



AGNC Economic Development Summit

Rifle, CO
August 26, 2025

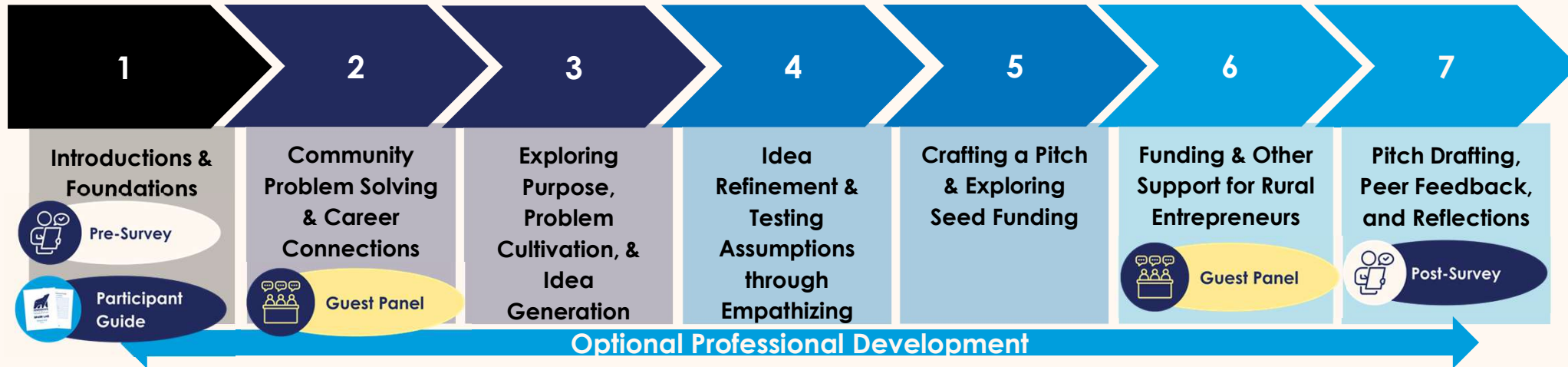
What is Spark Lab?

- A free pre-accelerator program designed for **young (age 14-19) entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs** with:
 - Active businesses,
 - Early business or nonprofit concepts,
 - Innovative ideas for an existing family business or employer
- The model focuses on exploring community challenges, refining their business concepts, identifying their “asks” and preparing a 2-minute pitch for the culminating “Pitch Event”.
- Implemented over the course of **7 separate 90-minute modules with approximately 11-25 hours of engagement time**, depending on Pitch Event participation.
- **Connects young entrepreneurs to other regional resources** for further developing their business.



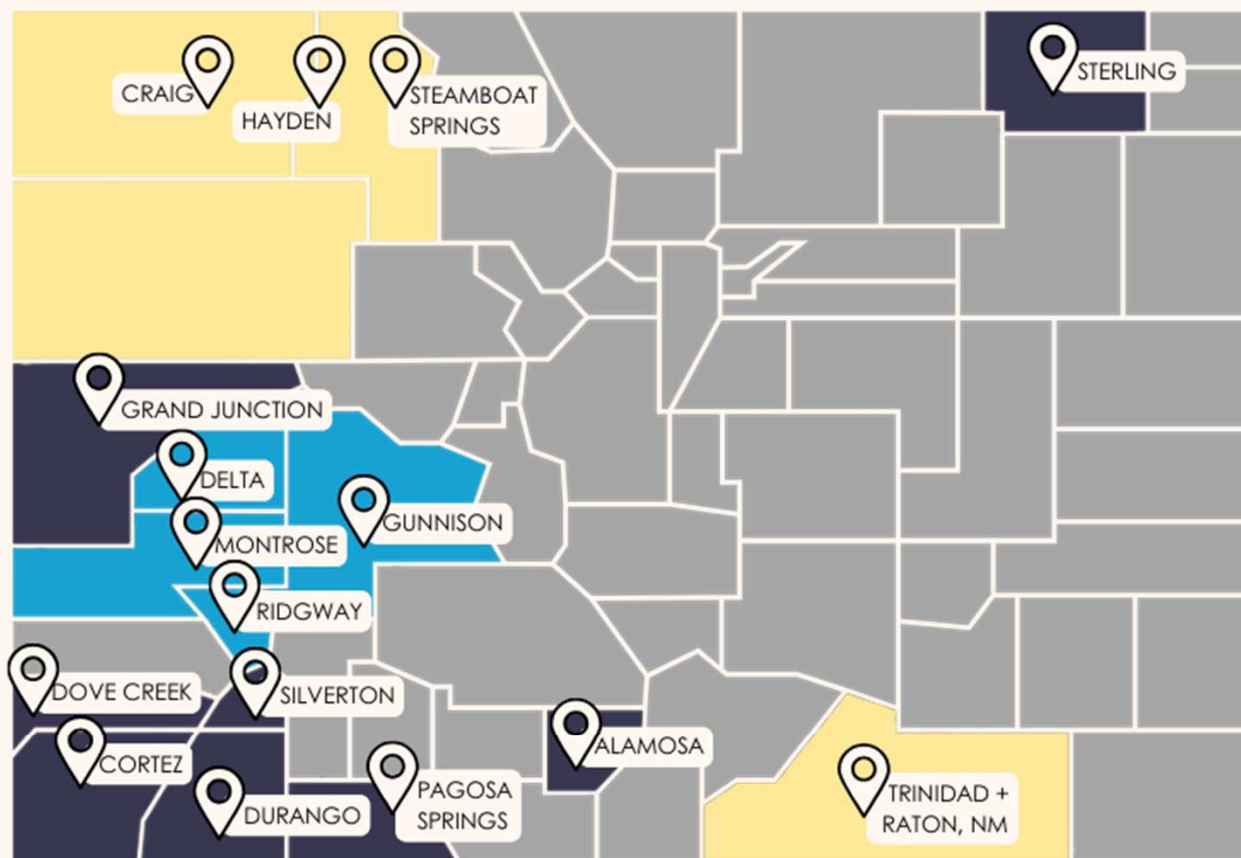
\$75,000 in direct seed funding to be provided to rural Colorado youth over the next 12 months through the Homegrown Pathways Youth Venture Fund.

Spark Lab 90-Minute Session Breakdown: 10.5+ hours



Spark Lab Pitch Event Opportunities: 8–15+ hours





2025-2026 FOOTPRINT

Confirmed: In-School

Confirmed: Out-of-School

Pending Capacity

\$75,000 in Seed Funding for Rural Colorado Youth

2024/25 Pilot: Pre and Post Survey Outcomes

Survey results from participants indicate improvement in **communication skills**, **confidence**, community **connectedness**, and **understanding of available resources** to support them in their entrepreneurial endeavors.



100%

Of Innovators shared that they would recommend Spark Lab to a friend.



100%

Said their Spark Lab experience advanced their business.



9.3

Average program rating by participants on a 1-10 scale.

"We have learned so much and met so many great people. I can say, without a doubt, I will take everything I have learned here and utilize it in my entrepreneurial life. **This program that you all have created is truly amazing.**"

- Luke (17), Spark Lab Participant

Pilot Launch: Pre → Post Survey Outcomes

100%

of participants shared that they are more likely to take action on a future business idea as a result of Spark Lab.

I have met with a network of funders.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I know how to get money to start my business.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I have built my own network of funders.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I know what resources are available to me to launch a business.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I believe I can add value to my community with my business.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I have peers who can support me with starting a business.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I know how to communicate my ideas clearly to an audience.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I know how my business idea can address a need in my community.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

YAMPA VALLEY SPARK LAB

- In partnership with YVPS3 & CNCC
- Open to youth ages 14-19 in Routt, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties
- Mileage Reimbursement & Busing available
- \$5,000+ in Seed Funding



YAMPA VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP
FOR STUDENTS
STEWARDSHIP
& SUSTAINABILITY



**Colorado
Northwestern**
Community College

SPARK LAB TIMELINE

PLANNING PERIOD

JULY 2025

ENROLLMENT PERIOD

SEPTEMBER 5-19

PITCH EVENT

DECEMBER 13

AUGUST 22

APPLICATION LIVE

OCTOBER 13

SPARK LAB BEGINS



CALLING ALL YAMPA VALLEY YOUTH AGES 14-19

WANTED: YOUR IDEAS

TURN YOUR IDEA INTO OPPORTUNITIES!
APPLY TO JOIN OUR **PRE-ACCELERATOR:**
SPARK LAB 7 IN-PERSON SESSIONS PLUS A PITCH EVENT!

WE NEED MORE YOUNG VISIONARIES LIKE YOU

Curious about what it takes to turn your big ideas into a business or nonprofit? In this pre-accelerator, you'll:

- learn the basics of intra- and entrepreneurship,
- build an awesome pitch,
- and present to receive seed funding!

ANY IDEA OR NO IDEA!
ALL ARE WELCOME!

Whether you have an idea related to sports, tech, non-profits, a product, something that helps your family's business or even **no idea at all—EVERYONE IS WELCOME!** Work alongside your peers, other creative minds, and **industry pros** to craft a vision or shape your existing idea into something that can truly take off.

SPARK LAB STARTS OCT 3

- 🕒 90-min meetups: **Every Friday 10-11:30AM from 10/3-11/14**
- 🎤 Culminating Pitch Event on **Saturday 12/13**
- 📍 Meetups held at CNCC Craig, CO
- 🚌 Long drive? We can cover travel costs!
- 🚌 Buses available from Hayden & Soroco schools pending need!
- 👥 1:1 Coaching for Pitch Preparation

FREE!
\$5,000+ IN SEED FUNDING FROM THE HOMEGROWN PATHWAYS YOUTH VENTURE FUND!
EVERY SPARK LAB PARTICIPANT GETS A PORTION TO LAUNCH THEIR IDEA.

ONLY 20 SLOTS AVAILABLE! LEARN MORE & APPLY BY 9/5

SCAN ME

www.homegrownpathways.org

PRESENTED BY
HOMEGROWN PATHWAYS
Empowering Rural Talent

YVP
QS3
YAMPA VALLEY PARTNERSHIP
FOR STUDENT
LEADERSHIP
& SUSTAINABILITY

Scan QR code below to visit Yampa Valley Spark Lab page & contribute directly to the Yampa Valley Spark Lab Seed Funding Pool.



homegrownpathways.org/spark-lab-yampa-apply



**GUNNISON
WATERSHED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Delta County
Joint School District 50J



Western Slope Schools

Career Collaborative

WSSCC Career Pathways

**Outdoor
Industry &
Tourism**

**Construction
Trades**

Healthcare

Homegrown Pathways is providing executive support to WSSCC as part of our shared commitment to rural economic mobility.

Homegrown Pathways To Guide Rural Pathways Strategy In \$125m Federally And State Funded Elevate Quantum Tech Hub

- Quantum technology is expected to revolutionize fields from healthcare to energy to national security – yet gaps persist in connecting rural learners and workers to these emerging opportunities.
- Design rural strategy to support pathways into existing advanced tech, manufacturing, and quantum-adjacent careers.
- Design a rural pathways model that can retain local talent and align with local workforce development goals and economic opportunity.



HOMEGROWN
PATHWAYS



Elevate

Quantum

RURAL YOUTH DRIVE INNOVATION.





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Colin@homegrownpathways.org

LinkedIn



[/company/homegrown
pathways](#)

Thank you!

**Learn More
about Spark Lab**



[www.homegrown
pathways.org/spark-lab](http://www.homegrown
pathways.org/spark-lab)

Highlighting Spark Lab Innovators from 2024/25 Pilot

Madeleine M. • Writer's Bloc

Writer's Bloc is a nonprofit creating a community where young writers can develop their skills, explore storytelling, and connect with peers through interactive workshops. Writer's Bloc was awarded \$650 to launch its pilot program this spring, supporting workshop preparations and student prizes to inspire and uplift young writers.



Monserrat P. • Swxxtcreations

Swxxtcreations, based in Olathe, CO, specializes in crafting custom-designed chocolate-covered strawberries and other unique desserts. Swxxtcreations received \$800 in seed funding in addition to \$600 awarded by the judging panel, allowing Monse to invest in essential tools, equipment, professional development, and marketing to expand her business. Follow on Instagram! [**@swxxtcreations**](#)



Neva H. • CareerMe

CareerMe from Ridgway, CO is a platform that helps companies efficiently recruit, hire, and train high school students for key internship roles. Homegrown Pathways awarded Neva \$800 to fund UI/UX design courses and cover an all-expenses-paid trip to West Slope Startup Week, where she will expand her network as Startup Colorado's Youth Ambassador.



Spark Lab Pilot Launch: Pitch Event



- **\$10,000+** in funding awarded at the culminating Pitch Event to support young, Western Slope entrepreneurs.
- Over 60 people in attendance from throughout the community including: educators, superintendents, chamber leaders, bank presidents, mayors, and venture capital representatives.
- Resounding praise and interest in future Spark Labs from audience, teachers and parents alike.



Morgridge
FAMILY FOUNDATION



ALT
SPACE



CITIZENS
STATE BANK



ROCKY MOUNTAIN STEEL



SAN JUAN TUFF
DEMOLITION



DELTA, MONTROSE & OURAY
PARTNERS
Mentoring Youth
WWW.PARTNERS-WEST.ORG



WSSCC



MESA
COUNTY



AmeriCorps



YAMPA VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP
FOR STUDENTS
STEWARDSHIP
IS SUSTAINABILITY



MCSD
Montrose County
School District

Spark Lab Pilot Launch: Winter 2024-25

Wide interest and enthusiasm throughout the region:

- 19 applicants in total - ages ranged from 14-23
 - Mix of out-of-school, public school, home school, and college students
 - 5 already had operating businesses
 - Participants came from 6 different towns, and 4 different counties
 - We hosted hybrid and in-person “meetups” at *Alt Space: Montrose* where both cohorts were able to interact together

ALT
SPACE

