The Colorado Health Foundation™

Economic Opportunity



The Colorado Health Foundation believes that every Coloradan deserves access to the economic opportunities that foster health and well-being.

We envision a future where all Coloradans, including Coloradans of color and rural Coloradans living on low- to moderate-income, can meaningfully participate in the pathways required to successfully achieve economic

stability, security and independence.

Why It Matters

Economic well-being is an important social determinant of health. It influences many aspects of a person's life, such as the ability to afford housing, access to health care, food and more.

The historical legacy of racism in the U.S., that has led to a vast and widening racial wealth gap, and continued disinvestment in rural communities, has kept economic well-being out of reach for many low-to-moderate-income Coloradans. These individuals and families have some level of self-sufficiency and make too much money to qualify for public benefits , yet they still lack access to the economic opportunities that would allow them to acquire assets and build wealth over time so that future generations are in a better financial position than their parents.

Racial Wealth Gap

Centuries of institutional and systemic racism—including persistent wage and labor market discrimination—have resulted in major disparities in employment opportunities income and asset ownership between households of color and white households. For example, in Colorado, the average Black worker makes 34% less than their white counterparts, while Latinx and Native American workers make 38% less and 40% less, respectively. Additionally, households of color generate less passive income via homeownership, financial investments and business assets.

Disinvested Rural Communities

Rural communities have less access to economic opportunities than urban areas due to the concentration of businesses, government agencies, financial institutions, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions in urban areas. Consequently, low- and moderate-income rural Coloradans are at an economic disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts. Outside of a handful of resort communities concentrated on the I-70 corridor west of Denver, median household incomes in rural counties across the state are considerably lower due to this lack of investment.

How We Will Reach Our Vision

In addition to homeownership, which is addressed by our affordable housing priority, there are several ways to build wealth and reach economic well-being. Through the economic opportunity priority, we seek to increase income and business ownership among low-to-moderate-income Coloradans of color and rural Coloradans.

To reach our vision, our focus will be on changing the systems that maintain the status quo and shifting markets that have historically excluded Coloradans of color and rural Coloradans from accessing economic opportunities. This includes:

- Supporting pathways to income growth through quality jobs as well as workforce development opportunities that would help individuals to acquire, retain and advance in these positions
- Increasing access to capital and other supports to small businesses, particularly those owned by people of color and/or are located in rural communities
- Bolstering wealth transfer mechanisms, including small business acquisition and transition to employee ownership or through public programs that

transfer wealth to individuals and families

Resources

- Learn more about current open funding
- Access the latest information about Coloradans' perspectives on health through Pulse, the Colorado Health Foundation Poll
- Apply for our annual Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership Award
- Stay updated about our work by joining our mailing list

Program Officers



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