

Through her leadership role at Second-61, Amber and her team provide back office services including bookkeeping, tax preparation, payroll, and consulting, to over 35 local businesses, including construction companies, restaurants, e-commerce, merchandisers, franchises, services, vendors, manufacturing, churches, ministries, government, non-profits, real estate, and many others. Amber recently relocated her team to Emergent Campus, at the Historic Florence High School. To learn more, visit <https://www.second-61.com/> and click "Get in Touch."

For someone who loved oil painting and horticulture, Amber Conover never thought she'd be spending the last 24 years immersed in bookkeeping. Amber spent her teenage years in college studying horticulture and painting whenever possible. She enjoyed working hard and was a successful greenhouse manager. "Every time I had a job, I was offered a management position and the opportunity to take over the business. At the time I didn't realize it was my aptitude for business principles, not just because I was a hard worker," said Amber. "Although working hard never hurts."

After moving from Colorado's front range to Fremont County, she quickly realized she would have greater opportunities by owning her own business, instead of working for someone else. Amber then started a trim carpentry business for residential homes. She really enjoyed the hands-on aspect of the work, but when the economy slowed down and she was offered a job at a tax and accounting office, she took it. "There wasn't much new construction going on and I was ready to start a family. Because of my history with bookkeeping and businesses management, it seemed like a good fit. Besides, being pregnant on a ladder with my nail gun in hand didn't paint the best safety picture," Amber quipped.

Amber continued to work at the accounting office for 15 years where she assisted with tax prep, bookkeeping, payroll, and audits for individuals, non-profit and for-profit businesses, as she continued running her own businesses.

Being a business owner and working with other business owners, she encountered some of the primary areas where a business would struggle to stay afloat and keep their doors open. "Whether the economy is at a high or a low, one of the biggest challenges, is to understand where your cash flow is. You need to be able to project and budget a worst-case scenario, expected scenario, best case scenario,

and be able to sleep at the end of the day. Having the upfront investment funds is key, but then you have to manage it well and determine where your profit leaks are, minimize those, and at the same time capitalize on your greatest profit margins.” She believes that far too many business owners are just trying to keep their bills paid and hope they keep making sales and periodically check to see if there is still money in the bank account. This can make it very difficult to make key decisions when necessary for the health and prosperity of their business.

Some business owners opt to do their own bookkeeping but to the expense of their personal time as well as possible expense due to their lack of knowledge in accounting. Some might decide to hire someone in house to handle bookkeeping, but this can also create additional overhead costs, due to the additional employee salary, therefore making it cost prohibitive. Amber believes that outsourcing bookkeeping and back office services can be a very viable solution that makes sense for small business owners and free them up to do what they do best.

When Amber became a tenant at FEDC TechSTART, she found herself working with a diverse group of entrepreneurs who were collaborative, and had a clear and strategic focus on revitalizing the local economy. She explains, “I had felt for far too long, we were becoming more globally minded economically and needed to bring it back to the heart and breath of the community, localizing it as much as possible and rebuilding our personal connections with one another.” She started working with Chris Koehn, founder of Second-61, who was also a tenant at TechSTART. The work she was doing for local businesses and non-profits paralleled the purpose of Second-61 and the ‘Rural Reboot’ project. Amber responds, “My biggest desire as a bookkeeper is to see a business be successful, because when they are successful, we are all successful. The people they employ are my neighbors, they have families, and those jobs are important. We want to build up, train up, and equip our local business owners, which will make our community stronger, add value back in, and give people hope.”

The recent challenge of COVID-19 has left scars on many in rural communities. There has been a tremendous shift in the economy, the

lasting impact of which is undetermined and far reaching. While globalization and urbanization have driven the world’s economy for the last four decades, COVID-19 will quickly reverse that trend as people move to remote working and lesser populated areas. Some may think a world that is less global and urban will isolate people and create instabilities. However, Amber believes that the opposite is true. This difficult challenge, which has created contractions in the urban market has offered a great opportunity to the rural market. She explains, “In the rural market, we still know who our neighbors are. Our kids play together, we see each other at the grocery store, we shop from each other’s stores and use each other’s services. We aren’t living on isolated islands; we are interconnected and that is the greatest advantage that we have.” It is Amber’s desire to see a community that is vested in each other and can continue doing the things they do best, which is serving one another at a fraction of the cost of the urban market. Instead of competing with a high cost of living, inflated overhead and operational expenses, the rural market and small business owner has the upper advantage. With greater flexibility and tenacity they are ready for the work at hand.

Amber Conover recently moved her office to Emergent Campus at the Historic Florence High School with the rest of the Second-61 team. They have hired new employees and are growing. She is excited to continue serving the local businesses and non-profits of Fremont County with bookkeeping and back office support. She is invested in the vision of revitalizing our rural economies and serving the needs that have risen from the evolving gaps from the instabilities of the urban market, globalization, and outsourcing overseas. Amber adds, “I would challenge all of us to step up to the plate and reclaim what has been lost along the way as we serve one another, and do it well.”

[Florence’s Emergent Campus becomes a hub for business opportunities \(Canon City Daily Record\)](#)

[Member of President Trump’s cabinet visits Florence’s Emergent Campus \(Canon City Daily Record\)](#)

[We Need To Strengthen Rural America If We Want To Unify Our Country \(Forbes\)](#)