

June 13, 2025

TO: Mayor Jason Gray
Castle Rock Town Council
Dave Corliss, Town Manager

FROM: Lori Gerlits, President & CEO
Kris Brader, Board Chair



RE: 2026 Town Service Contract

The Castle Rock Chamber respectfully submits the funding request to the Town of Castle Rock for 2026. We greatly value our partnership and community collaboration. This request coincides with a special milestone as we proudly celebrate 70 years serving Castle Rock. We look forward to building on this legacy of impact with the Town to foster a vibrant community for residents and visitors alike.

We are requesting a modest increase of \$7,000 due to increased community attendance and engagement, rising costs, and competitive salary adjustments to support a high-performing team. This is the first increase request in two years to support Chamber programs and services. We have hosted 115 events YTD, anticipating 250 events through December 31, 2025 supporting local business, workforce development, and community connection.

The Chamber coordinates a multitude of services, programs and initiatives in the Castle Rock community. Many support both members and non-members throughout the Town and region.

Business Support Services

The Castle Rock Chamber's eXcelerate Business Development and Talent Pipeline DC programs remain committed to small business, employers, and economic development. These programs provide a wealth of education and resources encouraging development and growth of entrepreneurial activity in Castle Rock at little or no cost.

eXcelerate Business Development Program

- Professional Development training and major speaker events for business owners and their employees. Seminar topics and presenters vary on business related subjects for education and professional development, while networking opportunities are included for attendees.
- One-on-one business consulting with expert volunteer assistance. Business counseling services are referred to Castle Rock partners in Douglas County Libraries and the Small Business Development Center for resources, mentoring and support services..

Talent Pipeline DC – Workforce Development

- The Chamber leverages connections with local businesses and industries creating hands-on opportunities to support talent pipeline opportunities and create synergistic workforce initiatives. Our partnership with ACC/CSU/DCSD brings educators and employers together to help both understand future needs opportunities. Local employers are encouraged to offer scholarships, internships, and apprenticeships. We are exploring a potential relationship with the University of Colorado to expand in 2026, and over 30 pathways identified.

Leadership Douglas County Program. Leadership Douglas County (LDC) is a premier 10-month interactive program designed to identify, educate, and motivate current and emerging leaders who will strengthen and enhance a sustainable community. LDC celebrated its 25th anniversary last week, and all participants live or work in Castle Rock or Douglas County and are comprised of local businesses, nonprofit, and civic organizations. It is a staple of the region.

Community Marketing. The Chamber is dedicated to ensuring that residents and visitors experience Castle Rock as a vibrant and welcoming community, inspiring people to live, work, shop, dine, play, and stay. We actively promote local businesses and community activities that drive foot traffic, increase local spending, and foster civic engagement. By supporting our local community, we help fuel and strengthen Castle Rock's reputation as a premier destination for both business and culture.

The Visitor Center. The Visitor Center is an essential front door to Castle Rock for visitors, prospective residents, and local businesses. We staff the Center Monday through Friday for personal connection and provide resources and information such as Castle Rock maps, community guides for visitors and residents (printed materials), and hospitality recommendations for local restaurants, retail, and attractions driving traffic to local businesses and increasing sales tax revenues. Business referrals are supplied upon request. As an online resource, Visit Castle Rock is accessible 24/7 to the public. This is a tremendous opportunity for us to encourage visitors and the Castle Rock community to shop, dine, and experience local attractions and charm of Castle Rock.

VisitCastleRock.org. VisitCastleRock.org serves as a central hub to highlight community events, nightlife, historic tours, and recreational opportunities. This drives both resident engagement and visitor interest. It is also a valuable resource for those considering relocation to local experiences and services. Through ongoing cross-marketing with community partners, we are pursuing regional multi-media opportunities to further elevate Castle Rock's visibility and vitality. The site is open to the community to promote their public events. We proudly feature Town and DMA activities in collaboration with local partners.

Livability Magazine. Since 2009, we have partnered with *Livability* magazine to showcase Castle Rock's strengths and appeal through stunning photography, professionally written stories, and organizational promotions. This high-quality publication is distributed in print throughout the community and available in digital copy online. A few stats to share on Livability – over 400,000 online page views with digital availability; over 28,000 views in 2024; and 14,000 new users since 2023.

Chamber Social Media. Our efforts are to increase social media engagement with the community as a source for Chamber and community events, in addition to local government and business support.

Facebook Metrics - 2025 January - May
Reach – 134,076 Views
New followers – 213
Engagement – 21% Increase over same period 2024

Instagram Metrics – 2025 January - May
Reach – 21,929; increase from 16,099 in 2024
Follows – 68% increase over same period 2024

LinkedIn – 2025 January – May
Followers – 12% increase over same period 2024

Shop the Rock. Refreshed in Summer 2024. New resident packets through our Shop the Rock program are available online for convenience and continual enhancement. The Chamber will incur all costs to create and maintain the program including mailings to new residents.



Community events are a major component of the Town’s character and tourism identified by our residents, ranking highly in local surveys. We value our partnership with the Town of Castle Rock, Downtown Alliance, CRPD and CRFD as we strive to improve quality and visibility of all events featured in our community. The Chamber proudly hosts the following FREE events to the community:

The **Douglas County Fair Parade** was created to bring the business community together in promoting Castle Rock and supporting local businesses in collaboration with the Fair.

The **Colorado Artfest** is held downtown, support business sales and income supplemental to the event. 2025 is our 36th anniversary of this two-day event showcasing 120 artisans from across the United States and includes live entertainment and interactive activities for children and adults.

Starlighting has been managed by the Chamber since 1964. Over 39,000 residents and visitors attended in November 2024.

Below are anticipated metrics for 2025:

Community Event	2024 Dates	Approx. Attendance	Volunteer Hours Required @ \$35.48
DC Fair Parade	July 26	14,000	89 hours - \$3,157
Colorado Artfest	Sept 6/7	14,000	475 hours - \$16,853
Starlighting	November 23	39,500	456 hours - \$16,356

We remain committed to being a trusted partner to the Town of Castle Rock. With your continued support, we will further amplify the positive impact of our programs, driving business growth, community engagement, and long-term prosperity. Thank you for your service, time and consideration.

**2026 SERVICE ORGANIZATION
FUNDING APPLICATION**

ORGANIZATION REQUESTING FUNDING:

Castle Rock Chamber

I. 2026 FUNDING REQUEST *(Please use this form for this information and not another format.)*

Breakdown of funds *(For what specifically would monies from the Town be used?)*

Artfest	\$20,000
DC Fair Parade	\$12,500
Starlighting	\$22,000
Leadership Douglas County	\$7,500
Talent Pipeline DC/eXcelerate	\$23,000
Community Marketing	\$29,000
<u>Chamber and Visitor Center Operations</u>	<u>\$26,000</u>
 TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST	 <u>\$140,000</u>

II. 2026 PROJECTED ORGANIZATION BUDGET
(Please use this form for this information and not another format.)

2026 projected organizational budget
(Including funding from the Town) \$1,038,900

Projected sources of revenue

Chamber Membership	\$239,000
Chamber Events	\$155,800
Community Events	\$467,500
Chamber/Foundation Programs	\$114,200
<u>Other</u>	<u>\$62,400</u>
 TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	 <u>\$1,038,900</u>

Projected expenditures
(By major budget category)

Chamber Events including salaries	\$105,000
Community Events including salaries	\$218,000
Programs including salaries	\$95,300
G&A	\$240,600
<u>Other Salary / Benefits / Payroll Taxes</u>	<u>\$380,000</u>
 TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	 <u>\$1,038,900</u>

III. 2026 PROPOSED PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Please measurable performance objectives that your organization will strive to accomplish **in direct relationship to any funding and contract awarded by the Town.**

Business Engagement & Small Business Support Services

- **eXcelerate Professional Development Seminars** offer small business resources and education for business development through technology, marketing, branding, human resources, hiring, social media and more. Expanding program in 2026 from 8 programs to 12 in 2026. In addition, more than 40 hours of business counseling have been referred to our partners - a nearly 300% increase over prior year.
- Castle Rock premier **Jobs Board** is revitalized as a key web resource providing opportunities for Castle Rock and Douglas County businesses (members and non-members) to post job openings recruiting talent in the region and strengthening workforce initiatives. We are updating listings and efficiencies weekly for ease of reference and increased traffic. Postings have increased by 200% from 2024 total to first half 2025.

Talent Development

- **Tours for Teachers** – The Chamber led a highly successful **Tours for Teachers** program in 2024/2025 with increased engagement by DCSD. Tours will follow the Colorado Career Cluster Model for Career & Technical Education (CTE). We have doubled the number of programs since 2023, and increased connectivity with educators. In 2023/2024, participants came from 10 schools with 35 educators. In 2024/2025, 15 schools were represented with 5 Tours (four the prior year); 16 Industries represented. Increasing to 6 tours and higher participation.
- **NextGen Castle Rock** – A Young Professionals quarterly program available to members and non-members. The mission of NextGen CR is to aspire and influence the future of Castle Rock for current and next generations of professionals promoting innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship while preserving Castle Rock's unique charm, history, and character. Events are held at Castle Rock business locations supporting the local economy. Over 240 participants attended in 2024, trending upward in 2025.

Community Marketing & Engagement

- **Community Signature Events** – Manage, promote, and support the community through regional events including Sip & Savor, DC Fair Parade, Artfest, and Starlighting. 2026 goal is to increase visibility, attendance, and effectiveness of marketing efforts. 2024 and 2025 have recognized an increase of more than 11,000 attendees collectively at Signature Events increasing need for volunteers and staff support.
- **Leadership Douglas County** – LDC is committed to ensuring the continuity of knowledgeable and effective leadership in Douglas County. 2026 goal is to expand the program to be a competitive application/selection process of business owners, community partners and government officials. More than 470 have graduated since inception in 1999.

Hospitality and Tourism

- **Visitor Center / Shop the Rock** – Inform visitors, new residents and community members of all Castle Rock's charm, amenities, and community events in-person and online 24/7 at the

Chamber office. Social Media and web traffic trending increase in view year over year. January through May 2025 has already promoted 119 events for the Castle Rock Community.

- **Promote Tourism of Castle Rock** – Create communication, both virtual and print materials fostering Castle Rock as a thriving community. Resources include Livability Magazine, Castle Rock/Douglas County map, VisitCastleRock.org website, social media, new resident welcome packets, BeLOCAL, etc. Expanding reach and promotions in 2026 with local partners through print, digital, and multi-media advertising.

IV. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Chamber Contact:

Lori Gerlits, President & CEO

Castle Rock Chamber

420 Jerry Street, Castle Rock, CO 80104

lori@castlerock.org | O: 303-688-4597 | C: 720.363.7978

2025 Castle Rock Chamber Board of Directors

Board Chair	Kris	Brader	Farmers Insurance - Brader Agency
Chair Elect	Dawn	Gabriel	Authentic Connections Counseling
Treasurer	Steve	Peterson	Christian Brothers Automotive
Foundation Board Chair	Rob	Osborn	CORE Electric Cooperative
	Angel	Kelchen	Edward Jones
	Tom	Henley	Black Hills Energy
	Matt	Gal	AdventHealth
	Steve	Thayer	The Thayer Group - Keller Williams
	Jay	Egger	ACC - Sturm Collaboration Campus
	Hannah	Paille	Kokish, Goldmanis & Greenberg P.C
	Jason	Rauch	Canvas Credit Union
	Jacob	Peterson	Rocky Mountain Heating & Air Conditioning
	Mark	Blickenstaff	Moore Lumber & Hardware
	Alan	McDaniel	Farmers Insurance - Alan McDaniel Agency
	Katherine	Horning	Outlets at Castle Rock
	Lesley	Frohnhofer	Premier Members Credit Union
	John	De Lay	Pegasus Restaurant
	Mary	Anderson	Minuteman Press Castle Rock
Ex-Officio Member	Karah	Reygiers	Castle Rock EDC
	Dave	Corliss	Castle Rock Town Manager
	Ryan	Hollingshead	Castle Rock Council Member
	Kevin	Bracken	Castle Rock Council Member
	Lori	Gerlits	Castle Rock Chamber President/CEO