: My Mother led my siblings and me to understand the importance of "If not you, then who?" We grew up believing in our personal power, our communities' collective power to right wrongs, and our responsibility to advocate for those without voice or access.

She was wise enough to ensure that we understood and witnessed the significant strides and accomplishments for marginalized communities in America via the Civil Rights Bus strike, sit-ins, and nonviolence Movement; the Farmworkers strike and movement in California; the Coors Brewing strike; the Black Panther Party; the Rainbow Coalition; the Black Lives Matter movement; the Crusade for Justice movement; the Women's movement, the LGBTQ movement, the Me, Too movement, and so many others. Each of

these movements was pushed by community and grassroots leadership, by average people - like my siblings and me - who decided they could fix systems that are broken.



Photo: McBoat Photography

Cole: Who are your role models, and what life-changing lessons did you pick up from them?

Haynes: Many women (locally and nationally) have been inspirational and influential in my life ... Women like Shirley Chisolm and Maxine Watters in politics; Oprah and Caroline Wanga in the business world; and Ruby Dee and Josephine Baker in the Arts. But, unless you can see the inner workings of a person's life, how they make choices, how their values live through their work and family life, there is very little you can actually use as a model. For that reason, my role models are people whose lives and choices I have been able to witness closely - my siblings, my mother, my aunts and cousins, my friends who have lived and are living a life of bravery, boldness, and community service. These are the people that I want to be like.

Cole: How do you ensure that others benefit from the life-changing knowledge you gained from your mentors?

Haynes: I actively mentor. I've been around for a while, so I have learned a few things. The people I mentor will tell you that it is important to me to share my experiences with anyone who asks.

Cole: What advice do you wish someone had given you earlier in your career?

Haynes: You don't need to make a career choice early in life. There's plenty of time to find your special niche. Be open to adventure and exploration.

Cole: What inspired you to pursue a career in community service, and how did you get started?

Haynes: I'm not sure I would characterize community service as my career. My community work is how I live my values.



Photo: McBoat Photography

Cole: What do you believe to be the most important piece of advice for a leader to follow?

Haynes: If you are lonely at the top, it's because you didn't bring anyone with you. Be honest. Be patient. Give grace. LISTEN. Be receptive to advice. Maintain a sense of humor.

Cole: How do you prioritize work-life balance, and what advice do you have for junior professionals who are struggling to find balance.

Haynes: I schedule time for the people and things that bring me joy the same way I schedule meetings. Sometimes those "meetings" can served double duty, which is a bonus.



Photo: McBoat Photography

“If you are lonely at the top, it’s because you didn’t bring anyone with you.”



GET INVOLVED

JOIN A COMMITTEE:

- **Business Policy Cabinet with Senator James Coleman**
First Thursdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 4th
- **CBCC Public Policy Committee**
Second Mondays, 4pm MT. Starts April 8th
- **CBCC Membership Committee**
Third Tuesdays, 3pm MT. Starts April 16th
- **Gala Committee**
Fridays, times To Be Determined



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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+303-831-0746

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[HTTPS://CBCC.BIZ](https://cbcc.biz)

Elevation Community Land Trust: Home is Just the Beginning

By TIANA PATTERSON

Elevation Community Land Trust (ECLT) is different from your typical housing organization. It's part of a movement born out of necessity. It's driven by the simple belief that everyone deserves a shot at homeownership, regardless of historical barriers, including income, background, race, or ethnicity..

A Homegrown Solution

Colorado desperately needs affordable homeownership options. Potential buyers face skyrocketing rents and a housing market seemingly out of reach. In 2017, ECLT entered the scene to bring the dream of homeownership within reach for low- to moderate-income families across Colorado. Drawing inspiration from successful models around the country, ECLT adopted the Community Land Trust (CLT) approach, a proven method for preserving affordability in perpetuity.

The CLT Model in Action

The CLT model means ECLT retains ownership of the land while selling homes at reduced prices to qualifying families (those at about 80% Area Median Income). This unique approach not only makes homeownership more accessible but also ensures that homes remain affordable for generations to come. By separating ownership of the land from the home, ECLT creates a pathway to ownership for families who might otherwise be priced out of the market. Moreover, our shared-equity model ensures that homeowners participate in market appreciation during their tenure, allowing them to build wealth and stability for the future.



(Photo: Elevation Community Land Trust)

A Range of Offerings

At ECLT, we understand that finding the perfect home is a significant step toward achieving family stability and security. That's why we offer diverse housing options through our property listings, catering to various preferences and needs. Whether you are looking for a cozy single-family home, a modern townhouse, or a convenient condominium, ECLT has something for everyone. Our properties are strategically located in neighborhoods with essential amenities such as schools, parks, and public transportation, ensuring that ECLT homeowners can thrive in their new homes.

Below are a couple of our newest housing communities. To explore all of our available listings and recent housing developments, visit <https://www.elevationclt.org/property-listings>. Fully qualified applicants with ECLT can access our property listings on a waitlist basis, allowing you to find the perfect home that fits your needs

and budget. Start your search today and take the first step towards owning a home with Elevation Community Land Trust.

The Burrell

Situated in the heart of Five Points, The Burrell presents a rare opportunity with 49 permanently affordable condos starting at \$205K. Inspired by the legacy of the legendary musician Charles Burrell, this development embodies a fusion of affordability and cultural homage, offering residents a chance to own a piece of history while embracing the vibrant energy of Denver's iconic neighborhood. For more information, visit: www.theburrelldenver.com.

BirdWhistle Townhomes

Named after Charles and Mamie Birdwhistle, esteemed figures in Fort Collins' history, this landmark affordable housing development embodies Elevation Community Land Trust's commitment to creating accessible living spaces while honoring the legacies of those who shaped our communities. Today, BirdWhistle Townhomes offers 54 permanently affordable residences with convenient access to schools, shopping centers, and parks, which not only provide housing but also strengthen the social fabric of Fort Collins. For more information, visit birdwhistlefortcollins.com.



(Photo: Elevation Community Land Trust)

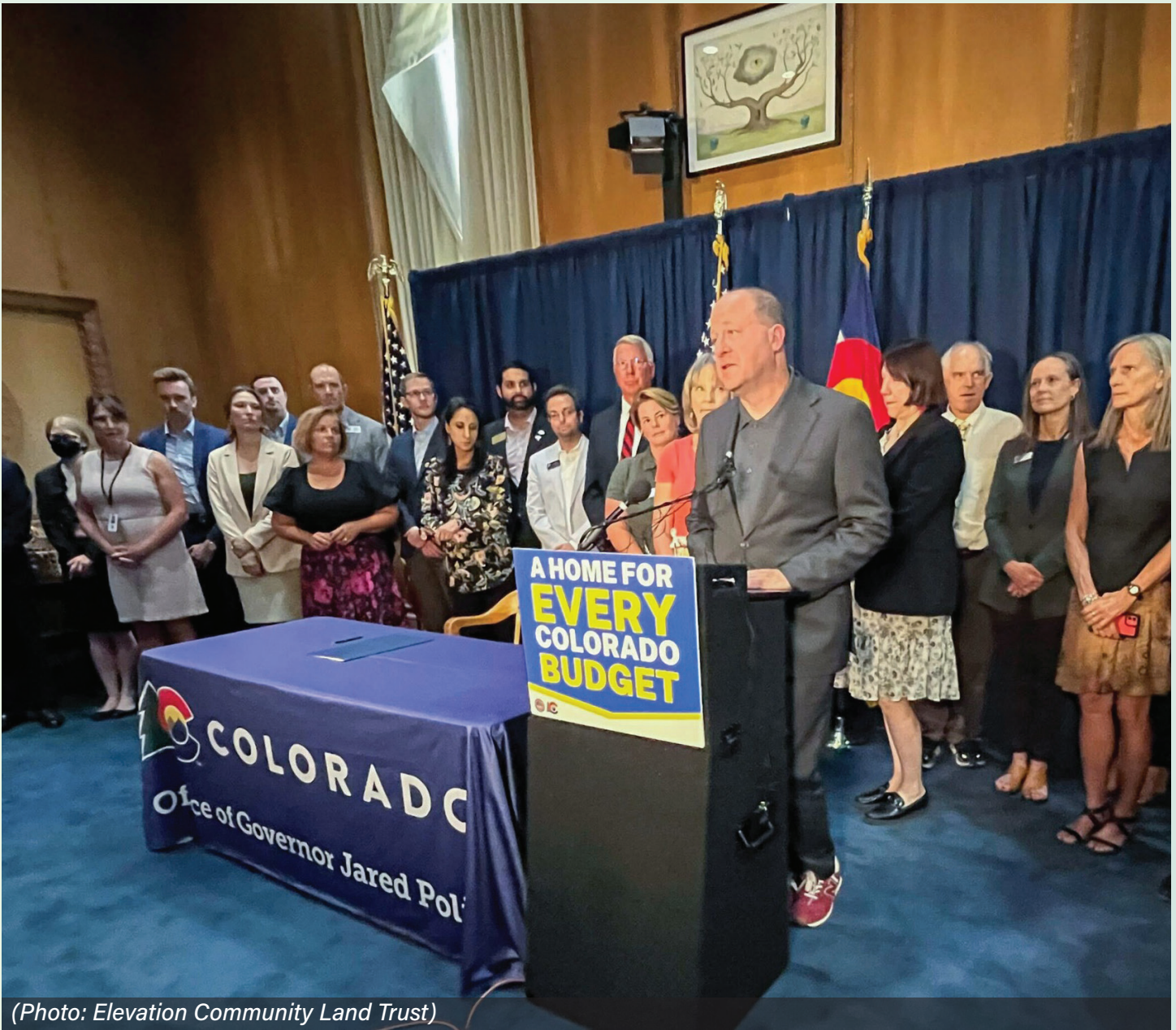
Programs and Initiatives

In addition to our core homeownership program, ECLT offers a range of programs and initiatives designed to support families throughout their homeownership journey. These programs include financial literacy workshops to help families build the skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively. From budgeting and saving to understanding mortgage options, these workshops equip homeowners to make informed decisions about their financial futures.

We also offer homebuyer education courses to prepare families for the responsibilities of homeownership. These courses cover home maintenance, property taxes, and insurance, equipping homeowners with the tools they need to succeed. Furthermore, ECLT provides ongoing support to homeowners after they purchase their homes. Whether connecting families with community resources or assisting with home repairs, we are committed to ensuring that homeowners have the support they need to thrive.



(Photo: Elevation Community Land Trust)



(Photo: Elevation Community Land Trust)

Down Payment Assistance

For many, one of the biggest hurdles in buying a home is coming up with a down payment. That's why ECLT offers the Doors to Opportunity program, which makes homeownership more accessible by providing down payment assistance loans of up to \$50,000*. This program aims to empower potential homebuyers to find their ideal home anywhere in Colorado, offering flexibility in choosing neighborhoods, home styles, and yards that meet their family's needs. With Doors, individuals are encouraged to invest in themselves and experience the freedoms of homeownership.

**Contact Elevation CLT to learn about accessing additional funding to increase your total down payment to \$150,000 potentially.*

Real Impact, Real People

Since our founding, ECLT has made a tangible difference in the lives of hundreds of families across Colorado. Take the story of Charlene Taylor, a single mother who had been renting for years, struggling to make ends meet on a modest income. When her rent skyrocketed, Charlene faced the very real possibility of being priced out of her community. But thanks to ECLT, Charlene was able to purchase her own home at

a price she could afford. No longer at the mercy of landlords or rising rents, Charlene and her son finally had a place to call their own—a stable, secure foundation on which to build their future.

And Charlene's story is just one of many. Since its inception, ECLT has assisted over 200 families in achieving the dream of homeownership. From young couples just starting out to retirees looking to downsize, we serve a diverse range of clients, each with a unique story.

Building Community, One Home at a Time

Our impact extends far beyond the individual families we serve. By bringing affordable homeownership to neighborhoods across Denver and beyond, we are helping to build stronger, more resilient communities. In Aurora, where housing affordability has become an increasingly pressing issue, our presence is making a real difference. By partnering with local governments, private developers, community-based organizations, and the philanthropic community, we are able to leverage our resources to make homeownership accessible to families who might otherwise be priced out of the market.

Challenges and Opportunities

Of course, our journey hasn't been without its challenges. From navigating complex regulatory landscapes to dispelling misconceptions about the CLT model, we have faced our fair share of obstacles along the way. But through it all, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to our mission. With a dedicated team of staff members and volunteers, we have continued to push forward, finding creative solutions to even the most daunting of challenges. And as we look to the future, we see a world of opportunity on the horizon. With plans to expand our reach to communities across the state, we are poised to make an even greater impact in the coming years.

Legislative Support and Advocacy

In our ongoing efforts to advocate for affordable housing, we recognize the importance of legislative support. At ECLT, we understand that we can't tackle the housing crisis alone. That's why we've been actively engaging with policymakers at all levels of government. For instance, to address the estimated shortage of up to 173,000 housing units in our most populous counties, we advocated for Senate Bill 24-106, the Right to Remedy Construction Defects, to increase affordable housing options by tackling issues like construction liability and expanding homeownership opportunities. This type of legislation is crucial given the scarcity of affordable housing types, such as condominiums, which have become increasingly unattainable for many Coloradans.

A Brighter Future Ahead

We are filled with hope and optimism as we look ahead to the next chapter of our journey. With a growing network of supporters and a track record of success, we are poised to continue making a real difference in the lives of families across Colorado. But perhaps most importantly, we remain rooted in the belief that change starts at the grassroots level. By equipping communities to take control of their own destinies, we are proving that when people come together, anything is possible. In the end, our story is not just about affordable housing; it's about the power of community, the resilience of the human spirit, and the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home and that home is just the beginning of a journey toward stability, security, and prosperity for all, not just some.

To learn more about Elevation Community Land Trust and our programs and initiatives, visit www.elevationclt.org.



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The Colorado Black Chamber is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact Black business owners. Your success is our success.

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- **Connect** Black-owned businesses with each other
- **Collaborate** with corporate partners and other organizations to support Black-owned businesses

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JOIN TODAY

The Gomez Howard Group: Celebrating 20 Years of Storytelling

By GERRI GOMEZ HOWARD

My mom—at 92 years young—has the ability to captivate others with her stories. She’s sharp and funny, with a knack for recalling details; the littlest things that might seem, to some, insignificant or irrelevant. To me, however, the details shape rich, engaging, entertaining, meaningful stories. The details are what I remember.

Storytelling has always been important in my family and, of course, in Black families and communities around the world. We tell stories over food, in the car or wherever we gather in our neighborhoods. We tell stories so we don’t forget



Jacque, Justin and Jacob Howard.
(Photo: Gomez Howard Group)



Gerri’s grandfather with her mother.
(Photo: Gomez Howard Group)

where we’ve come from or where we’re going. With this long legacy and with my mom, a natural storyteller, and my grandfather, an entrepreneur, it’s no surprise I started my own business with storytelling at the heart of what I do.

I started the Gomez Howard Group 20 years ago. It’s an integrated cause marketing and communications business. So, what does that mean? Well, in simpler terms, my team works with organizations—or causes—in Colorado to tell their stories.

We connect clients with news media—very successfully, I’d add—to share the good work their programs and initiatives are doing for others. We also design strategic marketing and communications plans with our clients and help them navigate the challenges or crises they encounter along the way. We help connect organizations with their constituents to increase awareness and access to needed information and resources. And, perhaps most importantly, we help them leverage earned and owned media and strategic communications to maximize their impact on others.

Our work isn't always easy, but it's rewarding, and every day we see the difference we make for our clients.

How We Started

After an 18-year career in broadcast television, I was exhausted. I was working around the clock, and I was a mom to three young kids during a time when my husband's work took him across the globe. I wanted to reprioritize my career and my life and give myself more time with my family. And I wanted to continue to find ways to do meaningful work for my community.

During my time in broadcast, I gravitated toward stories that came from our communities, stories that uplifted and inspired, and stories about organizations that were making a difference in the lives of others. When I made the decision to step away from my career in broadcast television, my biggest fear was that I was leaving a perfectly good job with stability and benefits. But I knew that I could do something bigger; something that would marry my love for storytelling with my entrepreneurial spirit, which comes from my grandfather.

He was an entrepreneur in the 1940s and 1950s. Despite my grandmother's warnings, he opened his own tailor shop in Brooklyn. My grandmother was afraid for him. She was afraid for his safety and that others wouldn't want to pay him for his work. A brilliant tailor, he persisted, and he was rewarded with loyal customers who came from all over New York's boroughs and from neighboring states for his services. He owned his shop for 23 years, but the commute from Queens to Brooklyn was daunting, so eventually he closed his business and went back to work in a local shop, sharing his talent with new customers.

My grandfather's entrepreneurial spirit lived on in me, so in 2004, despite my fears, I bet on myself, took a leap of faith and registered my business, the Gomez Howard Group.

The first years of owning my own business weren't always easy, and I needed to learn how to assign a monetary value to my unique set of skills



and the time it would take me to do the work. That can be challenging for new entrepreneurs. It can also be difficult to navigate the administrative demands of a new business—accounting, bookkeeping and finance, to name a few.

I was fortunate to have my husband Jeff, whose unwavering support made the early years easier to find my way. He was my biggest supporter and, over time, joined me in the business, and worked with me for nearly a decade. Jeff's experience in media, corporate communications, and audience engagement—coupled with his business acumen—helped us scale the business and our team.

In the last 20 years, we've grown to a team of nine, and we've adapted to expand the services we provide to our clients. Our team members' decades of experience and expertise—coupled with their empathy, compassion, and authenticity—have helped us establish trust with our roster of more than a dozen clients, who trust us to share their stories with our communities.

Many of our clients have been with us for more than a decade. Others engage us for shorter contracts, generally to help them create systems that better connect with their audiences or help to navigate a challenging situation.

We've heard time and again how we've been a trusted and valued partner, both for their organizations and the people they serve, who, in many cases, are from underrepresented communities.

Regardless of whether a client is long or short term, we want them to understand what they need to be successful in their messaging—and why investing in communications is always important.

Why Businesses Should Prioritize Communications

In the last 20 years, I've seen what happens when businesses and organizations prioritize their communications—and what happens when they don't (spoiler alert: it's not good).

Thoughtful, strategic, consistent internal and external communication is essential to every organization and business. They will, inevitably, need an effective communications strategy to scale their operations, reach new audiences, or traverse challenging terrain.



Gerri and Jeff Howard at the Women's Foundation of Colorado Michelle Obama event.
(Photo: Gomez Howard Group)

That's where the Gomez Howard Group has helped.

Through traditional and less-traditional methods, we've helped dozens of nonprofit organizations, state agencies and businesses develop deeper connections with their communities, donors and volunteers. Our team of community connectors participates in more than 60 events every year, representing our clients and connecting one-on-one with people in our state.

We've helped organizations advertise their services, so more people have access to resources, and we've helped them secure valuable television, print, and radio coverage.

We've also stood alongside our clients and assisted them in navigating crises—a sudden transition in leadership, a loss of funding, or a sudden end to services, for example.

Our work has resulted in authentic, meaningful, and mutually beneficial partnerships that help our clients advance the greater good. Our experience in this work helps us employ timeless engagement strategies (and take a few calculated steps outside of the box).

Our team stays in the know about what's happening in the ever-evolving media landscape. We understand how to provide relevant stories to the media, and we're sticklers for accuracy. Despite changes in media and how stories are shared on various platforms, we still believe earned media comes down to the basics: know what makes a good story and know how to tell it.

We've helped clients transform their communications and events by understanding their goals and developing sustainable practices. We have precise attention to detail and a unique ability to offer insight on strategic planning, video production, social media, email marketing, web design, podcasts, and more.

This kind of work can help organizations tell their stories in cost-effective, impactful ways.



Gomez Howard Group team retreat in Steamboat Springs. (Photo: Gomez Howard Group)

Our Legacy

As we celebrate the Gomez Howard Group's twentieth year in business, I've reflected on its legacy and my own.

A part of my legacy will be my family. Though my dad took his last journey around the sun a few years back, his work ethic, words of wisdom and sense of adventure live on in me and my children.

I'm celebrating 30 years of marriage and friendship with Jeff, who has been with me every step of the way on this journey. Ours is a true partnership, one I'm grateful for every day, and one I hope models unconditional love and support for our kids. I've also leaned into caregiving for my mother and my aunts. I've set aside time to sit with them, hear their stories, help them navigate health challenges, and teach them to adapt to a changing world.

Through owning my own business, I've also been so fortunate to have more flexibility to watch my children grow and pursue their own passions. Of course, storytelling is a large part of what they love to do, and they tell stories through the arts, with each finding their own unique passion—acting, animation and music.

Another important part of my legacy will be my team's success and well-being. I started my business to reprioritize my own work-life balance, and I've been fortunate to extend that benefit to my team.

I've found team members who want to do work that excites them and benefits others. I've provided them the flexibility to work in other states and countries, to be a present partner or parent, to pursue other interests, or to be a caregiver for family members in need. I'm proud to say our work always gets done well, but it doesn't have to come at the expense of our own well-being.

And, finally, of course, a large part of my legacy will be my business and the work we've done to share the stories of the organizations we've had the privilege to support. We've worked with smaller organizations that need to create a strong infrastructure, and large, reputable organizations that are ready to scale to new heights.

We've shared their stories which highlight so many fundamental services—mental health support, food, housing, education, and more. And I strongly believe the stories we've helped to tell have enriched, sustained and saved countless lives.

I believe the Gomez Howard Group has become an integral part of the nonprofit community in Colorado. Perhaps more importantly, we have become a trusted and needed partner for underrepresented and underserved communities, particularly communities of color.

That's a legacy I'm proud to leave—and a story I couldn't be more proud to tell.



Gerri Howard, Alli Clymens and Niambi Nicholes School Supply Drive. (Photo: Gomez Howard Group)

What the Gomez Howard Group's Clients Say

"The Gomez Howard Group's ability to capture the heart of our work and its impact, while creating a welcoming atmosphere for the community to support us, has created the nationally recognized Black Resilience in Colorado Fund. The GHG team centers community, providing communication and marketing excellence, inspiration, and lived experience. Under Gerri's leadership, GHG creates strategies coupled with their deep knowledge and relationships in Colorado's media landscape to perfectly connect their clients with optimal media opportunities."

LaDawn Sullivan, Executive Director of the Black Resilience in Colorado Fund

"Gomez Howard Group (GHG) is an exceptional strategic communications and public relations partner. Gerri and her team are responsive, trustworthy, and deeply committed to their clients' missions. Their attention to detail, understanding of the community, and thoughtful approach ensure flawless execution. GHG fosters close relationships, making collaboration effortless. The team goes above and beyond—delivering exceptional results and adapting quickly to changing needs."

Latia Henderson, Partner, Strategic Initiatives and Communications, RootED Denver

"The Gomez Howard Group has been a blessing and a gift to the Montbello Organizing Committee. From the moment they stepped in to help with marketing outreach and public relations, MOC's public identity—locally and nationally—has expanded exponentially. GHG is a trusted partner, and their work is welcomed and appreciated across our diverse, multilingual community. When GHG takes on a client, they take on that client's community. GHG gets in there and really understands what is needed. They are fearless in digging deeply to really understand the best way to elevate our messages."

Khadija Haynes, Board Member, Montbello Organizing Committee

"The Gomez Howard Group has been an invaluable partner for Make-A-Wish Colorado, providing exceptional strategic communications and public relations support. They consistently secure impactful coverage for Make-A-Wish Colorado in prominent media outlets, enhancing our visibility and outreach across the state. Gerri and her team's commitment to our cause and their adept handling of various aspects of communication and media relations have played a crucial role in cultivating a positive and compelling narrative around the work we do for children with critical illnesses. Working with The Gomez Howard Group has helped to safeguard Make-A-Wish Colorado's reputation and maintain the trust of our stakeholders, a critical component for the success of any organization."

Lauren Beede, Chief Development Officer, Make-A-Wish Colorado



BLACK RETAILERS GROUP

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Monday at 4:30 pm***

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For more info, contact Jevon Taylor. Jevon.Taylor@cbcc.biz

Best-In-Class Service

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a stone facade and large glass windows. The building is illuminated from within, and the interior is visible through the windows. The building is situated on a hillside overlooking a snowy mountain town. The sky is a mix of purple and orange, suggesting dusk or dawn. The foreground shows a concrete patio area and a snow-covered lawn.

Short-term rentals create economic opportunity for diverse workers and communities across Colorado
By VANESSA BEASLEY



(Photo: AirBnB)

It's no secret short-term rentals allow Colorado residents to earn extra income by sharing their home with travelers. What most people don't know is the economic benefits of short-term rentals reach beyond homeowners and directly benefit local workers and communities across the state. As a black woman working in Colorado's tourism industry, I also know first hand how short-term rentals have helped empower diverse communities with economic opportunities.

In 2019, I moved to Steamboat Springs and got a job as a Front Desk Manager at a resort. While I loved my job, there were no opportunities to grow within the company without being required to relocate. In 2021, I joined the team at Moving Mountains, a luxury short-term vacation rental property management company, as a Guest Services Specialist. The company operates locally in four popular ski markets: Steamboat Springs, Breckenridge, Vail, and Beaver Creek, Colorado. That winter, I assisted with planning ski vacations for over 250 reservations. This included organizing lift tickets, Snowsport lessons, airport transportation, grocery delivery and pre-stocking, and private chef dinners for our guests, including families, to ensure their experience in Colorado was unlike any other. After six months in the Guest Services Specialist role, and thanks to my prior management experience, I was promoted to Guest Services Manager. Short-term rentals are popular accommodation options for

families and groups when traveling to Colorado and our local teams go above and beyond to offer unique experiences and provide full-service local vacation planning. Once a Moving Mountains lodging reservation is confirmed, the Guest Services team is in place for pre-arrival communication and vacation planning experiences for all markets. What distinguishes us from other property management companies in the tourism and short-term rental industry is providing our guests with best-in-class service prior to and during their stay. Instead of leaving it to the guests to do research on what to do while staying in one of our mountain towns, our full-service Guest Services team is there to help them choose the best local vendors to use during their stay.

Short-term rentals create economic opportunity for local Colorado workers of all backgrounds and small businesses, not just homeowners. We take pride in being able to support our communities by hiring local workers and using local businesses as vendors. Most of Moving Mountains' employees are full-time residents, and the entire Guest Services team is based in Colorado, like me, living in or near the mountain towns our guests visit, so our guests can trust that we provide accurate local information. In Steamboat, our internal housekeeping department is composed of a diverse team of employees, and in Vail, Beaver

Creek, and Breckenridge, we outsource the housekeeping department to a locally owned cleaning company made up of local workers. We proudly employ 82 year-round employees and 43 seasonal employees. Additionally, the vendor partners we recommend are locally owned and operated, and we have partnerships with many small businesses in our mountain towns, including airport transportation companies, local chefs,



snowmobile tour operators, and dogsledding guides to name a few. When our team connects our guests with local partners, it helps ensure tourism dollars go directly into the pockets of our local residents and workers.

What's more, all of our vendors go above and beyond for our guests. For example, one of the families I was assisting had a local private airport transfer from the Yampa Valley Regional Airport to Steamboat and accidentally left their duffle bag at the airport. The driver was already driving back to the airport, so instead of them having the guest figure it out themselves, the driver grabbed the duffle bag when they returned to the airport and delivered it to the guest. This example speaks to one of our core values: "It's the little things that mean so much." It may seem small, but these simple things are what make a guest loyal to the company and local communities. Our local partners help us create unique experiences that in turn keep our guests loyal to them.

For example, I was recently assisting a family that has stayed with us many times and was having difficulty securing a reservation for their 17-person party at a local Italian restaurant. Using my resources, I contacted a chef who is one of our local partners that owned a portable pizza oven from a past business venture. Together, we were able to create an interactive pizza party for the family at their short-term rental, allowing the kids to make their own personal pizza with the chef. This was a hit with the family who said the experience turned out better than they could have imagined. Not only does this example speak to the fact that we provide our guests with amazing experiences, but it also underscores how the short-term rental industry drives income and loyal customers to our local small businesses. We also offer vacation planning to homeowners so even if they are staying at their home and bringing family with them, we are there to help. Additionally, part of our business is commission based, which means we are incentivized to support our partners as much as possible. The families that stay with us consistently spend thousands of dollars that goes back into our community. We are incredibly proud to support our local economies and help empower the local communities we serve by ensuring they see the



benefits of tourism spending.

While short-term rentals significantly benefit communities across Colorado, there have been recent attempts in the state legislature to strictly regulate and ultimately reduce the number of short-term rentals. These proposals put 8,100 local jobs and \$1.3 billion dollars in state revenue at risk while making it significantly more expensive to travel in Colorado. Moving Mountains is passionate about preserving the benefits of short-term rentals for Colorado residents and is a founding member of the Colorado Lodging and Resort Alliance where our Director of Business Development is an active board member. We actively engage and communicate with our homeowners, other local property managers, local commerce associations, and the local vendors that support and directly benefit from the short-term rental industry about new policies that threaten our ecosystem. As a result, we have a broad coalition of organizations and businesses that support fair, balanced regulations at the local level that allow our industry to continue to thrive. Short-term rentals support the diverse communities in our mountain towns and provide workers like myself with economic opportunity to live and raise families here. We are proud to be a part of the short-term rental industry that provides so many economic benefits for Colorado residents and communities that rely on tourism, and encourage our state and local lawmakers to continue expanding economic opportunities for Coloradans.

Empowering Organizations, Empowering Individuals: The Mission of KMG Consulting Services LLC

By KRISTEN M. GUISEPPI

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, where success hinges on adaptability and innovation, KMG Consulting Services LLC drives success and meaningful change through a dual suite of services aimed at empowering individuals and organizations alike. Led by [Kristen M. Guiseppi](#), a visionary program management/process improvement specialist and a champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, KMG Consulting Services LLC aims to serve the community by providing tailored consulting services that address the diverse needs of clients.

With a steadfast commitment to excellence and a wealth of experience, Kristen's dedication to empowering others are at the heart of everything we do. From optimizing operations to offering pre-law support to aspiring law school students, her mission is clear: to empower individuals and organizations to achieve their full potential.

Empowering Organizations | Program Management & Process Improvement Specialist
At the core of KMG Consulting Services LLC's offerings lies Kristen M. Guiseppi's expertise as a [program management and process improvement](#) specialist. With a proven track record of pioneering and optimizing award-winning programs through diverse collaborations, Kristen brings over a decade of experience in leading projects and programs at both the state and



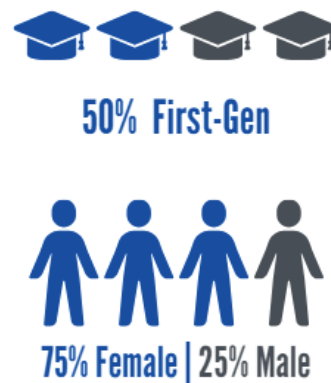
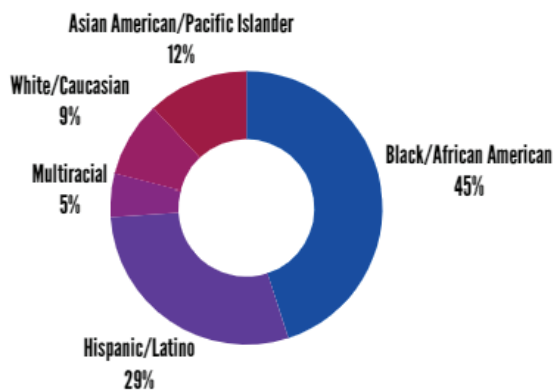
Images: Adobe

university levels. Drawing on her mastery of program management methodologies, Kristen's strategic and innovative approach and dedication to continuous improvement have enabled her to navigate complex challenges and deliver impactful results.

Kristen's proficiency in process improvement further enhances her ability to streamline operations and enhance efficiency for her clients. By identifying areas for optimization and implementing innovative solutions, she helps organizations of all sizes achieve their goals and maximize their potential.

Through KMG Consulting Services LLC, Kristen offers tailored consulting services aimed at guiding both startup and seasoned organizations towards success. Whether it's optimizing existing processes, implementing new strategies, or driving organizational change, Kristen's expertise as a program management and process improvement specialist ensures that her clients are equipped to thrive in today's rapidly evolving landscape.





Empowering Individuals | DEI Law School Admissions Strategist

With a unique blend of hard skills in program management, coupled with over a decade of specialized expertise in law school admissions, Kristen also offers a holistic approach to navigating the intricacies of the law school admission process as a Law School Admissions Strategist. Having worked at several law schools creating comprehensive pre-law programs and understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by aspiring law school students, particularly those from underserved and underrepresented backgrounds, Kristen has dedicated herself to innovating educational pathways and support systems. Through her work, she aims to address systemic barriers that impede access to legal education for marginalized populations.

Kristen's approach goes beyond traditional pre-law advising. By offering personalized mentoring, statement and resume development, and tailored strategy and coaching sessions, she empowers aspiring law school students with the confidence and skills needed to navigate the admissions process successfully. If you are [law school bound](#), Kristen provides a supportive and inclusive environment where all aspiring [lawyers can thrive](#). Her commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion ensures that every client receives the guidance and support they need to achieve their goals and pursue a career in law.

Kristen's expertise as a program management and process improvement specialist, combined with her dedication to diversity, equity, and

inclusion, ensures that every client receives the guidance and support they need to achieve their goals. From optimizing operations to empowering aspiring law school students, KMG Consulting Services LLC is dedicated to fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and empowerment.





DSBO Mentor-Protégé Program: Building Today's Capacity, Investing in Tomorrow

By SUSAN LIEHE

As a division within the city's Denver Economic Development & Opportunity (DED), the Division of Small Business Opportunity (DSBO) supports the growth, capacity, and sustainability of small, disadvantaged, minority and women-owned businesses. DSBO encourages and measures the utilization of certified firms on city-managed construction and professional services projects and the procurement of covered goods and services purchased by the city.

But utilization goals and contract compliance are just two elements of DSBO's work. Growing firms need to be ready, strong, and stable to perform successfully on public contracts. DSBO's robust outreach and capacity building program focuses on nurturing and educating small businesses, including delivering its successful citywide Mentor-Protégé program.

Each pairing of mentor-protégés is actually a three-way support platform, since the ultimate purpose of the program is to develop long-term business relationships between established prime contractors, MWBE firms, and city agencies. The involvement of both the agencies and mentors enhance the management and technical

capabilities of the protégé.

Mentors and Protégés must enter the program jointly and are expected to establish a mutually agreed upon development plan with input from a selected agency for at least one year. Building trust, creating relationships, and making the investment of time and effort is important, but the benefits to everyone involved are powerful.

City agencies that have committed to offering educational and networking opportunities for selected pairings on renewable one-year stints and coordinated through an identified agency liaison include the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, Denver Parks and Recreation, Denver International

Airport (DEN), and the Mayor's Office of the National Western Center.

"Each pairing is defined by individual leadership skills and needs, and every partnership has its own personality, but over time there are universal outcomes that we can measure," said Adrina Gibson, DEDO Chief Officer for Small Business Opportunity. "Our graduation events always include some powerful stories of personal connection as well as professional development." The program team, comprised of Program Administrator Helga Grunerud, Program Manager Kayla Hardin-Lawson, and Director of Strategic Business

Development Will Chan are eager to launch this next cohort. Chan states, "This program provides a structured pathway for knowledge transfer, skills, and insights between both mentors and proteges. Ultimately driving growth and excellence for our local economy."

To date, 11 pairings have participated in the program in its citywide form, launched in 2021.

Proteges are required to be an MWBE certified business with Denver with at least two consecutive years of experience in commercial or government contracting. To each pairing, the

Mentor contributes technical know-how as well as coaching on both hard and soft skills, the city agency liaison can help solve questions that may arise and help navigate, and DSBO checks in quarterly to ensure that maximum benefits are being realized all around. DSBO hosts networking and recognition events as well.

The application guideline, detail about the Mentor and Protégé roles, and details for the information session on Thursday, April 4, 2024 will be available [here](#). The next deadline for applying for consideration is Friday, April 19, 2024.



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Bringing business to the table to ensure Colorado students reach their full potential

Coalition of business leaders focuses on improving schools, changing educational outcomes for all students, and shaping the future of Colorado's workforce.

By RACHEL VAN BROCKLIN

Colorado faces a challenging paradox: we have one of the most well-educated workforces in the country, thanks to an influx of imported talent, yet we struggle to cultivate educational systems that help our own children thrive.

In fact, according to the most recent Talent Pipeline Report, more than 90 percent of jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage in Colorado require some sort of postsecondary training. And yet, less than 30 percent of Colorado high school graduates earn a certificate, associate's or bachelor's degree within six years of graduation.

A statewide nonprofit, Colorado Succeeds, is on a mission to crack this paradox, improve K12 and postsecondary outcomes, strengthen our

workforce, and empower a generation of learners to shape their futures.

Together with business leaders and policymakers, Colorado Succeeds is working to rewrite the narrative, unleashing the full potential of Colorado's students, and creating a brighter future for all learners.

ABOUT COLORADO SUCCEEDS

Colorado Succeeds was founded in 2006 by three politically diverse business leaders who saw a need for the business voice in education. Colorado Succeeds considers itself the radical middle, and believes the middle is where substantial work can be done on behalf of Colorado's learners.

The organization represents the statewide business voice, through members' businesses and business leaders who look past election cycles and work across the aisle to focus on long-term outcomes for learners.

Members apply their business expertise, influence, and capital to improve Colorado's education and training programs - working together with educators, policy leaders, and community partners to create change, invest in what's working, and scale success.

Colorado Succeeds' work to improve education is grounded in six key business principles:

Learners First

Prioritize the needs of the learner over the system

Equity

Prioritize learners furthest from opportunity

Transparency & Accountability

Collect the right data and share it publicly

Choice & Innovation

Expand options and remove barriers

Return on Investment

Channel limited resources to opportunities for greatest impact

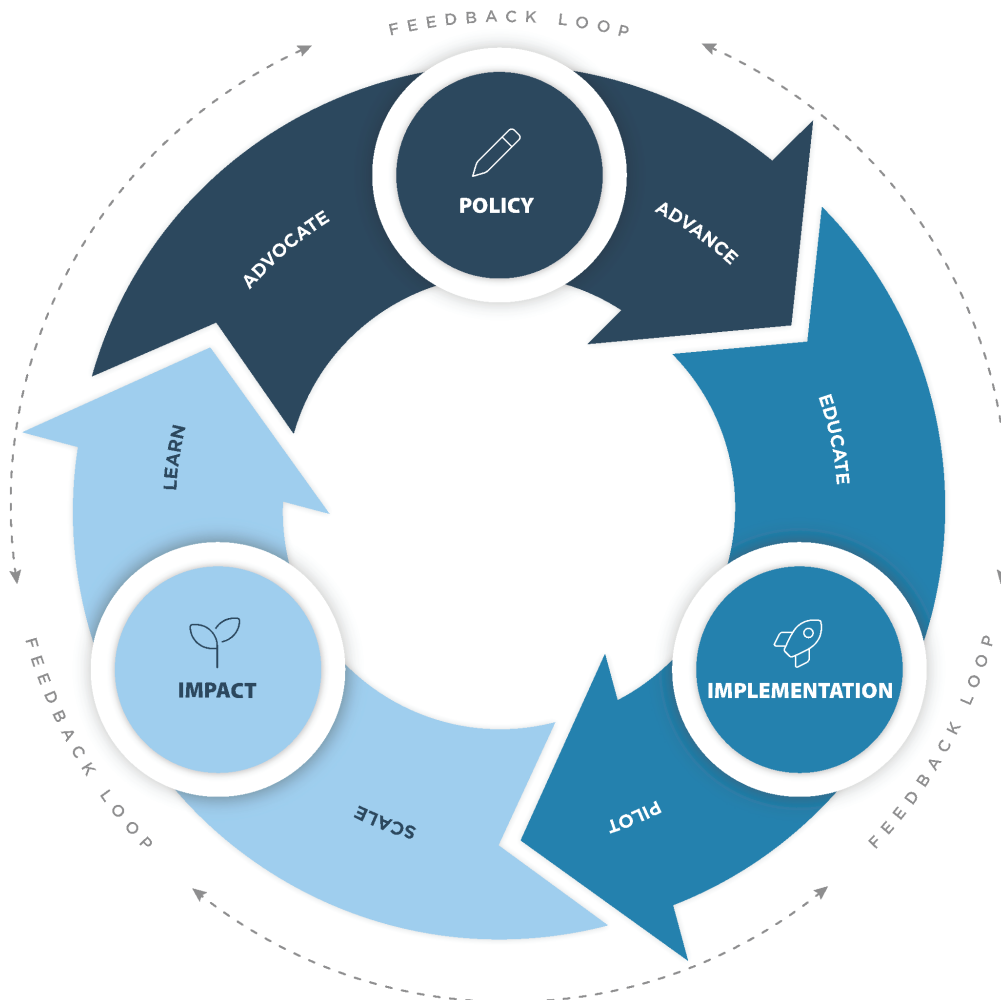
Agility

Respond and adapt to a constantly changing environment

The work to close gaps for students is complex and challenging, and the business community is critical in leading and supporting education and workforce development solutions that meet their current and future talent needs.

With that in mind, Colorado Succeeds' work focuses on three key areas:

- **POLICY:** Advocating for system changes through public policy that removes barriers to innovation and scales promising practices
- **IMPLEMENTATION:** Supporting the implementation of policy, working with hundreds of school districts, education partners, and business organizations from across the state
- **IMPACT:** Engaging in a continual feedback loop, not only championing policies but also investing in implementation, monitoring outcomes, and ensuring policies remain relevant and impactful



REMOVING BARRIERS & CREATING OPPORTUNITY

With less than 30% of Colorado high school graduates receiving the education they need to access economic success and mobility, public policy is a critical lever for scaling the promising practices that set students up for success.

Colorado Succeeds champions policies that promote equitable access to high-quality education experiences, from early childhood through career. The organization focuses on co-creating policy alongside learners, families, educators, and community and business leaders, and leveraging the business voice to advocate for their successful passage.

From there, ensuring these policies are implemented in a meaningful and impactful way is where real, lasting change occurs.

One such implementation project impacting thousands of students across the state is the [Homegrown Talent Initiative](#). Launched in 2019 in partnership with the Colorado Education Initiative, the Homegrown Talent Initiative is a statewide effort to develop career-connected learning experiences for K-12 students in rural communities.

To better prepare for life after graduation, schools and communities strategically focus on skill development, career-connected learning experiences, and flexible, relevant opportunities that align to student interests and local industry needs. Through this project, community design teams made up of superintendents, business leaders, educators, students, and community members came together to build unique plans to provide real-world experiences and skill development for their students, based on the strengths and needs of their local communities.

What started five years ago as an eight-district, three-year, \$4M+ pilot has now, through legislative advocacy that led to the state's more than \$15 million Rural Coaction grants, expanded to a larger network of more than 60 districts committed to co-creating and expanding career-connected learning opportunities for students, and developing a shared vision of the future of education based on the strengths, needs, and aspirations for their unique contexts.

The Homegrown Talent Initiative is one of many examples where policy and practice are coming together to ensure all Colorado learners have pathways to success.





IMPACT & WHAT'S AHEAD

While the work continues to support and expand effective programs, since 2006, Colorado Succeeds has championed a variety of important wins for learners across the early childhood to career continuum.

These include supporting the passage of key education and workforce policies such as:

- Creating opportunities for students to earn an associate degree while still in high school
- Removing of outdated seat time requirements allowing for greater learning outside the classroom
- Expanding dual/concurrent enrollment to every school district in the state
- Ensuring college credit is awarded for meaningful work experience
- Incentivizing school districts that support learners in earning career-relevant credentials
- Providing universal access to free part-time preschool and full-day Kindergarten for all students
- Allocating equal funding for public charter school students

In 2023 specifically, Colorado Succeeds' business coalition made important progress in transforming our state's education and workforce development systems.

So, what does it look like to shift impact on and outcomes for students?

By focusing on public policy, the organization:

- Expanded the [Career Development Incentive Program](#) through a 10-year, \$95 million investment to help high school students earn industry-recognized credentials and access high-quality work-based learning opportunities.
- Invested over \$70 Million in improving Colorado's school-to-work pipeline through policies that provide students with free access to in-demand, short-term credentials in labor-challenged fields such as health care, construction, law enforcement, and education and established a new scholarship program for Colorado high school graduates that provides awards to students pursuing high-priority postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities.
- Passed groundbreaking legislation to improve math outcomes in K-12. The legislation is the first of its kind in the nation, implementing an all-encompassing approach to addressing the 50,000 Colorado students who are currently struggling with math.
- Passed two laws that will significantly expand resources for 300,000 adults in Colorado without a high school diploma to access the

education they need to pursue credentials aligned to our state's labor market.

And through a focus on implementation, Colorado Succeeds:

- Delivered technical assistance and partnership support to over 60 rural school districts in expanding high-quality career-connected learning experiences for over 20,000 high school students.
- Advised and coached over 200 high school students from low-income households to access over \$900,000 in [Path4Ward](#) scholarship funds to pursue postsecondary and career pathways aligned with their interests and opportunities for economic mobility.
- Developed a blueprint for equitable, stackable pathways to economic mobility through a construction case study in Jefferson County. More than 50 business and education partners were engaged, along with over 500 young adults.
- Supported nearly 50 education and business partners in applying for over \$8M in state and federal funding through strategic thought partnership and grant writing supports.

This year, Colorado Succeeds is focused on several key efforts to continue their work:

- Supporting their recently launched Education to Employment Alliance in building a business-led effort to transform our postsecondary and workforce systems by executing the recommendations in their recent [Economic Mobility report](#).
- Implementing the recommendations of the state's [Secondary, Postsecondary, and Work-Based learning integration taskforce](#) to ensure more students are graduating high school with college credit, industry-recognized credentials, and high-quality career-connected learning experiences.
- Working with bipartisan legislative leaders to improve Colorado's School Finance Act and ensure funding is equitably allocated toward learners with the greatest needs.
- Supporting 40 new high schools, representing more than 30,000 Colorado students in increasing student participation in college

and career navigation, work-based learning, concurrent enrollment, and community partnerships to improve postsecondary outcomes.

- Providing industry partners with \$400,000 in incentive funding and technical assistance to increase the number of businesses engaging in high-quality work-based learning in rural communities across eight regions.

GET INVOLVED

Colorado Succeeds knows that progress doesn't happen in a vacuum and collaboration is a force multiplier. That's why they are eager to partner with employers, business organizations, education providers, and funders to scale success for all Coloradans.

Members of Colorado Succeeds have the opportunity to grow and leverage their leadership, elevate their brand, and deepen their understanding of education in Colorado.

If you are interested in getting involved and learning more, connect with Colorado Succeeds at [ColoradoSucceeds.org](https://coloradosucceeds.org).



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Burgess Community Development

By DENISE BURGESS

My name is Denise Burgess, I am CEO of an African American female owned second generation construction firm located in Denver, Colorado. That sentence in itself tells a story of hope, opportunity, challenge and triumph. Burgess Services has been a part of the fabric of this Denver and Colorado community for the last 50 years, starting with my Father, Clyde, having a dream of being an entrepreneur and a strong enough partner in my Mother, Lucille, to make it her dream too. They started a company named Burgess Heating and Air Conditioning serving the residential communities of Aurora and North Denver starting with an idea and three war veteran pension, which has grown into Burgess Services, a construction management firm that has been a part of teams who have managed to build over \$1 Billion in major public projects in Colorado and throughout the United States. The construction industry has definitely changed in those 50 years and Burgess has survived recessions, booms, minority programs, no minority programs, systemic barriers along with historic opportunities. As the industry changed, so did we and with every change – we continue to build and be a part of the American landscape. The challenges of survival are constant within

the construction industry, which is short of trained talent, especially from the minority community but is now looking on how to entice and welcome those who have long been discouraged to join and who two generations ago – their grandparents were trying to leave the construction industry behind for the future generations to have “professional” careers. The construction industry and those who have tried to discard it, has realized the importance of diversity. I brag that women average 96 cents for every dollar that a man makes – trust I always try to get that 4 cents. Do we have those same DEI challenges of every industry, of course we do. What I do know is that the best and most significant opportunities allowed our firm were provided by those who did not look like me or have the same lens of experience. That is something to be said about an industry who starting with a “check a box” but now realized that different perspectives make a project succeed. It’s good to break up packages so small contractors can bid, it works to recruit in areas of justice involved, veterans and

As a business owner you have to understand your business and the market but the business community is different for minority owned and woman owned business owners. I am not going to debate the point. I will say that we are not a marginalized population. As a Christian and raised by very confident and strong Black family, I



can't even begin to think that way. The system is marginalized because it has failed to live up to the promise of opportunity, the recognition that in order for our economy to expand – it has to be inclusive and can no longer exclude or ignore the hardworking entrepreneurs that have know in this business community for most of my adult career.

I now compete for the best and the brightest students who are part of the National Society of Black Engineers, Women In Engineering and National Hispanic Society of Engineers. There are chapters located throughout the country as every time I allowed to speak with those students – it gives you hope for the construction industry. I also cheer those who attend Red Rocks Community College and Arapahoe Community College or join an apprenticeship program. They are changing the future of their families and that is what makes me the most proud about the cons I am very proud of the last 50 years of Burgess Services and the last 30 years that I have dedicated to its successes. Burgess Services managed the quality control, mechanical installation or been a member of the project management team for Denver International Airport Westin Hotel, Wellington E. Webb Municipal Building, the Colorado Convention Center Expansion, and the Denver Justice Center just to name a few.

Burgess Services expansion includes affordable housing development, Burgess Community Development, with the FreshLo Project where the Montbello community will take pride in a landmark that will include not only family housing, grocery store but also an arts education center. The behind-the-scenes historical significance of Montbello Organizing Committee allowing opportunity from development, to contracting, workforce training along with a Wealth Building Incubator speaks to a community that I have come to know which embodies “don't just talk the talk but walk the walk”. The other part of this industry is the community component. Constructions builds the facilities that you work in, live in, enjoy the indoors/

outdoors and celebrate different times of our lives with the express commitment to make sure each facility you attend is safe, comfortable and most likely part of the overall experience. The plumbers, electricians, landscapers, crafts men and women take pride that we are making your world more comfortable and enjoyable without any expectation of a thank you. Our community includes the non-profits who make our growth better from Denver Scholarship Foundation with first generation college bound minority students to WORKNOW and Construction Careers now with wrap around services for those who need simple support or the Black Construction Group, Hispanic Contractors of Colorado or the Association of General Contractors encouraging new builders and entrepreneurs to take the talent to the next level. I am blessed that the next generation have greater opportunities, but I am cautious that the opportunities and the ability to perform will not transform into success as quickly as their expectations.

The new innovations to Colorado and the builders are everything from tiny homes and communities to maintaining the American Dream of home

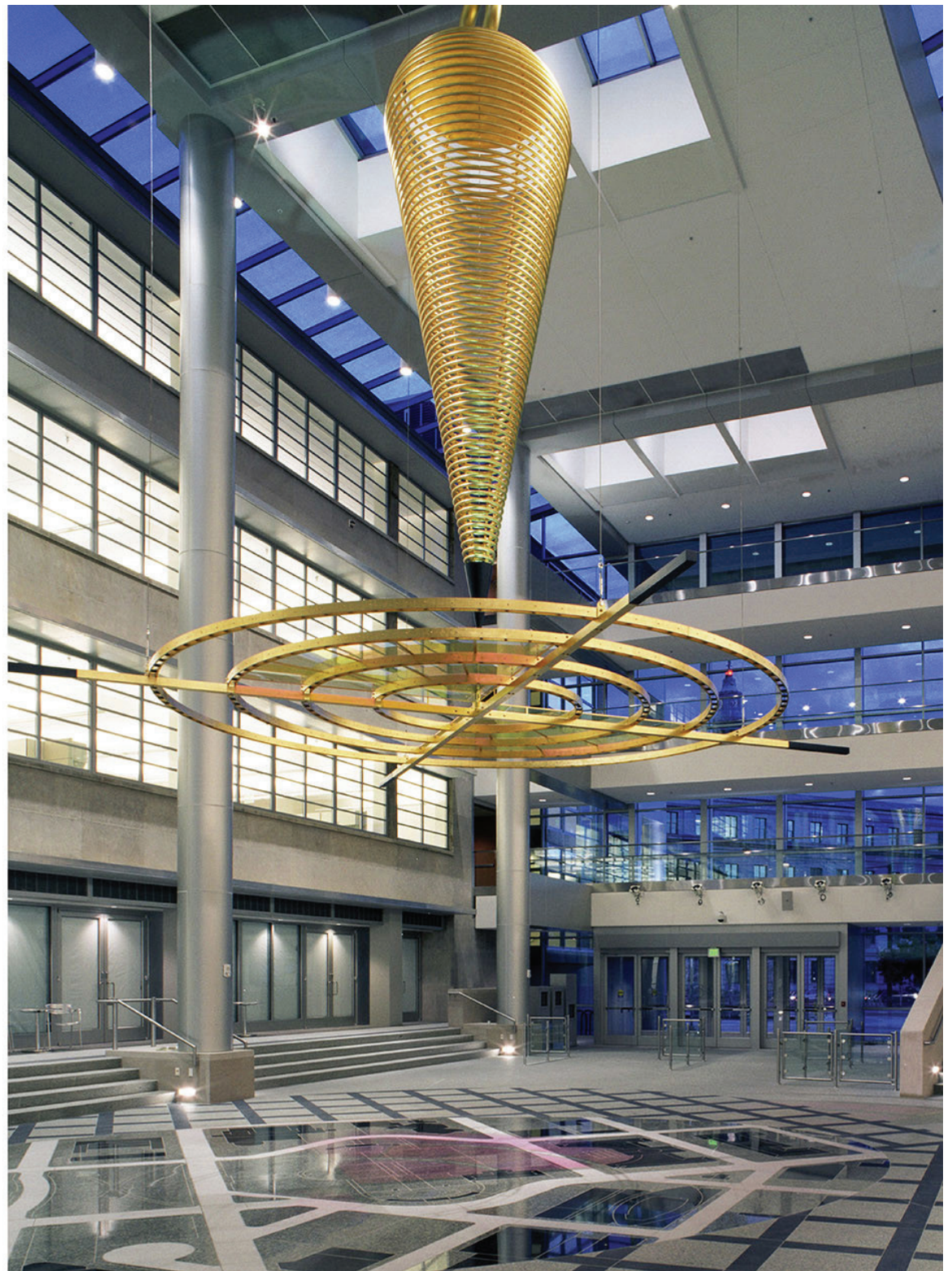


ownership in the form of a condos, tiny homes or TOD communities. Building will change as does the world it services. We talk about Green Build like it's an everyday expectation and we imagine a time where we are all electric with the right amount of grids and zero carbon. That is what construction does best and that is why it's imperative that our community latch on to the new era of construction from ownerships to management to innovator. The next time Denver International Airport or Regional Transportation District does a get to know our procurement process invite - go. The next time it seems a little out of reach with a State contract in Boulder or Colorado Springs - complete and submit the Request For Proposal.

The Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce was the one organization that I had to stretch my imagination, but it was the place that supported, trained and eventually I am became the first African American and sixth woman to Chair the Board. An experience that taught me that not only do people have to look like me, but they come to the table with a different interest, life experience and approach to business. That's where the most valuable lessons are found and the enrichment to not only you but your community. Also - where the people who were building projects along with bankers, lawyers and accountant were there to answer my questions and provide growth opportunities. As Colorado grows so does the people, the opportunities, and the challenges. The work continues for Burgess Services, my team and myself as we celebrate this 50th year in business. We are every day of the week celebrating Black History Month, every hour trying to make Women History Month and minute committing to be Women.

The expectation is that we all celebrate 365 days of the year.





E-Commerce and AI: The Perfect Match for Success

By CAROL WOODARD

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, e-commerce businesses are constantly looking for innovative ways to enhance customer experience and streamline their operations. One technology that is revolutionizing the e-commerce industry is Artificial Intelligence (AI). By integrating AI into their platforms, businesses can achieve unprecedented levels of personalization, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. However, it is crucial to implement AI in the right way and to leverage its potential effectively. In this article, we will explore how e-commerce and AI can be a perfect match if done right.

The Benefits of AI in E-Commerce:

Improved Customer Experience

AI enables e-commerce businesses to gain valuable insights into customer preferences, behavior, and purchasing patterns. By leveraging AI-powered recommendation engines, businesses can provide personalized product recommendations to customers, based on their previous purchases, browsing history, and demographic data. This level of personalization not only enhances the overall customer experience but also increases the likelihood of conversion and repeat purchases.

Enhanced Efficiency and Productivity

AI can automate several routine and time-consuming tasks, such as customer inquiries, inventory management, and order fulfillment. This allows businesses to streamline their operations and allocate their resources more efficiently. For example, AI-powered chatbots can handle customer queries with accuracy and speed, reducing the need for human intervention. Similarly, AI-powered inventory management systems can accurately predict demand, optimize stock levels, and eliminate the risk of overstocking or stockouts.

Fraud Detection and Prevention

With the rise of e-commerce, online fraud has become a significant concern for businesses and customers alike. AI can play a crucial role in detecting and preventing fraud by analyzing vast amounts of data in real-time. By leveraging machine learning algorithms, AI systems can identify patterns and anomalies that may indicate fraudulent activity. This helps businesses to proactively mitigate risks and safeguard their customers' sensitive information.

Data-Driven Insights

AI enables businesses to harness the power of data and convert it into actionable insights. By analyzing customer data, businesses can gain valuable insights into market trends, customer preferences, and competition. AI-powered analytics tools can generate comprehensive reports and visualizations, empowering businesses to make informed decisions and optimize their marketing strategies.

Implementing AI in E-Commerce:

Prioritize Data Security and Privacy

As AI collects and analyzes vast amounts of customer data, businesses must prioritize data security and privacy. Implement robust encryption measures, access controls, and regular security audits to protect customer information from unauthorized access. Additionally, ensure compliance with data protection regulations such as GDPR to build trust with your customers and maintain a positive brand image.

Align AI Initiatives with Business Goals

Clearly defining goals and objectives is an essential step for businesses before implementing AI. By establishing a clear direction, companies can ensure that their AI initiatives align with their overall vision and strategy. This strategic approach not only enhances the effectiveness of AI implementation but also maximizes the potential benefits it can bring to the organization. Businesses must invest time and effort in defining their goals and objectives before embarking on the AI journey.

AI should complement and align with the broader business strategy to maximize its impact. For example, if the goal is to improve customer experience, AI-powered chatbots and recommendation engines can be prioritized. If the goal is to optimize operations, AI-powered inventory management or demand forecasting systems can be implemented. By aligning AI initiatives with business goals, businesses can ensure successful integration and achieve desired outcomes.

Invest in Talent and Training

To leverage the full potential of AI, businesses need skilled professionals to develop, implement, and maintain AI systems. Invest in hiring or training employees with expertise in AI, data science, and machine learning. Additionally, encourages continuous learning and development to keep up with the latest advancements in AI technology. By building a competent AI team, businesses can overcome challenges and effectively harness the power of AI.

Monitor and Optimize AI Performance

AI systems need regular monitoring and optimization to ensure their effectiveness. Continuously evaluate the performance of AI algorithms, recommendation engines, and automated processes. Identify areas of improvement and refine the AI models accordingly. By monitoring and optimizing AI performance, businesses can stay ahead of the competition and maintain a competitive edge.

Conclusion

When implemented correctly, AI can be a game-changer for e-commerce businesses. It can enhance customer experience, improve efficiency, detect fraud, and provide valuable insights. However, it is important to prioritize data security, align AI initiatives with business goals, invest in talent and training, and regularly monitor and optimize AI performance. By doing so, businesses can unlock the full potential of e-commerce and AI, creating a perfect match that propels them towards success in the digital age.



Supporting Small Businesses: Why Purchasing Directly from Independent Websites Matters

By JAMIE SMITH

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, representing innovation, creativity, and personal connection. As a consumer, you have the power to make a significant impact by supporting these entrepreneurs and their dreams. In light of recent developments on Etsy, where numerous shops have been subjected to payment reserves, it is essential to understand the challenges faced by small business owners. In this article, we will delve into the reasons why purchasing directly from the store's own website can make a real difference and explore the story of one such business, Getitallboutique.

Understanding the Payment Reserve Issue:

Etsy, a popular online marketplace for handmade and vintage items, recently implemented payment reserves for thousands of its shops. These reserves involve withholding 75% of the sale proceeds, leaving only 25% available for the seller. While this measure aims to address perceived risks associated with certain shops, it has resulted in significant financial hardships for small businesses, including

long-established sellers. For many, the 25% remaining after fees is insufficient to cover the costs of materials, packaging, and postage.

The Plight of Getitallboutique and Similar Small Businesses:

Getitallboutique, founded by Jaime Smith and Emily, specializes in baby and kids clothing, personalized items, and accessories. Their mission is to offer high-quality, unique products at affordable prices, ensuring that parents can provide for their little ones without financial strain. However, the recent changes on Etsy have made it increasingly challenging for Getitallboutique to sustain their business and continue serving their customers.

Supporting Small Businesses: The Importance of Purchasing Directly:

Transparency and Direct Support: When you purchase directly from a small business's website, you establish a direct connection with the owner. This transparency allows you to understand the impact of your purchase and provides an opportunity to show your support beyond a simple transaction.

Improved Profit Margins:

Unlike platforms like Etsy that charge fees and deduct them from the remaining 25% of the sale proceeds, purchasing from a small business's website ensures that a larger portion

of your payment goes directly to the business owner. This enables them to cover essential expenses, such as materials, packaging, and shipping, without compromising their ability to grow and thrive.

Personalized Customer Experience:

Small business owners often take great pride in offering personalized customer service. By purchasing directly from their website, you are more likely to experience prompt and tailored assistance, as well as potential perks like special discounts or customized offerings.

Helping Businesses Thrive:

Your direct support contributes to the sustainability and growth of small businesses. By avoiding third-party platforms, you enable business owners to reinvest in their ventures, expand their product offerings, and continue providing exceptional products and services.



Black Business ON THE MOVE



Sunrise Vendors

The latest, smartest vending machines in town

By KAYO OLOWU

Introducing to you Sunrise Vendors. A fully black-owned, vending machine operator in the State of Colorado. We have the latest, smartest, most portable vending machines in town. Give us a call today. A trial will convince you.

Sunrise Vendors is in partnership with Ideal Vendors, manufacturers of innovative and portable vending machines to bring the Ideal Vending Machines to Colorado for the very first time. Ideal vending machines are very portable machines meant for offices with limited space. Our cold drink machine can even hang on the wall! Above all, it costs you nothing! We do all the work of placement, maintenance, and restocking. We specialize in placing vending machines in

offices so employees and clients have easy access to branded drinks and snacks. Healthy options are also available. Our machines are equipped with cash, coin, and credit card capabilities for ease of payment and our prices are competitive. Your employees will not have to go out during break hours in search of snacks. Your clients will appreciate you for this convenience.

We monitor our machines remotely and do refilling as quickly as it is needed. We also do on-the-spot maintenance of our facilities. We are also able to customize our machines to fit your company's brand and logo at no cost to you. Sunrise is open to negotiation on how our machines can benefit establishments where they are placed. We also offer one month trial services. If for any reasons establishments are not happy with our performance, we move our machines. Give us a call today or send us a WhatsApp.

Call/WhatsApp number: 720-404-2895
E-mail: sunrisevendors2023@gmail.com

Share Your Story with Us!

Are you a Black business owner in Colorado making an impact? We're seeking submissions for our "Black Businesses on the Move" section! In 250-500 words, tell us what sets your business apart, your contributions to the community, and any challenges you've overcome. Please include relevant photos and/or bios to accompany your story.

Send your submissions to:
TheAcumen@cbcc.biz.

**Let's celebrate your achievements and
inspire our community together!**

Editorial and Deadline Calendar

Featured Topic	Space Reservations	Materials Due
April 2024		
Black Women's Month	Friday, March 15	Wednesday, March 20
May 2024		
National Small Business Month	Monday, April 15	Friday, April 19
June 2024		
Juneteenth	Wednesday, May 15	Monday, May 20
July 2024		
International Day of Cooperatives	Friday, June 14	Tuesday, June 18
August 2024		
National Black Business Month	Tuesday, July 16	Friday, July 19
September 2024		
911 Memorial	Friday, August 16	Tuesday, August 20
October 2024		
Health	Monday, September 16	Friday, September 20
November 2024		
Youth Entrepreneurs	Tuesday, October 15	Friday, October 18
December 2024		
National Write a Business Plan Month	Thursday, November 14	Monday, November 18
January 2025		
A Salute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Friday, December 13	Wednesday, December 18
February 2025		
Black History Month	Tuesday, January 14	Friday, January 17
March 2025		
International Women's Day	Wednesday, February 14	Monday, February 19

Advertisements

Boost your business's visibility by advertising with the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce in **The Acumen**. Connect with a wide, engaged audience that supports local enterprises and gain unparalleled exposure within the community. Don't miss this opportunity - contact us today to place your ad and expand your reach!

Advertising Rates

Listed in cost per ad placement.

	1X	3X	6X	9X	12X
Full Page	\$1000.00	\$900.00	\$800.00	\$700.00	\$600.00
Junior Page	\$750.00	\$675.00	\$600.00	\$525.00	\$450.00
Half Page	\$500.00	\$450.00	\$400.00	\$350.00	\$300.00
Quarter Page	\$250.00	\$225.00	\$200.00	\$175.00	\$150.00
Eighth Page	\$125.00	\$112.50	\$100.00	\$87.50	\$75.00
Sixteenth Page	\$62.50	\$56.25	\$50.00	\$43.75	\$37.50

Advertisement Sizes

	Without Bleed (inches)	With Bleed (inches)
Full Page	8.500 w x 11.000 h	8.750 w x 11.250 h
Junior Page	5.000 w x 7.750 h	5.250 w x 8.000 h
Half Page - Horizontal	7.500 w x 4.875 h	7.750 w x 5.125 h
Half Page - Vertical	3.625 w x 10.000 h	3.875 w x 10.250 h
Quarter Page - Horizontal	4.875 w x 3.625 h	5.125 w x 3.875 h
Quarter Page - Vertical	3.625 w x 4.875 h	3.875 w x 5.125 h
Eighth Page (business card) - Horizontal	3.500 w x 2.000 h	3.750 w x 2.250 h
Eighth Page (business card) - Vertical	2.000 w x 3.500 h	2.250 w x 3.750 h
Sixteenth Page	1.750 w x 2.375 h	2.000 w x 2.625 h

To purchase advertising space, or to request more information, please contact TheAcumen@cbcc.biz.



ATTENTION ALL CBCC MEMBERS!

Want to share your story with fellow members?
Submit an article about your business or industry to be
included in **THE ACUMEN**, a Colorado Black Chamber of
Commerce monthly publication.

Are you a member of the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce?

The CBCC is a thriving business community that is driving success for Black-owned business. We create programs and services for business assistance and support; we connect Black-owned businesses with each other for networking and visibility; and we collaborate with corporate partners and other organizations to support the community as a whole. The Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce is the voice of Black business owners and an advocate for resources and policies that impact us.

Our membership offers unparalleled networking opportunities, exclusive access to business resources, and strong advocacy for your business interests. Elevate your business with our educational workshops and events that keep you at the forefront of industry trends. Connect, grow, and succeed with a community that champions your success. Take the first step towards unlocking your business's full potential.

**Join today and be part of a network that drives growth and
innovation!**

[Explore Member Benefits](#)

[Begin an Application](#)