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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Change in Rural Colorado Conversation: Innovation and Resiliency in the COVID Era

GREENWOOD VILLAGE, CO

Rural Colorado has always faced challenges in economic innovation and resiliency, but never more so than during the COVID era. Although cities were hit hardest first, now rural areas are proportionally suffering the worst impacts. Join us online **February 24 from 6 to 8 p.m.** for a community conversation that will explore the challenges and opportunities created by this public health crisis. Panelists will give short presentations about leveraging local and regional assets to maximize innovation and resiliency to generate inclusive growth in rural community economies. Their opening comments will be followed by discussion and audience Q&A. To learn more or register, visit coloradohumanities.org.

Featured panelists are Dr. Stephan Weiler, Elizabeth Garner, Kat Papenbrock, Dr. Michael Seman, and Greg Thomason.

Dr. Stephan Weiler is Professor of Economics at Colorado State University and Co-Director of the University's Regional Economic Development Institute. His current work focuses on regional economic growth and development, particularly in rural and inner-city areas, combining theoretical, empirical, and policy analyses on topics such as information, innovation, industrial restructuring, land use, public/private partnerships, immigration, entrepreneurship, gender, and the environment. He received his BA (Honors) in Economics and his MA in Development Economics from Stanford University in 1988, finishing with his Economics PhD from UC-Berkeley in 1994.

Elizabeth Garner is the State Demographer with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, an agency focused on strengthening the capacity of Colorado's communities. For over 25 years, Elizabeth has researched and discussed Colorado's population trends and their impacts, including aging in Colorado, characteristics of migration, and Census 2020. Elizabeth is an economist and received her B.A. in Business at the University of San Diego and her masters in Agricultural and Resource Economics at Colorado State University. Elizabeth was born and raised in Colorado, something only 43% of the state's population can claim.

Kat Papenbrock is the Rural Opportunity Representative for the Western Slope of Colorado for the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) where she represents, oversees, and executes projects to advance Colorado's rural communities. This work includes

managing the Rural Technical Assistance Program, coordinating rural strategy for their respective regions, working with other OEDIT offices including the Small Business Development Center, Minority Business Office and the Employee Ownership Network. Prior to joining OEDIT, Papenbrock served as the Executive Director for the Ouray Tourism Office.

Dr. Michael Seman is an assistant professor of arts management at Colorado State University. Michael's work examines issues in the creative economy and often focuses on how music ecosystems and regional growth intersect. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio, and regional media outlets often seek Michael's perspective and insights. His work is published in various academic journals, edited volumes, CityLab, and most recently by the Brookings Institution. Michael has also co-authored music strategies and creative economy reports for the City of Denver and the State of Colorado.

Greg Thomason has established collaborative partnerships across key government, industry and higher-education offices in the process of building sustainable economic development opportunities. He currently serves as the rural opportunity representative for Eastern Colorado with OEDIT. Prior to joining OEDIT, Greg was the executive director at Morgan County Economic Development Corporation where he advocated for workforce housing, new business development, and cultural inclusion.

Colorado Humanities is the only Colorado organization exclusively dedicated to supporting humanities education for adults and children statewide. Celebrating its 47th year and its 17th year as host for the Colorado Center for the Book, Colorado Humanities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress Center for the Book, the Smithsonian Institution, and the national award-winning educational nonprofit Motheread, Inc. Colorado Humanities works with partners throughout the state to design and implement programs that best meet each community's needs. Colorado Humanities' goals are to improve education, strengthen cultural institutions, and enrich community life by inspiring the people of Colorado to explore ideas and appreciate our diverse heritage.

To learn more or register, visit coloradohumanities.org or call 303.894.7951.

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