

# HOW WE LEAD

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# DISCOVERING COLORADO'S CIVIC DNA



For years, our region has been studied by researchers, journalists and pundits trying to uncover our community's secret to success. We always knew we worked a little differently, but now we've put a name to it.

Starting in 2015, the Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation asked nearly 250 Colorado leaders and influencers—many of whom worked on some of our proudest achievements—what makes us different. Remarkably, they kept coming back to the same five keys to our success.

# 5 ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE COLORADO BETTER FOR ALL



1

**INCLUSIVITY:**

Anyone who wants to  
work with us is welcome

2

**COLLABORATION:**

We get more  
done together

3

**SHARED VISION:**

We're always asking,  
what's next?

5

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

We're proud to be here  
and we want to make  
Colorado even better

4

**LEADERSHIP:**

We give up power to  
get things done

Call it our competitive advantage.

Call it our secret sauce.

**We call it Colorado's Civic DNA.™**

Our leadership community identified and defined the most important attributes of Colorado's Civic DNA. To share them, we've used their own words and the insights that make them uniquely Colorado.



# 1

# INCLUSIVITY

## Anyone who wants to work with us is welcome

Newcomers are always surprised at how quickly they become part of this community. Inclusivity comes naturally to us here: If you're willing to roll up your sleeves and do the work, we want you to join us. We don't care where you come from, and you can check your title at the door.

We pride ourselves on being respectful and willing to listen, even if we don't agree. Like our frontier forebears, we believe everyone should have access to power and opportunity.



# 2

## COLLABORATION

### We get more done together

This is a barn-raising culture. When there's work to be done, we collaborate, especially when it's for the common good. While collaboration can be messy and unpredictable, it has raised a lot of barns here.

We care more about how things get done than who wins, and we have little tolerance for arrogance and self-interest.

We're open to compromise, but we like competition. We're pragmatic and we'll cross political boundaries when it benefits our community.





# 3

## SHARED VISION

We're always asking,  
what's next?

Colorado has always been a gateway, not a boundary. Those who live here think big. We take the long view and are always asking, what's next? We like bold thinking and outrageous goals—and we're willing to invest in things that may not pay off for years if it will improve the lives of our children and our quality of life.

In a place created by trailblazers, the pioneering spirit is alive and well. People are willing to take risks and are not afraid to fail. We have learned to approach problems with imagination, flexibility and courage.



# 4 LEADERSHIP

## Giving up power to get things done

We look for non-traditional leaders. Rather than imposing their authority, successful civic leaders in Colorado give up power to get things done. They don't take credit; they give it to others. They tend to be more pragmatic than political, and more inclusive than ideological.

Leadership is seen by many as a contribution to the community, not an individual pursuit. Coloradans want leaders who listen first and find common ground, but aren't afraid to act.

While that might not be politically prudent elsewhere, in Colorado it helps leaders build trust and engage people to support some of the most bold and innovative initiatives in the nation.





# 5 RESPONSIBILITY

We're proud to be in Colorado and want to make it even better

Most of us are here by choice, and that creates a unique sense of responsibility for each other and for the spectacular environment in which we live.

People feel great pride in this place—the rugged, natural beauty and the quality of life it provides—and they feel responsible for it.

Along with optimism, we have also inherited a healthy skepticism of big government, big business and insiders of any stripe. We care deeply about the future impact of our decisions, and we're not about to turn over responsibility to anyone who might undermine our exceptional way of life.





# HOW DO WE CARRY COLORADO'S CIVIC DNA INTO THE FUTURE?



In each of the Leadership Foundation's programs, we help emerging and experienced leaders develop the skills they need to keep Colorado's Civic DNA a dynamic force for the common good in our community, because as leaders we know we're never done learning about ourselves or the impact we can make.



We still have work to do. The Leadership Foundation will continue to engage people from across the state to hear how we're leading—and where we fall short. That way, we can ensure that inclusivity, collaboration, shared vision, leadership and responsibility continue to inspire future generations and make Colorado an even stronger community for all who live here.

