

# Ranchlands

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## Colorado Springs, CO 80928

Ranchlands is a family-owned operation that specializes in ranch management and conservation. Its apprenticeship program is well-established, and has formalized to a multi-year management program over the last decade. Their work encompasses all of the sectors needed to run a successful ranching operation in the Southwest—livestock management, financial planning, as well as conservation-minded tourism.

Each apprentice starts at the main Chico Basin site, and is given a herd of cattle consisting of roughly 500 animals to manage throughout the duration of their tenure. The apprentice assumes entire responsibility for the herd, which requires the successful management of at least 80,000 acres. They are taught to monitor all aspects of a ranching ecosystem, ranging from the operation's finances to monitoring the complexity of the ranch's natural resources—the full understanding of which necessarily takes several years.

Ranchlands also provides general education opportunities to the community and school groups, and offers an internship program alongside its longer apprenticeship. Each intern commits to at least six months of ranching education, which may turn into a full-fledged apprenticeship experience.

### Program Summary

#### Type of Operation

For-profit ranching operation

#### Program Duration

2-6 years

#### Annual Graduates

About one every 1-2 years

#### Number of Staff

More than 5

#### Training Focus

Land and ecosystem management of ranching systems, financial management

#### Total Annual Cost

\$10,000-\$15,000

#### Major Funding Sources

Earned Revenue, each operation is self-sufficient

### Apprentice Demographics

Equally split between men and women, mid-20s with less than a year experience ranching

#### Qualities Sought

Craftiness and physical work ethic, new to ranching, fresh eyes

#### Most Common Outcome

Full-time ranch management



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## Top Successes

- Strengthening ranch industry by educating people who wouldn't have otherwise had opportunity
- Helping apprentices achieve their goals

## Top Challenges

- Natural attrition; finding and keeping quality people
- Lack of property to expand program

*What do you wish you'd known before you started?*

How to run ranches affordably and efficiently—it can be a slow process to become a successful manager

*What additional resources would be helpful as you look towards the future?*

Formal partnerships to formalize the apprenticeship even more; access to more property for long-term security

All apprentices receive direct guidance from Duke Phillips Jr., the son of Ranchlands' founder and current Chief Operating Officer. But because of the time commitment required, the apprenticeship program is largely cyclical, and features heavy involvement from past apprentices. Apprentices go on to manage their own ranch sites, and in turn mentor the up-and-coming apprentices. They hold formal check-ins and weekly meetings to ensure that the younger apprentices stay on track. Apprentices also have the responsibility to hire and manage all interns during their shorter program.

Ranchlands' self-sufficiency business model treats their apprentices like full-time employees, and pays them a livable stipend to acknowledge the serious commitment they have made. Underpinning this decision is the understanding that qualified ranch managers take time and patience to develop. The people that succeed in this program are truly committed to ranching as a way of life, and Ranchlands' primary goal is to teach an affordable management style that allows them to achieve their vision.

Ranchlands is truly a unique enterprise, complete with tightly-knit, dedicated staff. They have achieved a well-developed and thorough apprenticeship program, and hope to formalize it even more in the coming years. The organization promises work opportunities at the close of the apprenticeship program, the realization of which could be further supported by acquiring more land. This remains one of Ranchlands' limiting factors, and they hope to partner with larger institutions to create more land access and certification opportunities, all to strengthen the livelihoods of America's ranching communities.

