

Startup Colorado Connects Rural Entrepreneurs with Vital Resources to Support Them to Thrive

Startup Colorado partnered with Hivebrite to create a vibrant community to facilitate connections and communication in the rural entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Key Facts



1202 members in less than 2 years.



Invaluable understanding of rural entrepreneurs' needs and challenges.



A scalable and high-impact strategy to support rural entrepreneurs.



Meet the Customer

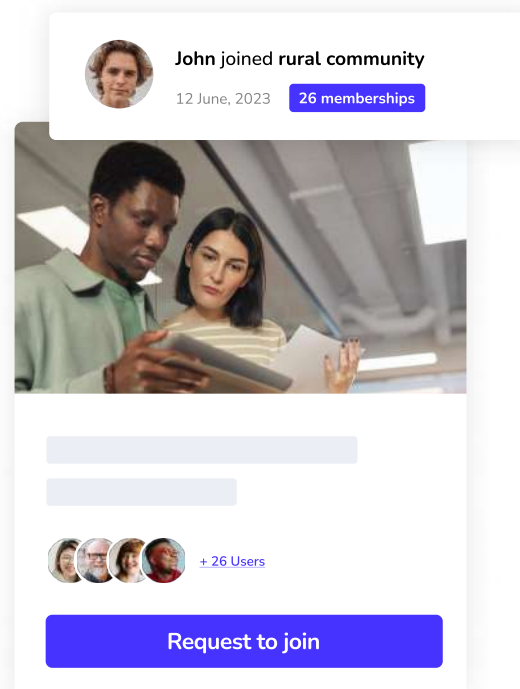
Startup Colorado is a non-profit organization, serving as the key connector between rural entrepreneurs and a robust state-wide network of human, social, and financial capital resources vital to starting and scaling businesses.



The Challenge

In cities known for their vibrant startup ecosystems, like Denver or Boulder, it's easy to find networking opportunities, business resources, or exposure to investors. By contrast, capital, connectivity, and resources can be hard to come by in rural areas—making the entrepreneurial road to success even harder. Previously, the Startup Colorado team drove thousands of miles across the state each year, visiting rural entrepreneurs and supporting entrepreneurial events. While these face-to-face meetings helped raise awareness about Startup Colorado's work and build trust, it was not a sustainable approach to driving impact at scale.

Startup Colorado began researching other ways to connect rural communities and entrepreneurs with each other, as well as with resources and funding opportunities essential to starting and growing a business.



The Solution

Startup Colorado partnered with Hivebrite to build the [Rural Entrepreneur Network](#). The community unites rural entrepreneurs, mentors, and funders in a fully-branded online space for networking and discussions. The community's searchable Resource Center and Funding Database centralize invaluable information to support entrepreneurial journeys.

Using Hivebrite's Communication and News Feed Modules, the team can share and highlight members' success stories and elevate the voices of rural entrepreneurs—both within the community and on external channels. Members can quickly search and connect with peers based on expertise, experience, industry, and location criteria. Virtual and physical events are organized using Hivebrite's Event Module.

The community also centralizes and promotes partner events within its community—to date 551 Startup Colorado and partner events have been published on the platform.

Community members have a variety of interests, skills, and requirements. The community offers 15 subgroups for targeted content, events, and support.

The team behind the community can also harness member profile data to create personalized communication campaigns to address the specific needs of each subsection of its audience.

The Outcome

Startup Colorado can now support entrepreneurs at scale no matter where they live, the size of their community, or their proximity to a city—all while saving the team time and increasing the reach of its initiatives. Since its launch just under two years ago, the community has grown to 1202 members, including entrepreneurs, mentors, business support organizations, and funders.

It's challenging to develop traditional metrics for ecosystem-building activities because Startup Colorado deals with intangibles and results that might not be revealed for several years. However, the insights provided by member profile data paired with growing engagement and access to resources in the Entrepreneur Network has enabled Startup Colorado to gain a comprehensive understanding of the state's rural entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The team is convinced of its online community's value in mitigating support gaps, dismantling silos, and eliminating barriers to empower rural entrepreneurs to thrive. In 2021, Startup Colorado ran two pilot programs for idea to early-stage entrepreneurs in rural Colorado. Participants were invited to build their businesses and provide feedback to others.

The team created a dedicated group for the program within its platform to foster regular check-ins and opportunities to comment, ask questions, and provide feedback. Twenty-four entrepreneurs from 18 industries participated and 13 businesses were taken from the idea stage to launch.



Project Manager

Full time - Remote



Launch of the new entrepreneur group!
3rd of June



Discover our members stories

“ For Startup Colorado, Hivebrite checked all the boxes. We’ve been able to develop engagement opportunities, a consolidated resource and funding database, and a robust storytelling program because of the features offered. On top of that, the customizable profile data has enabled us to learn more about our audience than ever before, which helps us serve them better. ”

Margaret Hedderman, Communications and Editorial Director, Startup Colorado

The End-User Experience

Robin Hall, a co-founder of the sustainable outdoor apparel brand for kids Town Hall, asked the Startup Colorado community a question about marketing her new business. She received 10 different responses, as well as several 1:1 meetings as a result.

“ I got more than an answer; I got a new toolbox. ”

Robin Hall, Co-founder of Town Hall