

# FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: CELEBRATING COLORADO'S GROWING NEURODIVERSITY MOVEMENT



On October 8, 2026, the Colorado Neurodiversity Chamber of Commerce (CNDCC) brought together business leaders, employers, neurodivergent professionals, entrepreneurs, and community partners at the Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance for our Neurodiversity Impact & Insights Luncheon.

It was an afternoon of celebration, reflection, and meaningful conversations about the future of neuroinclusion in Colorado. More importantly, it was an opportunity to demonstrate how far we've come, the impact we're making, and what becomes possible when businesses, organizations, and communities work together toward a shared vision.

**Our message was clear: Neuroinclusion isn't just the right thing to do. It's an economic and workforce priority, and Colorado has an opportunity to lead the way.**

# A CHAMBER ON THE RISE

**CNDCC Executive Director, Leslie Espinoza**, took attendees through the Chamber's journey, celebrating a year of remarkable growth and expanding influence.

Over the past year, our membership has grown from **148 to approximately 250 members**, welcoming nearly 100 new individuals and organizations into our community. Our reach has also expanded through four regional chapters serving Colorado, Boulder and Broomfield Counties, Denver, and Colorado Springs. But as Leslie emphasized, our work is about much more than growing membership.



It's about building a connected ecosystem where neurodivergent individuals can find opportunities, employers can access education and resources, entrepreneurs can grow their businesses, and community organizations can collaborate to address barriers. From employment and education to healthcare, housing, transportation, and public policy, these systems are interconnected. Creating lasting change means bringing the right people and organizations together.

**We're not simply building a larger Chamber. We're building a stronger network of opportunity for Colorado.**

## OUR WORKFORCE IMPACT

**Ellis Blevins, Chair of the CNDCC Workforce Committee**, showcasing the progress of our workforce initiatives. Our education and training efforts have grown significantly, from **44 trainings in 2025 to 82 Neurodiversity 101 and NeuroForward trainings in 2026**, in addition to conference presentations and panel discussions.

Through our NeuroForward program, we're helping employers move beyond understanding neurodiversity to implementing practical workplace changes.



**Early assessment results are encouraging:**

- **75% of participating organizations reported having either not begun discussing neuroinclusion** or having only a few informal practices in place before training.
- **100% of current post-assessment respondents reported feeling ready to implement changes** and leaving with practical strategies they could apply.

These early findings reinforce why employer education matters. Looking ahead, CNDCC is developing a Neuroinclusive Workplace Certification Program and a Preferred Provider Model to expand training opportunities across Colorado.

# BUILDING A STRONGER VOICE FOR NEURODIVERSITY

Another major milestone celebrated during the luncheon was the growing role in policy and advocacy.

**Vikki Ortiz, Chair of the CNDCC Policy Committee**, shared how the committee is being revitalized to create a stronger foundation for engagement. This work includes **tracking legislation, developing advocacy materials, identifying policy priorities, and building relationships with policymakers.**

The Chamber has also participated in Disability Rights Advocacy Day at the Colorado State Capitol, bringing the experiences and perspectives of neurodivergent Coloradans and businesses into conversations with legislators. Our approach is strictly nonpartisan and grounded in the belief that neurodiversity is both a human rights and economic issue.

As this work continues, we're inviting neurodivergent individuals, business leaders, HR professionals, and allies to help shape our advocacy priorities. Because meaningful policy change requires more than awareness. It requires a seat at the table and the voices of those most impacted.



## BUILDING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Growth creates opportunities, but it also requires strong leadership and a sustainable foundation.

**Dr. Amanda Kelly, CNDCC Co-Founder and Board Chair**, shared the Chamber's vision for its next chapter, emphasizing the importance of governance, stewardship, organizational development, and long-term sustainability.

As the Chamber expands its programs, partnerships, and statewide presence, our Board of Directors is focused on **building the infrastructure and leadership necessary to sustain that impact.**

The presentation also recognized a growing neurodiversity movement beyond Colorado, with other states developing similar chambers and initiatives. It's an exciting reminder that the work happening here has the potential to influence conversations and inspire action far beyond our state.

**Our vision is not simply to grow. It's to build an organization that continues creating meaningful opportunities for generations to come.**



# IMPACT PANEL: BUILDING COLORADO'S NEURODIVERSITY ECOSYSTEM



One of the most engaging parts of the afternoon was our Neurodiversity Insights Panel, bringing together three leaders with unique perspectives on employment, business, and community collaboration.

## Our panel featured:

- **Sindra Richards**, Founder of NeuroForte Strategies
- **Neil Brown**, Culture Business Partner at Blue Federal Credit Union
- **Dr. Jeff Sidders**, Statewide Strategic Employment Initiatives Lead with the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The conversation explored challenges across industries, opportunities to strengthen relationships, and how employers and community partners can move awareness into action. Attendees were also invited to participate in discussions at their tables, reflecting on two important questions:

*What role can you or your organization play in strengthening Colorado's neurodiversity ecosystem? And, how can we better connect and work together to remove barriers and create opportunity?*

**These conversations reinforced one of the Chamber's most important beliefs: No single organization can address these challenges alone. Our greatest impact comes through collaboration.**



## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

A special thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, **Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA)**; Gold Sponsors, **Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance** for hosting our event and **SSA Group** for sponsoring lunch; and **Craig Hospital** for providing complimentary Zoo admission for our guests.

We're also grateful to our Silver Sponsor, **CoBank**, and Table Sponsors, **Blue Federal Credit Union**, **Front Range Community College**, **SymphonicHCM**, and **Dr. Amanda Kelly**.

To our Board of Directors, committee leaders, ambassadors, volunteers, and everyone who helped make this event possible, thank you for your continued commitment to our mission!