



## **Tom Johnson - Professional Biography**

Tom Johnson is a seasoned economic development professional and non-profit executive with over 20 years of experience. For the last six years, he has led Elevate Rapid City, a pioneering regional development corporation. As President and CEO, he raised over \$20 million to help position Rapid City as the 36th fastest-growing city in the US with several large new and existing expansion projects.

During his tenure, he oversaw the merger of a chamber of commerce, economic and workforce development organization, a business incubator, a pre-seed accelerator (WildFire Labs), and brought under Elevate's umbrella a state military development authority and non-profit foundation focused on housing, childcare, and workforce mobility.

Under Johnson's leadership, Elevate created and developed numerous innovative programs, including a micro-loan fund, an equity seed fund, a downtown façade loan program, and a leadership institute focused on managerial training for mid-level managers. He also established a market-based research and analytics center for businesses, monthly economic forecasts and indicators, and comprehensive workforce initiatives including entry-level soft-skills training, cultural competency training for employers, grants for child-care providers, and soft-skills training for entry-level workers. Additionally, Johnson was at the forefront of establishing an Innovation District in the downtown core with over \$30 million in urban renewal and development projects under the organization's control. Finally, he was a founding member of the Economic Development Professional's Association of South Dakota in 2020.

### **Previous Leadership Roles**

#### **Colorado State University - Director of Community Engagement & Economic Development**

Johnson managed CSU's economic and community development programs while providing workforce support for Colorado's efforts to recruit technology companies to the front range region. He oversaw several signature programs for the state, including CSU's multi-generational Family Leadership Institute and a market research center that provided sophisticated analytical tools for private and public decision makers across Colorado. He also worked to match CSU research and faculty expertise in areas like water, economic and community development, and ag tech with problems facing Colorado's ecosystem.

#### **Wyoming Business Council - Chief Performance Officer**

As the Chief Performance Officer for Wyoming's state economic development organization, Johnson managed five divisions and an annual budget exceeding \$70 million, including the State of Wyoming's Main Street Program. He successfully helped to recruit diverse businesses to the state, including a 500-person Lowe's distribution center, a Microsoft Data Center, and the corporate headquarters of Weatherby Firearms from California to Wyoming. Johnson also conducted comprehensive ROI analysis of all 68 of the state's community and economic development programs and structured numerous incentive packages designed to maximize taxpayer returns.

### **Additional Experience**

Johnson has served as a local and regional economic developer, where he developed a system helping rural communities use social network analysis and place identity to generate business and workforce prospects. His consulting work has spanned diverse projects including value-added beef processing, business valuation, and non-profit mergers and performance management. He holds a master's degree in finance & accounting from Regis University in Denver and a bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of Wyoming. He has also studied economic and community development at Penn State University.

### **Personal Interests**

Beyond his professional achievements, Johnson is an accomplished poet with hundreds of published works in literary journals over the past two decades. When not working or writing, he enjoys hiking with his wife and dog, and has the unusual habit of pondering discount rates while listening to true-crime podcasts.