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**Local Lender Offers FIRE Program to Small Businesses Affected by Fires**

*Denver, Colorado, July 18, 2012* - Today nonprofit business lender Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF) announced an initiative to assist small businesses adversely impacted by fires in Larimer and El Paso counties.

CEF's Fire Impact Recovery Effort (FIRE) will partner with the Larimer County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to offer a series of free workshops to help attendees recover lost business by developing innovative marketing strategies to attract new customers. One-on-one business consulting sessions also will be available at the SBDC, also at no cost.

CEF also will offer reduced-rate FIRE loans with flexible qualification requirements for fire-impacted businesses seeking a micro loan to aid recovery.

CEF asks that FIRE workshop attendees have experienced at least a 10% reduction in sales due to Colorado fires.

"CEF always has provided special support services to our loan clients," said CEO Ceyl Prinster. "But in our last board meeting we decided we needed to respond quickly with a special lending program to help businesses hurt by the fires, as well as to provide advisory support whether they borrow money from us or not."

CEF staffer Robert Anderson, leading the FIRE program, said, "Any pressure on a small business calls for a creative and intelligent response. But these fires caused a drop in demand for many sectors of business all at once."

Disruptions of normal driving patterns and people staying inside to avoid bad air all around Larimer, El Paso and other Colorado counties caused a sizable downturn in traffic for thousands of consumer-driven businesses, Anderson said.

“When margins are already hair thin because of the slow recovery, any hit to weekly sales makes owners wonder how they can make the next payroll,” he said.

Prinster encouraged affected businesses to attend the free sessions at the SBDC on “guerrilla marketing” in order to learn methods on low-cost and creative marketing, designed for quick turnaround of sales.

Workshops begin on Friday, July 27, and are repeated on the next two Fridays (August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>). Sessions begin at 9:30 AM each day, and will be held at Larimer County Small Business Development Center facilities in downtown Ft. Collins. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis at [www.larimersbdc.org](http://www.larimersbdc.org) via the Workshops link.

Attendees will be able to sign up for personalized follow-up consulting assistance, provided by local small-business experts, at no cost.

Colorado Enterprise Fund is a nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI) whose mission is to fuel economic opportunity by providing financing and support to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Many small businesses not able to receive traditional bank financing get support through CEF by means of loans, guidance, and training. Investments by public, private and corporate sources, as well as institutions such as the US Small Business Administration, provide lending capital to CEF. With offices in Denver and Ft. Collins, information about CEF’s lending programs is available at [www.coloradoenterprisefund.org](http://www.coloradoenterprisefund.org) . CEF may be reached at [microloans@coloradoenterprisefund.org](mailto:microloans@coloradoenterprisefund.org) or (303) 860-0242.

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