



WELCOME CENTER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Welcome Center Partnership Program Policy Guide

Purpose

This policy guide will provide the details of the partnership roles and responsibilities between the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) and any center applying to be a partner location. Additionally, it describes the differences between a community partner and a regional partner so that locations understand the different requirements and benefits of each.

Visitor Services

Visitor service centers or welcome centers are designated to provide information and aid to current or potential tourists in a destination and its surrounding areas. The center acts as a main point of contact for tourists' travel planning inquiries and a place where local businesses and travel agencies can promote their experiences and services.

The Colorado Tourism Office strives to provide a platform for all visitor service centers and welcome centers to learn best practices and serve the guests of Colorado wherever they are. Through our Welcome Center Partnership Program, we are expanding beyond historical structures to offer resources, training, and networking opportunities to all visitor service partners.

About CTO's Welcome Center Program

The Colorado Tourism Board adopted a Welcome Center plan in October 1984 with the goals of the program to: "Enhance visitor experiences in Colorado, increase the visitors length of stay and increase tourism expenditures."

Welcome center programs are incredibly beneficial to enhance the visitor experience and promote traveler safety. Throughout the United States, tourism offices continue to find importance and relevance in visitor services programs. As an industry, visitor centers are the only human-touch point we have. The new Welcome Center Partnership Program is designed to provide opportunities and support for all welcome centers across the state. We are committed to creating a network among the visitor services sector and creating connections with all our partners.

This new partnership program provides centers with even more opportunities to collaborate with the CTO and peer centers. And, with a greater understanding and

connectivity of each center's operations and needs, the CTO can better serve each center within the program and further enhance the visitor experience.

For many years, the CTO has been approached by different locations who want to be a part of the visitor services program. There has never been a clear pathway, but now through our partnership program we can provide opportunities and support for all welcome centers across the state with a new method of categorizing centers based on similarities and operational needs.

The Value and Benefits

In Colorado, we are passionate about hospitality and the integral role visitor services play in enhancing the guest experience. The CTO is committed to pursuing new opportunities and avenues to strengthen our support for visitor services across the state. With this in mind, we are excited to announce the new Welcome Center Partnership Program. We are excited for these new categories to offer room for partners to explore creative and innovative ways to serve guests while focusing on specific location needs. These categories are meant to help both the partners and the CTO understand our requirements and expectations for participation in our program.

We understand, from the industry feedback provided in Spring 2024, that connection to other centers, resources for learning and technical support are important to our partners. We utilized this input in identifying the benefits CTO will provide and also identified what requirements are valuable to CTO. As we have interacted with partners, there is clarity around differing priorities for locations. For example, centers located along state borders and more dispersed areas have travelers with a further travel destination than centers located in highly trafficked tourism areas. This changes the guest interaction and needs from regional or even statewide information for some centers, to more granular and specific information requests in other locations.

How will the program work?

The following table provides a framework that will help determine which category best suits a particular center. However, additional criteria details are outlined on the following page. Once a partnership application has been submitted, the CTO will review it. Both the designated center and the CTO will be partners in fulfilling the obligations outlined below. Partners agree to scheduled and unscheduled site visits to their welcome center.

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OPERATING CRITERIA	REGIONAL PARTNERS	COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Building Ownership and Maintenance	Locally owned and operated	Locally owned and operated
	Local entities may request standard signage through CDOT	Local entities may request standard signage through CDOT
Location	Within 1 mile proximity of an interstate or a state highway	Within 3 mile proximity of local downtown area or visitor attraction
Staffing	Local entity is employer	Local entity is employer
Visitation & Reporting	Reports monthly visitation to state	Reports annual visitation to state
Hours of Operation	Open Year-Round (7-days/week summer)	Minimum 5-days/ week for 9 months/ year
Travel Information	Offers statewide information in addition to local information <i>(detailed info below)</i>	Offers primarily local information
	All locations carry the Official State Visitor Guide (OSVG)	
Benefits & Requirements	Eligible for specific scholarships to attend GovCon and the Visitors Services Summit	
	Eligible for Staff Engagement tools; Volunteer recognition program (ex. branded uniforms)	
	Access to CTO Brochure Database	Access to CTO Brochure Database
	All staff and volunteers complete Colorado Concierge	Manager completes Colorado Concierge
	Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit	Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit
	Invitation to Quarterly Visitor Services Connection Calls	Invitation to Quarterly Visitor Services Connection Calls
	Annual Care for Colorado Training	Annual Care for Colorado Training

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OPERATING CRITERIA	REGIONAL PARTNERS	COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Amenity Requirements	ADA Compliant (ada.gov)	
	On-site parking	
	Must have public restroom access	
	Cleanliness Standards (more details below)	Must have public restroom access
Branding	CTO Logo Affiliation Rights (brand requirements apply)	
	Access to promotional items for visitors when available	
	Receive Do Colorado Right Window Clings/Messaging	Access to Do Colorado Right materials
Marketing	Listed in the OSVG	
	Listed on welcome center maps (large map for visitors in centers)	
	Listed on colorado.com	Listed on colorado.com

Regional centers partner closely with the State of Colorado to promote broader state tourism. These locations promote at minimum tourism information for their entire region and may also promote statewide. The regional information should be at least twenty-five percent of the regional brochure database (information can also be accessed digitally if the center has a technology conduit for destination information). In exchange for upholding brand and service standards, these locations have eligibility for scholarships to the Governor’s conference on tourism, staff engagement tools and additional marketing opportunities. Regional centers are required to promote all of State tourism through the direction of CTO Visitor Services. Specific examples of benefits include, but are not limited to the following:

- All community partner benefits, **plus**
- Scholarship opportunities for Governor’s Conference on Tourism
- Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit (lodging and registration fees apply)
- Staff engagement tools and training as available

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- Additional marketing opportunities (such as occasional promotions), as available.
 - Use of CTO Logo (brand requirements will apply)

Regional centers should have a designated manager who is dedicated solely to the operations of that location. This can be a paid staff position or a volunteer manager.

Community centers are partners to the Tourism Office, but are more focused on in-market visitors. There is no requirement in this designation to have available literature that expands to the region or state. Through participation in the program, they will receive additional training opportunities, networking and information from destinations, as well as CTO branding opportunities. Community partners have discretion in what tourism areas they promote. Specific examples of benefits include, but are not limited to the following:

- Access to the Colorado Tourism Office brochure database for travel literature
- Receive regular newsletters from CTO dedicated to Visitor Services
- Quarterly connection calls for networking, training and/or certification purposes
 - Annual Care for Colorado training
- Dedicated networking opportunities at the Visitor Services Summit each year
- Access to CTO marketing portal and additional training on the CTO Learning Labs platform
- Eligible to join Care for Colorado Coalition
- Scholarship opportunities for Governor's Conference on Tourism
- Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit (lodging and registration fees apply)

Community centers would help stem statewide communication, collaboration and clear messaging throughout each potential visitor stop.

Any organization offering visitor services in Colorado that is not eligible for these partner opportunities, does have access to the following resources:

- Sign-up for regular newsletters from CTO dedicated to Visitor Services
- CTO Learning Labs platform

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- Colorado Concierge's training for frontline staff
- Attend the Governor's Conference on Tourism and Visitor Services Summit (lodging and registration fees apply)
- Access to [request OSVG and maps in bulk order for distribution](#)
- Any organization is invited to learn more about joining CTO's Care for Colorado Coalition

Partner Expectations

Additional Requirement Details for Welcome Center Program Partners

To provide detailed information accompanying the framework chart above. This provides clear roles and responsibilities for the CTO and for any partnering location. Additionally, locations that the Colorado Tourism Office collaborates with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) within rest areas that have State employees are listed.

REQUIREMENTS

Building Ownership & Maintenance

Community & Regional Partners

- Locations in this designation are owned and operated by local entities. Non-state ownership.

CDOT Partners

- Locations in this designation are owned and operated by the State of Colorado-Colorado Department of Transportation.
- Locations must comply with the Dark Sky Association.
- Locations must be maintained by interagency agreement between CDOT and CTO.

Highway Signage

Community & Regional Partners

- Locations in this designation are responsible for their own request for signage with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and any wayfinding signage related to the visitor/information/welcome center.
- The CTO will not provide or require specific signage.

CDOT Partners

- Highway signage for this designation is provided by CTO.

Center Location

Community Partners

- Locations in this designation are located within 3 miles of proximity of a local downtown area or a visitor attraction. (Example of visitor attraction: National Park Visitor Centers)

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Regional Partners

- Locations in this designation are located within 1 mile proximity of an exit off a federal interstate or a state highway.
- Partners who are within proximity of federal interstates or state highways, but who are primarily serving one attraction or destination will be considered a Community Partner.

CDOT Partners

- Locations within 1 mile proximity of an exit off a federal interstate.
- Location owned by CDOT and maintenance supported by CDOT Rest Area program.

Staffing

Community & Regional Partners

- Staffing is recruited, hired, and supervised by the local entities. CTO provides no financial compensation for staffing.
- CTO uniforms are not required, but logo usage is available for Regional partners.

CDOT Partners

- Staffing in CDOT partner locations are state-employed.
- Uniforms implemented by CTO are required to be worn at these locations.

Staff Training

Community Partners

- Managers are required to complete Colorado Concierge, Care for Colorado Training
- All other staff and volunteers are encouraged to participate in trainings.

Regional Partners

- All staff and volunteers are required to complete Colorado Concierge, Care for Colorado Training.

CDOT Partners

- Managers are required to attend CTO's Visitor Services Summit and GovCon annually.
- All staff and volunteers are required to complete Colorado Concierge and Care for Colorado Training.

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- Additional State required training(s) as employees (cybersecurity, accessibility, CORA, and as assigned by the SOC).

Reporting

Community Partners

- Report total annual guest visitation to the CTO.

Regional Partners

- Report monthly visitation to the CTO.

CDOT Partners

- Monthly visitation tracking.
- Market demographic tracking and email capture requirements.

Visitation

Community Partners

- No minimum required guest visitation.

Regional Partners

- Minimum guest visitation of 25,000 annually.

CDOT Partners

- Minimum guest visitation of 100,000 annually.

Hours of Operation

Community Partners

- Open a minimum of five days a week for at least nine months a year.

Regional Partners

- Open seven days a week throughout the summer months (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend).
- Open year round (major holiday exceptions) minimum of five days a week. No monthly closures.

CDOT Partners

- Open seven days a week in summer. Open year round (closed Sundays between November and April; major holiday exceptions).

Type of Available Tourism Information

Community Partners

- No minimum information requirement.
- Must carry the Official State Visitor Guide.

Regional Partners

- Must demonstrate at least ⅓ statewide information available (in addition to local information). CTO will provide a brochure list to support access to available literature.
- Must carry the Official State Visitor Guide.

CDOT Partners

- Must offer **all** statewide information as directed by CTO.
- Must carry the Official State Visitor Guide.
- Must carry the State map.

Amenities

Community Partners

- Must have public restroom access.

Regional Partners

- Must have public restroom access.
- The facility must be [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) compliant](#).
- Must adhere to [cleanliness standards](#) provided by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- On-site parking available. Parking does not have to include RV and Truck parking.

CDOT Partners

- Must have public restroom access.
 - Must have at minimum three restrooms adhering to HB23+1057 (amenities for all genders in public restrooms).
- The facility must be [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) compliant](#).
- Must adhere to [cleanliness standards](#) provided by the Center for Disease

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Control and Prevention (CDC).

- On-site parking available. Parking must include truck and RV parking.
- Complimentary coffee must be available.

Marketing & Branding Requirements

Community Partners

- CTO approval is not required for marketing, signage and branding materials displayed with exception to CTO owned-materials.
- Option to advertise local businesses and events.

Regional Partners

- CTO approval is not required for marketing, signage and branding materials displayed with exception to CTO owned-materials.
- Option to advertise local businesses and events.
- Required usage of Do Colorado Right signage and creative assets when they are available/applicable. These are provided by the CTO.

CDOT Partners

- All marketing, signage and branding elements within the center must be CTO-approved.
- Required usage of Do Colorado Right signage and creative assets.
- Welcome center digital advertising program is required (run by CTO marketing agencies).
- Required to utilize CTO brochure program policies and approvals.

BENEFITS

Staff Training

Community Partners

- Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit.
- All staff and volunteers will have access to the following annual training from CTO: Colorado Concierge and Care for Colorado.

Regional Partners

- Complimentary registration to Visitor Services Summit.

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- All staff and volunteers will have access to (and must complete) the following annual training from CTO: Colorado Concierge and Care for Colorado.
- Staff are eligible for a specific scholarship open to Regional Partners to attend the Governor's Conference on Tourism.

CDOT Partners

- Managers are required to attend CTO's Visitor Services Summit and the Governor's Conference on Tourism annually.
- All staff and volunteers are required to complete the following state training annually: Colorado Concierge, Care for Colorado, Inclusivity in Travel, and Crisis Communications.
- Additional State training as required and or assigned by SOC. Examples include cybersecurity and CORA training.

Additional Resources and Benefits

Community Partners

- Staff are eligible for a specific scholarship open to partners to attend the Governor's Conference on Tourism.
- Access to the CTO State-approved brochure database.
- Complimentary registration for Visitor Services Summit.
- Quarterly Visitor Services connection call invitation.

Regional Partners

- Staff are eligible for a specific scholarship open to partners to attend the Governor's Conference on Tourism.
- Complimentary registration for Visitor Services Summit.
- Access to the CTO State-approved brochure database
- Eligible for staff engagement tools when available from CTO. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - Volunteer appreciation program which is offered as milestone tokens for hours worked.
 - Campaign shirts for staff.
- Quarterly Visitor Services connection call invitation.

Marketing & Branding Resources

Community Partners

- Listed on colorado.com as a partner welcome center.
- Access to Do Colorado Right materials.

Regional Partners

- Listed on colorado.com as a partner welcome center.
- Listed in the OSVG. The deadline for the marketing team is August 1.
- Receive Do Colorado Right materials.
- Listed on large maps located within current welcome center locations. Access to the large map file for recreation, but fabrication is at the expense of the entity.
- CTO Logo affiliation rights (brand requirements do apply).
- Access to promotional items for visitors when available from CTO.

Application and Eligibility

Partnership period is fiscal year (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).

Annual applications are required.

Applications will be accepted on the [Office of International Trade and Economic Development website](#) when application periods are open.

Eligible Colorado Applicants include:

- Government entities in Colorado (state entities, local governments, and federally recognized tribes) engaged in direct operations of a visitor or welcome center.
- For-profit or Non-profit organizations that operate a visitor/welcome center. Including:
 - Destination Marketing/Management Organizations
 - Lodging tax boards, committees, or panels
- Other nonprofit tourism leadership organizations that are responsible for the visitor or welcome center on behalf of a destination such as:
 - Chambers of commerce or chamber resort associations

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Ineligible Applications include:

- Any organization operating a visitor/welcome center not located in Colorado.
- Individual attractions, museums or businesses that do not have a defined “Visitor/Welcome Center” within their organization.
 - Gift shops located within the museum with guest service information do not qualify as an individual visitor or welcome center.

Other considerations:

1. Only one application can be submitted for an individual destination, center or organization.
2. Welcome Center Partners who failed to fulfill the requirements within the past twelve (12) months may lose their designation for one year.