



# Visitor Services

The Visitor Services Program oversees 10 Colorado Welcome Centers, located primarily along major entry ways to the state and serving about 1 million visitors annually. Julesburg serves more than a third of all welcome center visitors, with Burlington and Fruita serving another third.

A 2017 study found the centers inspired about 22 percent of travelers to add more experiences to their Colorado trip, generating about \$23 million in traveler spending. With a Welcome Center budget of \$730,000, **that represents a return on investment of \$31.50 for every \$1 spent.**

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Colorado Welcome Centers is to drive travelers throughout the state and increase their activities, length of stay, and spending while visiting.

## Management Structure

Each Welcome Center falls under one of three management structures:

- CTO-OPERATED: The CTO provides direct oversight of the centers at Burlington and Fruita. Paid staff in these locations are CTO employees, and the buildings are owned and maintained as rest stops by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).
- CONTRACTUAL: The CTO provides financial support for five welcome centers under fee-for-service contracts with five different entities:
  - Sedgwick County manages the Julesburg center, which also is housed in a rest area owned by CDOT and maintained with CDOT funding.
  - City of Fort Collins/ Visit Fort Collins manages the Fort Collins center.
  - The City of Cortez contracts with Mesa Verde Country Visitor Information to run Cortez.
  - The City of Lamar operates the Lamar center from a former train depot.
  - As of August 1, Moffat County Economic Development will operate Dinosaur.
- MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA): Through an annual MOA, the CTO provides management and promotional support for centers in Alamosa, Silverthorne and Trinidad, but provides no direct financial contribution.

## Staffing

Colorado operates its welcome centers at a cost well below the national average, primarily due to the services of about 350 volunteer travel counselors. Each center has 1.5 paid staff, who are responsible for recruitment and training of volunteers. Many managers report increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers from rural communities.

## Brochure Distribution

Colorado Welcome Centers distribute maps and travel literature to visitors free of charge. Attractions, associations, destinations and other entities promoting visitation to Colorado can qualify through a CTO review process to have their materials displayed in the centers. Once approved, the only cost to the organization is for shipping the brochures to the centers.