The Colorado Health Foundation™



Transforming State Governance FAQ

Why Governmental Process Reform? What's The Background Of This Project?

Sometimes, it's not just *what* is within a bill that can impact Coloradans' health and well-being; it's also *how* the bill gets passed and implemented that can profoundly affect the policy's overall impact on equity and racial justice. Coloradans deserve to have the tools and opportunities to be heard in the decisions that impact them and to be healthy where they live. Still, it isn't always easy or straightforward to participate in the policymaking process in our state. It can be confusing to know where or how to be meaningfully involved, which can limit who can shape the dialogue on important issues throughout our state.

In 2020, we began to wonder if there were ways to make the overall process of policymaking more equitable and inclusive in Colorado's state government institutions. This curiosity has shaped and driven this advocacy ever since.

What Do You Expect To Accomplish Through This Work?

We do not have preconceived ideas of exactly what "should" happen as a result of this exploration. However, we hope to be an informed thought partner and collaborator advocating for important reforms that could make Colorado's policymaking process much more accessible to engage with. Why? We believe that a more inclusive set of voices participating throughout the policymaking

process will ultimately lead to more thoughtful, creative and responsive policies that bring health and well-being closer in reach.

How Does This Project Align With The Foundation's Commitment To Advancing Health Equity And Racial Justice In Colorado?

The essence of health equity is that everyone has the fair and just opportunity to pursue their highest levels of health. Yet we know that for many people, the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in shaping policy decisions – many of which directly impact their health and well-being – has been limited or intentionally suppressed.

Increasing transparency and accessibility within the legislative and rulemaking processes for more Coloradans is an essential step toward health equity – particularly for people of color, those living on low-income, or other marginalized groups in our state. By making each stage of the policymaking process easier to understand and access, we believe there can be a shift toward policies more connected to and representative of the rich array of people who call Colorado home.

Who Did You Talk To When Writing These Reports?

To develop a nuanced understanding of the policymaking process in Colorado's state government – both its strengths and areas for improvement – we knew we needed to listen to a wide range of people. We spoke to over 65 representatives from advocacy organizations, current and former legislators, current and former lobbyists, current and former legislative staff, local

government leaders, and various representatives from state agencies. We hosted multiple one-to-one and group follow-up conversations about this research with the key informants from the advocacy, legislative and state agency communities, including a feedback session at the 2023 Colorado Health Symposium.

I Have Ideas On How Colorado's Government Can Operate Better. Can I Be Interviewed?

We are always open to hearing thoughts and reflections on how Coloradans think state government could operate better. Please reach out to us at Show email to get in touch with one of our policy staff members.

Area(s)? Whose Input Did You Take Into Account When Making Decisions On How To Move This Work Forward?

After aggregating the recommendations we gleaned from the interviews, we assessed each suggestion with partners from across the policymaking ecosystem and began organizing them into different categories. These categories were influenced by the different approaches that may be necessary to implement some of these recommendations.

For example, some suggestions require a ballot initiative, legislative change or Constitutional update, which are actions that the Foundation is legally prohibited from participating in due to our tax status as a nonprofit private

foundation that cannot engage in lobbying activity. Some recommendations have funding implications. Others need additional research or legal analysis. In other words, every recommendation likely requires a slightly different approach tailored to a particular idea for reforming Colorado's policymaking processes. We work alongside and hold ourselves accountable to our partners in community to ensure that we do our best to move forward suggested reforms that would have the most significant potential for making policy decisions more inclusive, equitable and racially just.

How Do You Control Your Own Bias?

One of the ways we guard against this is by making sure that we are not operating in a silo. Having regular conversations with the advocacy community, state agencies, and the legislative branch about these recommendations helps us to pressure test our thinking about which suggestions would make meaningful changes. We believe that the best decisions are marked by transparency and collaboration and seek to honor this with every decision made along the way in this project.

Is The Research Sample Size Large Enough To Effectively Inform Changes To Colorado's State Government?

We interviewed 25 organizations engaging in policy advocacy, 19 individuals with experience in the legislature, and 17 with experience alongside or within state agencies and boards. We have also held follow-up individual and group conversations on this material with more than 100 people representing a wide

range of roles and lived experiences across the state. Despite this, we recognize that there is a lot of variation present from one nonprofit, state agency, or legislator to another. We do not view our research sample as *comprehensive* of this expected variation between practices and viewpoints. Still, there is strong evidence to support changes to how policymaking happens in Colorado. We welcome ongoing conversations to tailor recommendations to better support racial justice, equity and inclusion throughout the full policymaking lifecycle.

Is Anyone Else In Colorado Working On This?

While we have not encountered others conducting the exact type of research that we've been compiling on the topic of policymaking process reform, we have been excited to hear from many others throughout the state working toward many of the same goals identified in these reports. We are always eager to make more connections. If you or somebody you know is working on a project you think aligns, we'd love to hear about it! Please reach out to us at Show email to share more.

How Do You Plan To Partner With The Advocacy Community?

We know we can't do this work by ourselves. From the beginning, this project has been shaped by the wisdom and experiences of the advocacy community throughout Colorado. As we contemplate what the next phase of this work could look like – moving from research toward action – we plan to continue working alongside partners from the advocacy community to check our

assumptions, sharpen our thinking, and hold us accountable to our commitments to equity and racial justice.

How Do You Plan To Partner With State Agencies And The State Legislature?

Just as we know we cannot shape this work without the input of the advocacy community, we also recognize the vital importance of hearing from those who work on the “inside” of the legislative and executive spaces. We hope to work with members of state agencies and the state legislature in addition to the advocacy community with the goal of moving toward more equitable practices that will strengthen the important work in these governmental institutions.

If you are curious to learn more about our strategies for connecting with governmental officials, please contact Alexis Weightman, senior government affairs manager, at Show email.

Will The Foundation Create Grants Or Other Funding Opportunities To Support The Recommendations Included In The Reports?

The Foundation remains committed to supporting the work of advocates throughout the state. For those looking to expand their capacity and ability to engage in advocacy activities, we recommend checking out the Advancing Advocacy and Justice for Communities of Color grant opportunity with upcoming applications accepted in June 2024.

I’d Like To Learn More. How Do I Connect With A Member Of The Team Working On This Project?

We’d love to connect with you! Please reach out to us using Show email. One of our policy team members will be in touch with you soon.