



Colorado Agricultural  
Leadership Program

# Connecting the Pieces of **CALP'S LEGACY**



# IMPACT REPORT

1983-2025

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*CALP Family and Friends,*

For more than forty years, CALP has brought together people, ideas, and experiences that shape Colorado agriculture. With every new class, each connection adds a new piece to our shared progress. Across the state, you can find CALP's thread woven through farms, water districts, boardrooms, classrooms, and communities. It's in the people who lead family operations, manage resources, shape policy, mentor others, and build businesses that keep Colorado's roots strong. Together, these threads form a network and an experience unlike any other.

The first-ever CALP Impact Report brings those pieces together. It tells a story of connection, growth, and ripple effects, showing how a two-year experience transforms into decades of leadership, innovation, and community impact.

**The outcomes are clear: CALP does more than develop leaders. It influences careers, strengthens operations, inspires collaboration, and builds the foundation for a thriving agricultural future. The bonds forged in seminars or in the bookends before and after sessions, continue in each of your own communities.**

I am deeply grateful to every Fellow, alumni, partner, and supporter who contributed to this effort. Your voices and stories reveal the true design of CALP, a program built on connection, purpose and the belief that leadership and agriculture are stronger when they fit together.

Thank you for being an essential piece of this legacy. I look forward to what we will build together in the next forty years.

With gratitude,



**DANI TRAEEK**

Executive Director  
Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program



Colorado Agricultural  
Leadership Program

## MISSION:

To develop leaders that will become a strong, unified voice for agricultural issues.

## THE CALP WHY:

To answer the call to create and nurture leadership skills of agricultural individuals through a hands-on, interactive program dedicated to producing graduates with the vision and commitment to lead change and ensure the sustainability of Colorado's agricultural economies and rural communities.

## SPECIAL THANKS



Colorado  
State  
University



# THE PIECES THAT STARTED IT ALL

The Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP) was built by leaders who believed Colorado agriculture needed a stronger, more united voice. From its earliest days under the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Council to its revival through industry and state partners, CALP's story is one of resilience, reinvention, and shared purpose.



Through change and growth, CALP class members, alumni, and board members have preserved the relationships and leadership that carry CALP forward (pictured: CALP Class 8/Carl Class 1).

## 1983 Colorado Agriculture Leadership Council is founded

Supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, agricultural leaders established the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Council to develop future leaders for the state's agricultural and rural sectors. The council became the founding structure for the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP).

## 1984 The First Class Launches

CALP welcomed its inaugural Fellows, creating a space for producers, agribusiness professionals, and community leaders to learn, connect, and grow.

## 2000 – Program Pause and Transition

Shifts in funding and program structure led to a temporary pause. Stakeholders used this time to evaluate how the program could evolve to meet new challenges in agriculture and rural development.

## 2002 – CALP Relaunches as CARL

The program resumed under Colorado State University as the Colorado Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program (CARL), during which CARL Classes 1–3 were inducted.

I've believed in CALP since I went through it. The program played a major role in shaping who I am today, and I've seen the same impact on leaders across classes. People go on to make a difference in business, public service, and government.

### JERRY SONNENBERG, CLASS 8

Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency - Colorado



Keeping CALP alive hasn't been easy. It's lived through public-private tensions, university pressures, and the burden of administration. But the seeds planted decades ago proved strong, and the program continues to shape leaders for Colorado agriculture.

### MARK FRASIER, CLASS 1

Manager, F Cross Cattle Company



## 2007 – Program Inactivity During the Recession

As Colorado and the nation faced the recession, institutional and funding challenges once again paused the program, though alumni and advocates continued to champion its importance.

## 2011 CARL Relaunches as CALP

Through the leadership of Jerry Sonnenberg and renewed collaboration with the Colorado Department of Agriculture and key industry partners, the program was revived as the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP) and restructured, preparing to recruit its next class.

## 2012 Recruiting a New Class

CALP officially resumes with Class 11, welcoming a new generation of leaders committed to strengthening Colorado's agriculture, communities, and economy.

## TODAY Continuing the Legacy

More than four decades later, CALP continues to connect people, ideas, and industries across Colorado.

# ASSEMBLING THE CALP EXPERIENCE

CALP is a two-year, experience-based journey that equips emerging leaders with the knowledge, relationships, and perspective needed to strengthen Colorado agriculture and rural communities. Fellows explore a variety of agriculture issues including political processes, board governance, fundraising, policy, and communications.

## CALP CURRICULUM

### PERSONAL PROJECTS

Designed to influence positive change within their home community or organization, every CALP Fellow completes a self-paced project. The experience builds on CALP's leadership principles in real time, challenging Fellows to identify a need, mobilize people and resources, and create measurable impact.

### SEMINARS

Fellows engage in a series of intensive seminars that form the core of their two-year journey with CALP. These seminars take participants across Colorado, lead them to Washington, D.C. and another state, and include an international study tour, exposing them to the full spectrum of agriculture around the globe. Each seminar is intentionally crafted to connect leadership, communication, policy, and production agriculture, challenging Fellows to expand their perspective, build meaningful relationships, and develop the skills required to become influential voices in their field.

“The CALP network provides a true statewide perspective. When issues arise, I can speak to different parts of agriculture and different regions of Colorado because of the connections CALP created. I utilize this quite often in my world.”

DUSTY JOHNSON, CLASS 14

Colorado State Representative



## COLORADO AGRICULTURE FORUM

Each year, CALP Fellows take the lead in producing the Colorado Agriculture Forum – a one-day event that brings together producers, industry leaders, policy-makers, and consumers to explore the issues shaping Colorado's second-largest economic driver. Fellows are responsible for every element of the event, from sponsorship development and program design to marketing, media outreach, and on-site execution.

## ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Building on CALP's growing alumni network, this component connects current Fellows with alumni, industry partners, and community leaders through seminars, regional tours, and statewide events. These experiences broaden Fellow's networks while fostering mentorship, collaboration, and applied leadership. The relationships and leadership capacity developed through CALP often lead alumni to continue their service, representing Colorado agriculture on local, state, and national boards and commissions.

“CALP draws in people from all over the state to participate in the program. The class members gain new perspectives by getting to see the different kinds of agriculture in the state. The seminars are critical in helping broaden their horizons.”

BOB MATTIVE, CLASS 11

Partner, Worley Family Farms



## EXPERIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

Up to  
**25 Fellows\***  
in Each Class

**11**  
Seminars

**48 Days**  
of Programming

**135+**  
Speakers

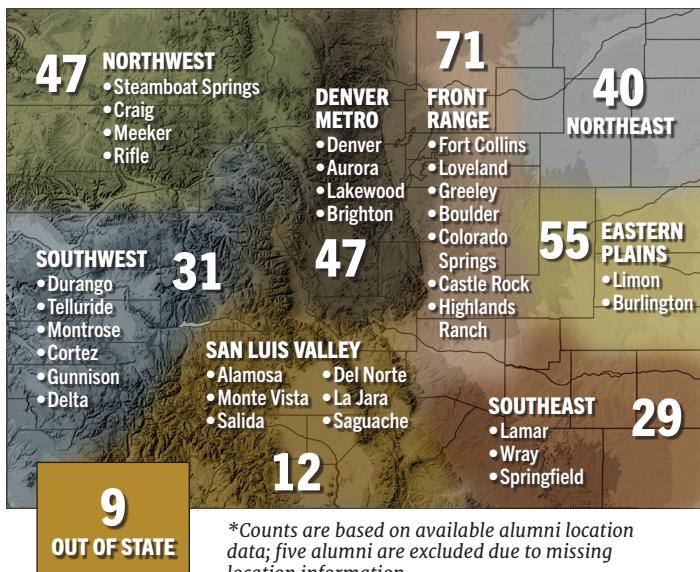
# DEFINING CALP'S IMPACT

The impact of CALP extends far beyond participation. Though Fellows experience visible growth throughout the two-year program, the full impact comes into focus over time. This report captures that continued influence through survey data, interviews, and reflections to demonstrate how CALP continues to strengthen leadership and advance the state's agricultural future.

## CALP REACH

16  
Classes

346  
Alumni



Certain leaders need to be woken up. They need to be told that they have talents. When leaders feel the impact of what they do, their confidence grows and the beneficiaries are many. CALP sharpens leaders' skills and removes the fear of stepping into the center of a conversation. The program wakes up the natural born leaders and enhances them.

**MARC ARNUSCH, CLASS 10**  
President, Marc Arnusch Farms



Travel Throughout  
**All Regions**  
of Colorado

## EXPERIENCE BY GEOGRAPHY

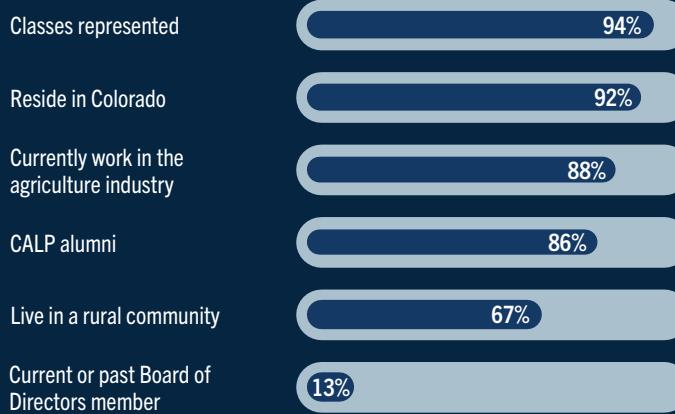
**Washington, D.C.**  
Seminar

## IMPACT STUDY FACTS

**88**  
Survey Respondents

**24**  
Interview Participants

### SURVEY RESPONDENTS



CALP's impact reveals itself over time. When you're in the middle of it, you don't always see how the pieces fit together. But after stepping back, you realize how every experience connects.

**MARCUS CATLIN, CLASS 16**  
Consultant



## INTERNATIONAL TOUR LOCATIONS



# CALP ELEVATES LEADERS AND CAREERS

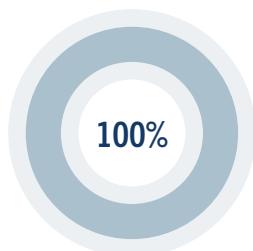
CALP answers the call to create and nurture leaders equipped to strengthen Colorado's agricultural economics and rural communities. Through a hands-on, interactive curriculum, Fellows develop essential leadership skills, confidence, and vision to lead change and ensure the sustainability of Colorado agriculture. For some, CALP accelerates career growth; for others, it inspires new directions in leadership and service.

## ENHANCING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

### 100% of alumni

agree that CALP:

- Increases ability to communicate effectively in representing agriculture
- Increases self-awareness as a leader
- Increases confidence as a leader
- Increases commitment to lifelong learning and development



**I** had expectations about what I was going to learn, but I had no idea that I would get to see myself in a different light. CALP Fellows learn a lot about themselves and how to stretch their skills. Most leaders might believe they have learned a lot already and just need polish. Through CALP, you realize that you have a lot to learn.

**SHARON KAUFFMAN, CLASS 14**  
Owner, Country Road Vines and Wines



## EXPANDING NETWORKS

### 100% of alumni

agree that CALP increases collaboration with other professionals in agriculture and rural communities



### 95% of alumni

agree that CALP increases access to mentoring relationships

**In** the past, you could survive by being a good producer. Today, survival depends on a strong network. Production still matters, but without engagement you'll struggle. CALP provides access to the kind of network that makes the difference. The diverse network helps fight isolation and fuel enthusiasm. When you're surrounded by others who share your passion, you cross-pollinate ideas and build a rich community that keeps agriculture strong.

**BRUCE TALBOTT, CLASS 3**  
Orchard/Vineyard Manager, Talbott's Mountain Gold



Fellows participate in media training at the Center for American Values.



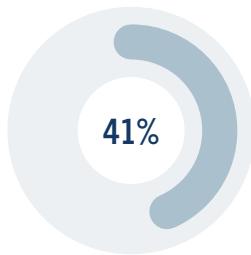
Members of Class 13 during a visit to Washington, D.C.

## GROWING CAREERS



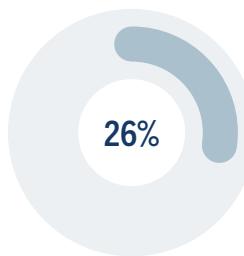
**92% of alumni**

state CALP increases entrepreneurial spirit



**41% of alumni**

state CALP changed their goals or future plans



**26% of alumni**

credit CALP for improving the economic standing of them and their family

“The relationships you build within your CALP class are invaluable. You connect with people you might never meet otherwise. In fact, one of my business ventures began through a partnership with a fellow class member. His skills complemented mine, and that collaboration was instrumental in launching Centennial Cuts.”

LUKE LARSON, CLASS 11

Founder, Centennial Cuts



## SEMINAR TOPICS IN LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

- Board governance
- Etiquette training
- Event production
- Framework for change
- Fundraising
- Listening skills
- Media training
- Motivational Theory
- Multiculturalism
- Personal, corporate, social and community ethics
- Presentation skills
- Public speaking
- Selfless service
- Seminar collaborations
- Social media training
- Team building
- Understanding different perspectives
- Vision
- Writing skills

“CALP was a practice ground for refining what I wanted to learn and the network I wanted to build. The experience gave me broader perspective and helped me hone my own voice. This empowered me to share and advocate more effectively for animal agriculture.”

**MARY KRAFT, CLASS 7**

Owner, Quail Ridge Dairy



## PERSONAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHT LAUNCHING FOOD CHAT

“My CALP project sparked the idea for a podcast to reconnect consumers with Colorado agriculture. What began as a small experiment has evolved into ‘Food Chat’, a nationally recognized podcast that continues to air years after my CALP experience. Today, it reaches more than 50,000 listeners in cities from Boston to Los Angeles, sharing producers’ stories and building meaningful bridges between agriculture and the public. I’ve even had the privilege of featuring several CALP alumni as guests.”

**GREG BLOOM, CLASS 12**

CEO, Barber's Foods, Inc.  
& Chief Foodie, Food Chat Podcast



# CALP UNITES COLORADO'S AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Through experiences that reach every corner of the state, CALP immerses Fellows in the full diversity of Colorado agriculture. By engaging with new environments and perspectives, they gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that shape the industry. This experience equips CALP leaders to bridge divides, foster collaboration, and connect every facet of Colorado's agricultural community.

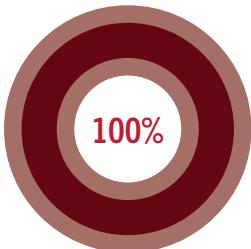


On Colorado's Western Slope, Class 14 explores a niche agricultural market at Sage Creations Organic Lavender Farm.

## 100% of alumni

agree that CALP increases the following:

- Knowledge of Colorado agriculture, agribusiness, and rural communities
- Ability to communicate effectively in representing agriculture
- Knowledge of policy issues impacting agriculture and rural Colorado communities
- Collaboration with other professionals in agriculture and rural communities



“CALP gave me the confidence to stand in the gap when agriculture was under attack. I learned we can't expect consumers to automatically care. We must meet them where they are, tell our stories, and show how what we do impacts them.”

TRAVIS GRANT, CLASS 15  
CEO, Colorado Livestock Association



## SEMINAR TOPICS IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ISSUES

- Agritourism
- Conservation easements and trusts
- Customs and international trade
- Education
- Food safety
- Globalization
- GMOs and biotechnology
- Hunting and landowners
- Immigration reform
- Micro/macro economics
- Negotiating the Farm Bill
- Niche markets
- Oil and gas
- Organic farming
- Production agriculture
- State, U.S. and other major political systems
- Urban farming
- Water

## UNITING THE INDUSTRY

“In our industry, we can't afford to be untrained or absent from the table. CALP equips leaders to strengthen Colorado agriculture, rural communities, and the state's economy. Until we see the full diversity of Colorado agriculture and understand one another's challenges, we can't move forward. This program gives agriculture leaders the license to cut across Colorado's divides – urban and rural, cultural and economic – and foster a deeper understanding of the state we share.”

TERRY SWANSON, CLASS 1  
Owner, Swanson Farms



**A**griculture is a contact sport. To be successful, you must engage in the conversations shaping our future – whether that's business, the environment, or policy. Impact comes from having the tools to listen, articulate where our industry is, and help chart the path to common ground. It takes patience, timing, and the ability to sequence change. CALP gives leaders these tools.

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#### BRAD WIND, CLASS 7

General Manager, Northern Water



## LEADING THE COLORADO AGRICULTURE FORUM

Each year, CALP Fellows orchestrate the Colorado Agriculture Forum – a dynamic one-day gathering that brings together hundreds of producers, policy-makers, educators and industry leaders from across the state and beyond. Centered on themes of innovation, global markets, and the future of Colorado agriculture, the Forum serves as a premier platform for thought leadership, networking, and industry advancement. Through their leadership in planning and execution, CALP Fellows not only strengthen their own professional skills but also elevate Colorado's agriculture ecosystem, making the Forum one of the state's most significant convenings for insight, connection, and action.



*Social influencer Michelle Miller, also known as 'The Farm Babe,' teaches farmers, ranchers, policymakers, educators, and students about cultivating connections between farmers and consumers at the 2025 Colorado Ag Forum.*



## PERSONAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHT PROTECTING COLORADO'S FRUIT INDUSTRY

As a CALP Fellow, Brant Harrison led an effort to combat the Japanese beetle infestation threatening Colorado's fruit industry. What began as his personal project in CALP united growers, researchers, and local leaders in an unprecedented success story.

“

**Boy, I'll remember that it became so successful as far as eradicating something of this magnitude and on this budget. That's unheard of,** Brant said.

His leadership protected Colorado's orchards and stands as a lasting example of CALP's impact on its leaders, Colorado, and the agriculture industry.

### IN MEMORY OF BRANT HARRISON

**C**ALP has kept Colorado agriculture in the game. The world is starving for leadership and agriculture is no exception. This program is invaluable for keeping the leadership pipeline strong and giving us the perspective to see agriculture across the state, nation, and globe. We then bring that knowledge home to strengthen our industry in our communities and state.

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#### CHRIS KRAFT, CLASS 4

President & CEO, Badger Creek Farm, Inc.  
& Owner, Quail Ridge Dairy



# CALP FUELS COMMUNITIES ACROSS COLORADO

During the two-year CALP experience, Fellows gain insight into how successful communities function and the challenges they face. After seminars conclude and travel bags are unpacked, CALP Fellows return home equipped to volunteer, lead boards, launch initiatives, and step into public service, applying their skills where trust, collaboration, and leadership are needed most.



## 71% of alumni

have become more engaged in their community because of CALP.



**55%** Volunteered for community organizations or charities

**29%** Ran for local office

**44%** Participated in state-wide boards or commissions

**15%** Served on higher education boards

**42%** Participated in grassroots advocacy or activism

**14%** Created a new community program or initiative

**35%** Served in state or national roles for their profession

**5%** Ran for state-wide office

CALP's impact runs quietly but deep. From mayors to state legislators, many leaders have come through the program. It creates the relationships and trust that help solve problems across Colorado. The state of Colorado owes CALP more than it realizes.

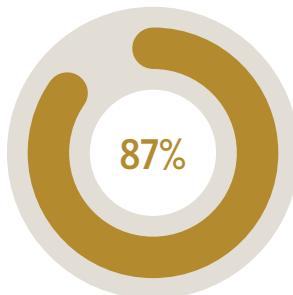
### ERIC WILKINSON, CLASS 5

Past General Manager of Northern Water, Retired



## 87% of alumni

report positively impacting their communities because of CALP.



## PERSONAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHT COMMUNITY FIRE TRUCK

Recognizing the challenges rural communities face with long fire response times, I turned a personal concern into a proactive solution through my personal CALP project. I purchased and restored a non-operational water truck, transforming it into a functional community fire-response vehicle. The project's purpose was not to replace local fire departments, but to serve as a first line of defense to help control fires during the critical minutes before emergency crews arrive. In its first year alone, the community truck has already been used to assist in active fire response.

### ANDREW HOLSTEN, CLASS 16

Owner/Operator, G and V Lindstrom Farms



I'm not sure I've seen anything in Colorado as powerful as CALP. It takes people with passion for agriculture, sharpens their skills, and sends them back to lead commodity groups, boards, and communities. It gives you the vision and confidence to succeed in new industries, start businesses, and serve your community. The program has elevated leaders across the state for decades.

### RANDY BLACH, CLASS 2

CEO, CattleFax



*"CALP equips rural leaders with the skills and confidence to engage through debate, public speaking, and firsthand exposure to the legislative process. It's one of the only programs in Colorado that truly prepares people to return home and be effective advocates for rural communities."*

### TRACEE BENTLEY, CLASS 11

President/CEO, Permian Strategic Partnership



CALP provides people the tools and confidence to be a voice for agriculture. Alumni take those skills back to their communities and serve on boards, advocate, and lead locally. Together, it creates a greater impact across Colorado. It's an honor to be part of a program with such prestige and influence.

### JORGIEA RAFTOPOULOS, CLASS 16

Rancher & Speech Language Pathologist,  
Moffat County School District



Through an annual effort, CALP Class 15 member Trevor Birk, mobilizes hundreds of volunteers to harvest and donate more than 100,000 ears of sweet corn to Colorado food banks.

## PERSONAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHT REVIVING "THE SPACE"

Recognizing a broader need for connection, creativity, and civic engagement, my CALP project led the revival of The Space. It is now a nonprofit arts and events center that serves as a vibrant community hub for learning and collaboration. Since reopening in 2024, The Space has welcomed more than 800 participants of all ages, offering programs in art, STEM, and professional development while empowering local artists through affordable teaching opportunities.

### SHELBY ROCKWELL, CLASS 16

Founder & Creative Director, Shelby K Marketing



# INVESTING IN COLORADO'S FUTURE

The influence of CALP continues to piece together long after each class completes the program. Alumni, partners, and friends of the program remain actively engaged, contributing their time, expertise, and perspective to strengthen Colorado agriculture and rural communities. This shared commitment sustains a network of leaders whose collaboration and service help ensure a vibrant and resilient future for Colorado's agricultural industry and communities throughout Colorado.



## 81% of alumni

Nominated or encouraged prospective Fellows to apply



## 74% of alumni

Advocated on behalf of the program



## 49% of alumni

Provided financial support in the form of donation or sponsorship



## 23% of alumni

Provided in-kind support



## 18% of alumni

Served or currently serves on the Board of Directors



## 13% of alumni

Have written letters of support

Supporting CALP is a no-brainer. You can't feed a nation or world without leadership and CALP develops grassroots leaders who strengthen agriculture from rural Colorado to urban centers. Imagine what CALP can deliver 50 years from now! 



Class 15 touring a barley hopper at Proximity Malt Company in Monte Vista, Colorado.

Investing in CALP pays off in unforgettable ways. You see parts of the world you'd never otherwise see, share cool experiences with great people, and build professional connections that last a lifetime. It's a perspective and community you simply can't get anywhere else. 

### DAVID BOWER, CLASS 14

Attorney, Johnson & Repucci



## 93% of alumni

Have supported CALP for five years or more.



Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program

### DANI TRAEEK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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