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The Colorado Resiliency Office is highlighting the work of local governments, organizations, and businesses who are adapting to the changing COVID-19 crisis.

City of Montrose

Chelsea Rosty is the Director of the Office of Business Innovation and Tourism for the City of Montrose where she oversees the city's business incentives program, Main Street program, and tourism. She sat down with the Colorado Resiliency Office to discuss how she is maintaining the relationships she has built between the local government and business community and what sorts of adaptations the City of Montrose is making in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following are several key takeaways from her interview:

Ms. Rosty first highlighted how the City of Montrose is **rapidly responding to business needs** through a [relief package for small businesses](#). The package includes cooperative marketing grants, sales tax deferral, and a small business emergency loan fund. The relief package emphasizes the “spirit of collaboration” since the cooperative marketing grant requires at least three businesses to partner together. Montrose quickly pivoted by reallocating funds for tourism to providing cooperative marketing



grants to local businesses working together.

Image Credit: City of Montrose/Chelsea Rosty

The City of Montrose has also worked as a **convener** by bringing together the school district, recreation district, and a local Jimmy John's franchise to provide meals for local children. The school district is providing meals Monday-Friday with the recreation district serving as the delivery operator. The recreation district is otherwise shut down while stay-at-home and safer-at-home orders are in effect. Jimmy John's reached out to the City to provide 100 meals for children over the weekend when the school district cannot provide food.

Ms. Rosty provided three best practices she thinks prepared her organization to respond adaptively to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Implement a framework that encourages fruitful collaboration between local government and the business community.** Rosty said every Colorado community should look into the Main Street Program or a similar framework that strongly encourages interaction between the local government and the business community. Montrose is part of the [Colorado Main Street Program](#) and uses it for all its business districts rather than just the downtown corridor. If communities are not interested in or eligible for the Main Street Program, Rosty recommends communities look at the framework it provides and replicate that on their own terms.
 - **Institute a formal or informal "open-door" policy.** In Montrose, this means that the City sets the expectation that employees are available to the public. They accomplish this by publishing their cell phone numbers and email addresses for the public to use - including the city manager. This means that the city manager or other government representatives often meet for coffee with residents to discuss ideas or hear feedback. She said it opened the door to better communication because having "a conversation with someone who's actually working in that industry or in that business and knows what [it's] all about" helps the city and business community accomplish goals together.
 - **Identify business "champions" in your community.** These leaders from Montrose serve as a resource for city officials for questions or concerns. The relationship works both ways as the champions and officials "work together to be an advocate for the city, but also to be an advocate for the businesses." Rosty noted that she puts a lot of effort toward relationship-building in her role, not knowing how those efforts would truly pay off until the COVID-19 crisis. Leaders in Montrose include the owners of local businesses like a distillery, restaurants, a pet food store, retail shops, and construction and manufacturing companies.
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