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ARIZONA DAILY STAR

June 25, 2006

Joseph Snell, who led economic developments in the Denver area for four years, was tapped by a nine-member board Friday to head Southern Arizona's new regional economic development entity.

The 41-year-old Snell was the board's unanimous choice as the first CEO and president of Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities Inc. (TREO), said interim president Steve Lynn.

A selection committee conducted a nationwide search and over a month and a half whittled a list of more than 90 applicants down to three: Snell; fellow Coloradan Thomas Flavin; and Kendall Bert, Tucson's economic development director since 1984.

Snell began his career in economic development in 1987 in Rio Rancho, N.M., moved on to the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce in 1989, then to Reno County, Kan., in 1991.

He led economic development efforts for the Northern Douglas County/Parker Area Economic Council in Colorado from 1995 to 1998, then became CEO of Metro Denver Network Inc. - one of the largest economic development corporations in North America.

Snell said one of the biggest strengths he brings to the job is a constant focus on coalition building.

"I have a sign in my office that reads, 'If they write it, they'll underwrite it,' " he said. "If you bring a lot of good minds together and get people involved in the process, they'll buy into it."