

2021 INNOVATION AWARDS PROGRAM



Promoting a Culture of Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Grand Prize (COVID-19 Category)

LARIMER COUNTY VIRTUAL FAIR

Louise Romero, Teah Romano, Ge Wyscarver, Laura Ames

The 2020 Larimer County Fair was canceled due to COVID-19, but the event team was not going to be stopped so they recreated the entire Fair as a virtual experience.

- They planned each experience, then created a daily schedule to play out over the original Fair dates on Facebook.
- They had interactive sessions, entertainment experiences, and showed 4H live.
- There was great interaction from the local community, especially parents with children at home seeking entertainment. It gave our residents the chance to enjoy the County Fair in a new format.
- The Virtual Fair was zero cost to Larimer County. We found local sponsors, entertainers performed for free, and the team worked on this during work time, as well as their own time.

The Ranch actually won two awards at the International Associations Fairs and Expos (IAFE) for this unique event. We won first place in the Budget Friendly Tactics category for creatively using promoter gifts as fair contest prizes and second place in the Sponsor Exposure category for sharing logos and supporting our major sponsors during the Virtual Fair on Facebook.

It was a wonderful experience for all of us who worked on it and we had over 25,000 views during the time we hosted Fair. Once the Fair started we only had positive responses, versus the negative ones we got about canceling the real Fair.

Grand Prize (Non-COVID-19 Category)

ECONOMIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Amanda Repella, Jacob Castillo, Adam Crowe

In 2019 and early 2020, a group of economic developers across Northern Colorado embarked on an innovative approach to collaborative, data-driven economic development led by Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development (EWD) and the City of Fort Collins. When Larimer County created its Economic Development Department, one goal was to build a hub of economic development related data expertise. This project demonstrates the maturation and realization of that goal.

The Northern Colorado Regional Economic Development Initiative (NoCoREDI) represents a network of EDOs and Chambers of Commerce across 35 communities in Northern Colorado. The project involved 13 organizations and 23 individual contributors across Larimer and Weld counties in a detailed and innovative process conducted over almost a year. NoCoREDI identified the importance of economic development professionals in the region to explore data, rather than outsourcing data analysis to a consultant.

EWD developed the tools to support regional collaboration which resulted in the Cluster Strategy Playbook, which primarily focuses on how the region and its individual communities can work both individually and together to strengthen local businesses and the cluster ecosystem. From this collaborative research, they were able to produce the first network map of industry interactions in Northern Colorado.

This innovative graphical representation of our region's business ecosystem is a powerful tool for sharing and explaining how the NoCo economy is unique within Colorado and the U.S. This shared understanding led to the development of focused strategies and tactics to enhance the economy of Northern Colorado and position the region to be more competitive in the years and decades ahead.