



The Colorado Health Foundation™

## Locally Focused Work: Montrose County



At the Foundation, our community engagement approach is significantly enriched through our locally focused initiatives. We invest substantial time and effort in understanding individual communities. Montrose County is one of nine communities where we are deeply committed.

Our goal is to cultivate profound and meaningful relationships, connect with residents and support long-term efforts that prioritize community-informed,

collaborative solutions to health challenges.

Why local focus? We firmly believe that solutions generated at the local level are more likely to address the community's unique needs and drive lasting change.

## What We Do In Montrose County

Montrose County, located in Western Colorado, spans 2,243 square miles, encompassing a diverse landscape from the Uncompahgre Plateau to the towns of Olathe, Naturita, Nucla, Uravan and Paradox in the West End. The county has a population of approximately 41,000 residents and is known for its rich history in mining, agriculture and tourism. The Montrose Regional Airport serves as a gateway to popular destinations like Telluride, Ouray and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, attracting visitors with its Gold Medal waters for fly-fishing.

### Locally Focused Work

Montrose County has been a part of the Locally Focused Work program since 2020. The Colorado Health Foundation collaborates with local organizations, stakeholders and residents to address the community's unique challenges and opportunities. The focus includes building a diverse and inclusive economy, supporting health equity initiatives and fostering community engagement.

### Community Strategy

The Foundation's strategy in Montrose County involves building relationships, observing community dynamics and initiating early projects. Leadership training, playground builds and film screenings contribute to creating a foundation for positive change. Engaging with key organizations and

individuals, such as the Affordable Housing Coalition and the Hispanic Affairs Project, aligns with the goal of supporting solutions to health-related challenges.

### **Historical Significance**

Originally inhabited by Ute peoples, Montrose County emerged in the late 1800s as a non-Indigenous hub for servicing mining districts in Ouray and Telluride. In the next century, towns like Uravan played a significant role in developing the atomic bomb as part of the Manhattan Project during World War II. Today, the West End faces economic challenges, with a decline in mining and impacts on agriculture due to climate change.

### **Economic Dynamics**

While agriculture remains a key industry, the county's economy has diversified, supported by small businesses, tourism and the Montrose Regional Airport. The influx of residents and tourists has led to a transformation, impacting housing affordability and creating disparities among different segments of the population.

## **Get Involved**

If you have ideas about creating a healthier community or want to learn more about the Foundation, please email [Chris Bui](#), senior program officer, or call him at 303-953-7912.

## **Activities In Montrose County**

## **Foundation Inputs**

The Foundation has invested in Montrose County through grants and donations, supporting organizations like Montrose Memorial Hospital, the Region 10 League for Economic Assistance and Planning and the Growing Healthy Communities Coalition. Initiatives focus on increasing access to healthy food, advocating for equity and improving community engagement.

## **Areas of Focus**

Key areas of focus include affordable housing, community engagement and preserving cultural heritage. The Foundation aims to strengthen the Affordable Housing Coalition, improve community engagement with the Hispanic population and support the preservation of historic sites like La Morada in the Tortilla Flats neighborhood.

## **Resources**

[Sign up for our mailing list](#): Stay updated on upcoming publications, [funding opportunities](#) and events.

## **Program Officers**



**Chris Bui** Senior Program Officer