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# Colorado Small Business Community Forum Results

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Colorado SBDC State Advisory Board and  
Governor's Small Business Council



Ronald Baalman  
Courtney Berg  
Tony Gagliardi  
Joseph Jenkins  
Pete LaBarre  
Greg Lopez  
Dixie Malone  
Kelly Manning  
Jon Maraschin  
Shelly McPherson  
James Neubecker  
Patrick O'Brien  
Jessie Ruiz, Jr.  
Avram Saunders

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## Colorado Small Business Community Forum Results

Small businesses are the focal point of any healthy and vibrant economy. They create the majority of new jobs here in Colorado and continue to be a driving force in our growing economy. However, small businesses are insufficiently considered when it comes to supporting their growth and breaking down their barriers to success.

In order to better understand and meet the needs of small businesses in the State of Colorado, the Colorado Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network (also acting as the Governor's Small Business Advisory Council) conducted a series of small business forums around the state. The goal of these forums was to gather information on small business barriers to success, as well as brainstorm solutions to the various issues brought forth. In addition, these forums allow small business owners to offer their own advice and solutions on behalf of the small business community.

In 2012, small business community forums were conducted in the following communities:

- Durango
- Colorado Springs
- Broomfield
- Pueblo
- Glenwood Springs

The SBDC Network utilizes the State Small Business Advisory Board to conduct these community forums around the state. This Advisory Board consists of individuals who are members of both the SBDC State Advisory Board and the Governors Small Business Council. The members are business representatives from across the state providing a variety of experience and backgrounds. The Advisory board is 100% volunteer based. Its sole mission is to help small businesses succeed in Colorado.

**The Colorado SBDC Network is the only statewide agency that provides direct support, education, training, and consulting services to small business owners and staff.** The Network strives to be constantly in tune with the small business community, and continually changes its services, support, and trainings to assist small business owners to be competitive and viable.

Outlined in the next pages are the top barriers to success that were found to be the most prevalent throughout the forums and across the state. The issues are addressed, as well as possible solutions and suggestions for state government, the small business community, and the SBDC Network.

The top barriers to success are:

- Access to capital
- Government regulations
- Healthcare and the Affordable Care Act
- Access to and retention of a skilled workforce

These issues are in no particular order. Other barriers were raised and some are mentioned throughout the paper, but as stated earlier, these were the most prevalent throughout the forums and brought with them the most solutions.

## I. Access to Capital

### Issues:

**Banks are not easily lending:** Small business owners continually cite access to capital as one of their top barriers to success. Throughout the state, business owners explained that banks are still not lending and/or have yet to relax their lending policies even as the economy rebounds. Lenders still require a minimum of one year in business, a positive bottom line, “sufficient” collateral and good personal credit. One restaurant owner in Colorado Springs cited being turned down for a loan due to bad personal credit despite having been in business for over 30 years.

**Small business owners are uninformed:** Many entrepreneurs in the start-up phase of their business, as well as existing small business owners, are unaware of the requirements needed to access start-up or additional capital and the sources of such capital above and beyond banks. These entrepreneurs and business owners invest their time and money into business plans and ventures only to later be turned down by lenders due to the reasons stated above. While no one wants to see a return to the aggressive lending policies of the past, the pendulum has swung too far to the cautionary side, and small businesses continue to be held back for lack of financial resources to grow.

### Solutions:

**Education:** Business owners need to be informed of the rising credit standards and minimum requirements needed for additional and start-up capital. Small business owners are unaware of the additional sources of funding available to them including how to access SBA programs, etc. Most were unaware of small business lenders such as Colorado Lending Source, Accion, and CHFA. Education and information distribution can be accomplished by hosting panels and networking events for lenders and small business owners, as well as more information provided to the SBDCs across the state, Chambers of Commerce, community leaders, and more.

**Regional Development Banks:** Throughout the forums, many business owners mentioned the need for community development and growth of the entrepreneurial spirit throughout the community. Regional Development Banks not only spur growth within the economy but also instill a sense of community within the area. Another prevalent and recurring suggestion was a state fund set up specifically for rural areas, as these communities have a harder time finding and accessing small business lenders.

## II. Government Regulations

### Issues:

**New and existing regulations creating uncertainty:** Many small business owners voiced concerns that the promulgation of new rules and regulations continually hinder the growth of their business. Valuable time is continually spent by these business owners adjusting to these regulations instead of growing their business. Uncertainty of how regulations affect business owners was also a recurring concern. Many owners cited delaying growth because of this uncertainty.

**Sheer multitude of regulations hindering small business owners:** Licenses and permits, as well as inspectors and state officials, are a necessity to keep citizens safe and healthy. However, many businesses owners cited the sheer multitude of these requirements as extremely hindering to their success. Alice Spencer of Spencer's Market, a 100 year-old family business, explained that she needed 17 different licenses to open her doors each day. The time spent keeping up with permits and licenses is not an issue for larger companies, but it becomes a heavy burden on small business owners.

**Communication of new regulations:** The failure to provide clear and timely information regarding pending or new regulatory requirements also creates a sense of uncertainty. The forums raised the issue of learning about regulatory requirements after the fact, and having to either change or rework their business models and activities, which is costly and harmful.

### Solutions:

**Education:** Small business owners need to be informed of new and existing rules and regulations and how these regulations affect their business in a timely and clear manner. More emphasis needs to be placed on getting this information out into the communities as soon as possible.

**Instill a business friendly culture into the Colorado workforce:** Rules and regulations are not easily abandoned, and rightfully so. But a small business-friendly culture instilled into the State of Colorado and local processes would help ease the hindrance these regulations put on small businesses. Some inspectors and state workers were cited as being obstructionist and harassing to owners. If state workers were expected to provide support to help small business owners comply with these regulations, instead of being compliance oriented, this would free up more time for business owners to focus on growing their business, thus creating jobs and growing the economy.

**Small business owners have to lobby on their own behalf:** Many small business owners need to take responsibility and make sure their opinions are heard. Business owners were encouraged to be their own lobbyist and talk to their local legislators and government officials. Business owners, legislators, and government officials need to keep the lines of communication open, allowing the small business community to become a top priority.

### III. Healthcare and the Affordable Care Act

#### Issue:

**Healthcare costs and Affordable Care Act uncertainty:** Rising healthcare costs have notoriously been at the top of small business concerns and a significant barrier to success. Rising healthcare costs and concerns over coming regulations, State and Federal, was listed in the last Colorado small business forum findings as a major concern. Most of the concerns voiced during this round of community forums were that businesses continue to suffer from rising costs, and many are unsure of how the Affordable Care Act will affect their business. This uncertainty hinders growth, as many try to weigh their options and understand the various requirements taking effect before investing in their own business. This fear slows down growth at best and makes it impossible at worst.

#### Solutions:

**Education:** Training and informational resources on the Affordable Care Act need to be made available and easily accessible to small business as soon as possible. Clear and concise information will enable them to intelligently adjust to the coming regulations. Directly helping businesses plan for and comply with the new law will minimize uncertainty, hesitation, and the potential compliance issue that everyone fears.

**Engaging State Agencies:** Engaging with the various state agencies directly involved in healthcare policy decisions, (i.e. engaging with the Department of Health, insurance commissions, and the legislative task force to provide timely information about health insurance products or services to small business owners) is a crucial step in minimizing the impediments to appropriate implementation of the new requirements, while not overburdening the small business owner. One model that might be appropriate is the healthcare system in Grand Junction, which has received national attention for providing high quality medical care at a reasonable cost. The town's innovative thinking for solutions could serve as a model for other communities in Colorado and their small businesses.

## IV. Access to and Retention of a Skilled Workforce

### Issues:

**Recruiting qualified employees:** Small business owners have a difficult time competing with larger companies who are able to pay higher wages and salaries. Small business owners in rural areas have an even more difficult time finding qualified employees in their area. Small business jobs are often more high-paced and work is more non-routine than those in larger companies. As a consequence, the type of flexibility required of employees makes finding and retaining employees that much more difficult.

**Retaining qualified employees:** Concerns were continually voiced in the rural areas that business owners had a hard time retaining employees after spending significant amounts of money in employee training. Employees in rural areas move on to higher wage jobs in more urban areas.

### Solutions:

**Utilize existing programs:** Partnerships with higher education and workforce development centers could be more effectively utilized to provide specific trainings and internships for relevant, available jobs. Programs should be put in place to incentivize Colorado students and employees to qualify for these available jobs. Small business owners need to communicate with Colorado Workforce Centers and Higher Education Institutions on creating specific programs, internships, scholarships, and fellowships for students and trainees. Sector Partnerships should also be utilized as they are highly customized to target specific industry needs and can identify skill gaps and changing industry needs as they arise.

**Education:** Encourage companies to recruit based on character and work ethic as opposed to recruiting highly skilled employees solely looking for higher wages. Educate employers on how to retain employees through the proper utilization of independent contractors, non-compete clauses, no-solicitation agreements, exit interviews, internships, part-time employees, and incentive programs.

**Market available state resources:** State of Colorado should continually be marketing its available resources including Connect Colorado, Colorado Workforce Development, and the Colorado SBDC Network.

## Conclusion

The small business community continues to grow in Colorado. The Colorado SBDC Network strives to continually serve the small business community, while quickly adapting to the community's relevant needs. The small business community forums enable the Network to stay in-tune with the community's needs and assist small business owners in overcoming these obstacles and barriers to growth and success. However, there is a great deal more to be done.

In the past four years, the Colorado SBDC Network has made job retention and job creation its top priority. We have created successful partnerships with other state agencies such as the Department of Labor, Workforce Centers, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC), and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to utilize new and existing programs to better serve the small business community. These efforts need to continue and grow in depth and broadness.

The following table provides some basic statistics and achievements of the Colorado SBDC Network:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	<b>Total</b>
Consulting Sessions for Small Businesses	10,852	13,583	14,796	17,003	56,234
Unique Small Business Clients	4,906	5,453	5,567	6,087	22,013
Training Events for Small Businesses	663	908	837	891	3,299
Training Attendees	9,473	12,139	11,756	11,827	45,195
Small Business Jobs Created	1,385	1,715	1,801	1,712	6,613
Small Business Jobs Retained	1,495	2,491	3,739	2,201	9,925
Small Business Starts	391	514	385	372	1,662
Small Business Capital Formation (SBDC Clients)	\$68,542,779	\$85,422,275	\$106,020,123	\$93,648,328	\$353,633,505
Contracts won by Small Businesses (SBDC Clients)	\$10,485,345	\$36,506,967	\$82,526,508	\$71,019,920	\$200,538,740

The Network hopes that the results and findings of the community forums conducted are utilized across the state to better assist small business owners and strengthen Colorado's economy. The Network's end goal is to increase optimism, create jobs and strengthen the economy, thus vastly improving the great State of Colorado.

## APPENDIX I

**The following table provides basic statistics about the programs and services the Colorado SBDC tracks continually:**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
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## APPENDIX II

### SBDC State Advisory Board & Governor's Small Business Advisory Council

#### Member Biographies

##### Ron Baalman

Ron Baalman is an owner of a family business, RK Investment Company that acquired four Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory locations in 2002, closed a location acquired in 2002 and opened two additional locations in 2002 and 2003. Four of these locations are in Colorado Springs with one in Castle Rock, Colorado. The company also operates four seasonal locations at the Sky Sox stadium, Air Force Academy, World Arena and a mobile store for street festivals and fairs.

Since 2003, the business has doubled in revenues and currently has over 50 employees. As business owner, the responsibilities include day to day management, sales and marketing, business development and funding of the business.

Ron has over 30 years of management experience dealing with sales and marketing, improving business operations, finance and accounting for small (less than \$1 million in revenues) to large (more than \$1 billion in revenues) companies.

His past business experience includes: Senior Manager of Ernst and Young Consulting, with clients in manufacturing, energy, health care and retail. He was also Vice President – Chief Financial Officer for a new business unit of Houston Industries that grew from start up to over \$500 million in revenues over 13 years. He professionally held a Certified Public Accountant license.

He belongs to the Greater Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC where is a member of the Small Business Advisory Council and Legislative Watch Council. Additional he is a member of the Rotary Club of the Broadmoor District, where he has served six Board of Directors.

##### Courtney Berg

Courtney Berg is a small business consultant specializing in human resources. She works with businesses up and down the front range of Colorado. Courtney has more than 28 years of human resources and operations management experience, with for-profit and not-for-profit companies ranging in size from a family-owned furniture store to a national insurance corporation. Her experience includes front-line supervision to executive level positions in both human resources and operations.

Courtney founded CourtSide Consulting to help educate business owners and managers and to collaborate with them in building human resources and management processes which increase the organization's overall effectiveness. Upon starting CourtSide, Courtney went to the North Metro SBDC for assistance in writing her business plan. Once she was on her feet, she began volunteering at the Denver Metro SBDC as a consultant.

In January 2005 she received her Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) designation from the HR Certification Institute/Society of Human Resource Management. In December 2008, Courtney was featured in a "How To Conduct Annual Employee Reviews" in Inc. Magazine. Courtney was also a 2009 Denver Business Journal "Outstanding Women In Business" nominee. She received the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce "Chamber Champion" award in the Spring of 2011. Courtney is the 2011-12 Denver Metro Chamber Leads Group Program Chairperson. Courtney has a BS in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management from the University of Northern Colorado.

### **Greg Diehl**

Greg Diehl earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Utah. He worked in the private sector as a business development and information technology contractor with a global consulting firm. Greg joined the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in 2002 where he currently manages the Department's small business programs.

### **Tony Gagliardi**

Tony Gagliardi has been the NFIB/Colorado State Director since 2005. Prior to joining NFIB Tony owned Tony Gagliardi and Associates, government-relations, consulting and lobbying firm for eight years, and has worked with Colorado small businesses and trade associations for over a decade to achieve their legislative goals at the state capitol. The challenge of being the voice of Colorado's small-business owners lured Mr. Gagliardi to his present position as state director for America's largest small-business advocacy organization, NFIB. In this job, which he refers to as the "ride of my life", he lobbies on behalf of the small-business owners, which includes constantly reminding policymakers that they are not smaller versions of big business, but have different difficulties in remaining solvent. Tony is a sought after speaker by various community and other business organizations. He has served on national boards for workforce development and health care. He is known for his humor and easy going nature when discussing current issues affecting small business and Colorado's political climate.

### **Joey Jenkins**

Joey Jenkins oversees the collection and reporting of statewide economic impact and individual center performance for the Colorado SBDC Network. Through impact collection, Jenkins gauges client satisfaction and conducts trend analysis to ensure the network is meeting and exceeding economic goals. He is responsible for statewide marketing efforts, center reviews and maintains the relevance of SBDC and small businesses resources, including the Business License Database.

Prior to joining the SBDC, Jenkins spent a year in the finance industry, working as a mutual and hedge fund accountant for ALPS Inc. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Colorado State University with a minor in business administration.

### **Pete LaBarre**

Pete LaBarre has been involved in numerous successful business ventures in real estate, food service, photography and video rentals. He and his wife Vicki are the owners of seven Denny's restaurants in four Colorado Communities two of which recently opened with the eighth breaking ground late this spring. He has worked in construction, as a city administrator and as a business analyst for the SBDC. Additionally Pete served six years active duty with the USAF and another 27 with the AF Reserve.

Pete earned both his undergraduate degree in Finance and MBA from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. He taught economics, business management, and statistics at a Pikes Peak Community College and was a guest lecturer at The Faculty of Economics at Masaryk University in the Czech Republic.

### **Greg Lopez**

Greg Lopez is the U.S. Small Business Administration's Colorado District Director. He is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of key economic initiatives and business development programs targeted to the Colorado small business community. After graduating from high school, Greg decided to seek a nomination to the United States Air Force Academy from his US Senator. Greg's dream was to become a fighter pilot.

While he was successful in being selected to attend a military academy, his disappointment was that he was selected to attend the US Naval Academy and not the Air Force Academy. Greg chose to enlist in the US Air Force. He served as a weapons specialist, programming and arming a wide range of ammunitions utilized by fighter aircrafts. While serving in the U.S. Air Force, Greg took advantage of the Veterans Education Assistance Program and earned his business degree. His tenure around jet engine noise left him with an 80% hearing loss in his right ear.

After leaving the military and marrying his wife, Lisa, Greg and Lisa moved to Colorado in 1988, and he started working for a major Wall Street investment firm offering financial services and products. In 1992, at the young age of 27, Greg was elected Mayor of Parker, Colorado. The Town of Parker is located in Douglas County which at the time had a minority population of less than 1%. Greg was able to mobilize the community on his behalf and beat the incumbent Mayor. Greg was Mayor of Parker from 1992 – 1996.

### **Dixie Malone**

Dixie Malone is the Business Specialist at the Denver Central Public Library. In this position she identifies business community needs, trends and library resource requirements. Dixie began working in the Central Branch of the Denver Public Library in 1995 as a Reference Librarian specializing in business and government documents. Prior to 1995, she worked in medical marketing and education at the Colorado Neurological Institute on the Swedish Medical Center campus. Her primary interests as a business librarian are helping the beginning entrepreneur and owners of small businesses find affordable business research solutions to aid in developing and lending credibility to their business and marketing plans. In 2012 Dixie and her colleagues conducted 350 of these sessions.

From 2000 to 2011, Dixie was part of the organizing committee for the very successful annual Small Business Resource Fair held at the Central Denver Public Library in partnership with the Colorado District SBA, the Colorado SBDC Network, the Colorado Office of Minority Business and Women's Office, and the Colorado Minority and Women Chambers' Coalition. For the last fifteen years she has been a monthly presenter at the SCORE monthly business workshops at the Denver District Small Business Administration. She also participates in programs about small business with area SBDC NxLevel classes, Mi Casa Resource Center for Women, the Rocky Mountain Microfinance Institute, and area community colleges, vocational schools and training programs.

Dixie is a third generation Coloradoan who received her B.A. after attending the University of Colorado at Boulder and at Denver. Her M.A. in Library and Information Management is from Emporia State University's "Emporia in the Rockies" Program. She is a 2003 graduate of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Foundation's "Leadership Denver," and the 2006 Colorado Business Committee for the Arts' "Leadership Arts." Her awards include the Small Business Administration Colorado District Director's "Diamond Award," and the Colorado State Library's "Community Relations Award of Merit."

### **Kelly Manning**

Kelly Manning oversees the operational management, strategic planning and financial planning of the Colorado SBDC Network, a \$3.5 million federal- and state-funded program. Under Manning's leadership and ability to manage change, the Colorado SBDC has successfully increased the assistance of jobs created/retained by 800 percent; increased capital formation obtained by clients by 275 percent; and increased the return on investment by more than 50 percent, proving the successfulness of Manning's ability to align her continually changing goals with statewide strategies.

Since Manning started with the Colorado SBDC in 2000, she has successfully moved the SBDC network to a performance-based program while implementing numerous initiatives to assist the growing needs of small business entrepreneurs, including programs, conferences and training for veterans, women, emerging industries and creative businesses.

Manning attended New Hampshire College School of Business and obtained a bachelor's degree in business administration. She also holds a master's degree in communication with a certificate in dispute resolution from the University of Denver.

### **Jon Maraschin**

Jon Maraschin is the Executive Director of the Business Incubator Center in Grand Junction, Colorado. The Business Incubator Center was founded in 1987 and is a 60,000 sq.ft. mixed-use campus which includes manufacturing and office space as well as a commercial kitchen. The Center hosts a Business Loan Fund and SBDC, as well as providing administration for the Enterprise Zone tax credit program. Working with approximately 500 clients annually and housing 50 companies on site, the Center is a vital part of economic development on the Western Slope of Colorado.

Jon was involved with the Incubator as a volunteer for over 6 years before becoming Director in 2011. Prior to joining the staff, Jon had a successful 15+ year commercial banker in Salt Lake City, Steamboat Springs and Grand Junction. Jon has worked in retail management, been involved in starting and operating small businesses, and has worked closely with a large variety of businesses over the years, helping them to achieve financial success. Jon, a Grand Valley native, is an Honorably Discharged US Navy Veteran and has a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Utah with an accounting emphasis.

### **Shelley McPherson**

Shelley McPherson, CEO of American Wiping Rags, established the business in Pueblo, Colorado, which is a woman, minority owned business. Shelley is a graduate of the SBDC Colorado Leading Edge Network. She is a descendant of the Navajo tribe from Huntington Beach, California. Raised to recycle, she decided in 2003 to start her own business in recyclable products, making a difference in the world. American Wiping Rags, Inc. is celebrating its 10 year anniversary this year. She managed a rag business at the age of 14 with her father. During her entrepreneurship, Shelley established a non-profit organization called AWR Cat Tails Rescue, in 2008. Recently, she opened a thrift store on behalf of the rescue, and also is known throughout the community as the "Rag Diva". She drives a Hot Rod Custom 1982 Chevy Van, otherwise known as the "Raggin Van". Hobbies she enjoys are snowboarding, traveling, scuba diving, reading, movies, and hanging out with her critters.

### **James Neubecker**

Jim is a lifelong union worker, an officer and activist in local and national union labor activities. Raised in Cleveland, Ohio, he served in the U.S. Air Force and began his career with Bell Aerospace. He joined the Cleveland Pipefitters Local Union and worked for Avery Engineering in management and supervision. Moving to Colorado in 1987, Jim joined Pipefitters Local 208, Denver, CO. He was senior union organizer, Colorado state representative for the pipe trade industries and advisor to the UA, the national association for plumbers and pipefitters. Jim serves on Colorado Workforce Development Council and Northern Colorado Labor Council.

### **Pat O'Brien**

Pat O'Brien is the market president for Guaranty Bank and Trust in Boulder, where he started in 2009. O'Brien began his banking career in 1983 as a credit analyst at Fidelity Bank of Denver and then worked for ten years with Colorado National Bank in Boulder. He was promoted to vice-president/loan manager for his last five years at the bank. In 1995, O'Brien joined Wells Fargo bank in Boulder as a team leader. He was promoted to senior vice-president in 2000. In 2007, O'Brien took on the additional role of community bank president with responsibilities for retail and business banking in Boulder, Broomfield and Longmont. In 2008, he was promoted to business area manager for Northern Colorado. O'Brien is committed to community involvement and has been active with the Boulder Chamber of Commerce, Boulder Area Buff Club, Boulder Economic Council, YMCA of Boulder Valley, I Have a Dream and the Longs Peak Boys Scout Council. O'Brien graduated from Western Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in marketing and finance, as well as a holder of a Master of Science degree in finance from the University of Colorado.

### **Jessie Ruiz, Jr.**

Jessie Ruiz, Jr. is a 1983 graduate from Chase County High School in Imperial, Nebraska and attended Chadron State College for two years. Mr. Ruiz has had many opportunities in his life time which include working in the corporate world in the area of Human Resource for many large companies such as Wal-Mart, Seaboard Foods, Pro-Health, and for the last four years with John Deere. In this latest role, he serves as Director of Human Resources & Public Relations for MV Equipment, LLC which is a one of the largest John Deere Dealers in Colorado with over 130 employees. This organization has five locations which are located in Yuma, Holyoke, Wray, Burlington and Sterling, Colorado. In March of 2009 Governor Ritter appointed Mr. Ruiz to the Colorado Workforce Development Counsel. On October 13<sup>th</sup> of 2011 he was reappointed by Governor Hickenlooper for another term which expires in September of 2014. Jessie serves on the Executive Committee of the CWDC and is the Chairman of the SECTOR Steering Committee. For the past two year, he has also served on the Rural Consortium Board as an Executive Committee member. For the past 12 years, he has also served on the local Eastern Colorado Workforce Investment Board on the Executive Committee and until recently, served as Vice Chair and Chairman. Jessie has also served on many local organizational boards such as the Chamber of Commerce, the City Planning Committee, the local Hospital Task Force Committee and also his local church; St. Patrick Catholic Church. He also serves on six college advisory boards in the states of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska. Jessie loves to meet people and loves sharing ideas as to how we can better our State.

### **Avram Saunders**

Avram Saunders presently serves as the President and CEO of Lightning Eliminators & Consultants, Inc. (LEC Global), a company based in Boulder, CO specializing in lightning protection and prevention products, solutions and services to over 60 countries crossing several industries. Over the past 35 years Avram Saunders has brought a wealth of business experience to his various endeavors. Mr. Saunders' versatile background as a lawyer, businessman and entrepreneur has contributed greatly to the projects he has been part of and has enabled success in the management, administration, financial analysis, negotiations, legal processes and review of corporate enterprises, small businesses and government agencies he has worked with.

Graduating in 1977 from Antioch School of Law, Mr. Saunders started his career in Washington D.C. in the government, legal and higher education sectors, working for such agencies as USHEW, the Neighborhood Legal Services Program, USHHS, in addition to being Assistant Dean of Administration at Antioch School of Law. Moving to Colorado in the late 1980's, he worked as Administrative Officer for the Department of Energy in Denver and began branching out into entrepreneurial endeavors in the 1990s focusing on Educational Resources, Medicine, and Real Estate leading him to his present position at LEC Global.