The Colorado Health Foundation™

Locally Focused Work

Focus Area: Support Community Solutions



At The Colorado Health Foundation, we believe in the transformative power of local communities.

Real change flourishes when led and driven by the very heart of the communities that need it the most. That’s why we have identified places across Colorado that

reflect some of the biggest disparities around health, income, geographic and other identities — and embody a sense of what's possible when communities themselves drive better health and opportunities for the people who live there.

We currently work in nine unique communities through this effort, which we call locally focused work (LFW).

Why It Matters

We've witnessed the staying power of locally generated ideas. These ideas are more likely to reflect a community's unique needs, but most importantly, they are more likely to be embraced by the community itself. Working locally in this way can help unlock power for groups that are often overlooked. Deeper engagement in these communities over an extended period of time also allows for building and sustaining relationships that can better foster and support enduring change.

We developed LFW to find ways of collaboration, leadership and idea generation that are authentic to a community's needs for the future, especially given the multitude of opportunities and challenges they face. Every community has its own features and characteristics that make it home for many. We also know that Colorado's communities are experiencing ongoing systemic challenges, including housing costs, mental health strain, health care costs, gun violence, crime and environmental worries, such as wildfires and other natural disasters.

Our 2023 Pulse public opinion poll revealed that more than 80% of Coloradans worry most about the cost of living and housing affordability, two

areas of concern that we can delve deeper into with our locally focused work.

How We Will Reach Our Vision

LFW involves cultivating relationships and nurturing promising ideas within these communities, amplifying voices that are and have been excluded, and advancing change to ultimately improve the health and well-being of communities. From individual community members to networks and coalitions, institutions and policymakers, we're engaging with local actors at all levels to help unlock and bring community-driven ideas to life. The core of our approach rests on three pivotal outcomes:

1. Cultivating leaders: We aim to empower community members to engage, lead and take action.

2. Strengthening coalitions and networks: Through local people, organizations and networks working together, we tackle health-related challenges.

3. Shifting institutions: Strong, responsive and inclusive institutions enact policies and systems that promote health.

Where We Work

We're currently engaged in this effort in nine Colorado communities. Each community has a dedicated **program officer (PO)** who is eager to meet with you, the community members, to better understand your perspectives and the local context. Whether sharing a cup of coffee, joining a meeting or taking a neighborhood walking tour, we're here to connect.

- Alamosa County
  PO: Tomas Gallegos
- City of Pueblo (Bessemer, East Pueblo and Hyde Park)
  PO: Show email
- Eagle County
  PO: Show email
- East Colfax Corridor (Northeast Denver/Northwest Aurora)
  PO: Show email
- Montrose County
  PO: Show email
- Morgan County
  PO: Show email
- Otero and Crowley Counties
  PO: Show email
- Rio Grande County
  PO: Show email

Resources And Opportunities

Community Building Through Shared Aims

Transform Your Community with a KaBOOM! Playground. Are you ready to make a tangible difference in your community with a KaBOOM! playground? Contact Sianna Simmon, our community outreach coordinator at KaBOOM!

Build Leadership Skills

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) is a leadership training partner with

LFW to enhance local leaders' capacity to improve their community's health through innovative problem-solving and collaboration. Individuals who participate will:

- Increase their self-awareness and improve their ability to work effectively with others
- Increase their ability to create innovative solutions to complex challenges
- Understand the dynamics of leading people through change within their communities or fields of practice

Insights From The Field

Read a series of blog posts written by our staff working locally in these communities. Gain deeper insights into the work we're doing and the impact we're making:

- Evolving Our Practice of Community Engagement, Jehan Benton-Clark
- The Space Around the "Yes" and the "No," Rose Green
- Who We Stand With and How We Show Up, Jehan Benton-Clark
- Recognizing What I Don't Know, Monique Johnson
- Walking into Communities with Open Eyes, Ears and Hearts, Chris Bui, Rose Green, Monique Johnson
- A Junction of Poverty and Opportunity, Charles Reese Jr.
- A Kaleidoscope of Possibilities: Addressing Health from a Local Perspective, Jehan Benton-Clark