The Colorado Health Foundation™

Locally Focused Work: Otero and Crowley Counties



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.

Otero and Crowley counties are two 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 Otero And Crowley Counties

Overview

Our locally focused work in Otero and Crowley counties focuses on understanding the unique circumstances of these communities and tailoring our efforts to address their specific needs. The program aims to build momentum, establish relationships and identify areas of interest and energy in collaboration with community members.

Community Engagement

In the early stages of our work, we conducted exploratory site visits, initiated discussions around reconvening the 2021 Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Leadership on the Ground (LOG) cohort, and awarded grants to support local initiatives. Our engagement involves understanding the capacity of community organizers and exploring collaborative opportunities with regional partners.

Data and Research

To gain insights into the community, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews with residents, deliberately seeking perspectives often overlooked in traditional outreach efforts. These interviews provide a nuanced understanding of Otero and Crowley counties to inform our place-based approach and guide future initiatives.

Located in Southeast Colorado, Otero County spans 1,262 square miles, approximately twice the size of Denver. With just under 19,000 residents, the county is characterized by small cities and towns, including Fowler, Manzanola, Rocky Ford, Swink and La Junta, the largest city and county seat. Cheraw, a smaller town, lies 10 miles north of La Junta. Once home to Indigenous communities, Otero County was a significant trading point along the historic Santa Fe Trail.

Economic Landscape

Farming remains a cornerstone industry, with a historical focus on sugar beet production. While the sugar beet industry has declined, Otero County has diversified its agricultural products, including prized cantaloupes and watermelons around Rocky Ford, cattle, sorghum and a growing interest in hemp farming.

Demographics

Otero County reflects a diverse demographic, with a large Hispanic population of 42.5%. Both communities face challenges including an aging demographic, a declining population due to a lack of career opportunities and housing affordability concerns.

Get Involved

If you have ideas about creating a healthier community or want to learn more about the Foundation, please email Show email., program officer, or call him directly at 303-953-3657.

Activities In Otero And Crowley Counties

Grant Initiatives

Since the July 2022 Impact Report, we have awarded grants to various organizations, including Colorado State University Pueblo, to address nursing shortages in the region. These initiatives aim to support projects aligned with community needs and contribute to the overall well-being of Otero and Crowley counties.

Collaborative Initiatives

Our program collaborates with community stakeholders to explore opportunities for regional economic development and foster collaboration with neighboring counties. Examples of our commitment to building connections and promoting holistic community health include initiatives like the KABOOM! Building in Monte Vista and engaging with organizations like Rio Grande Prevention Partners and High Valley Community Center.

Resources

Sign up for our mailing list: Stay updated on upcoming publications, funding opportunities and events.

Program Officers



Charles Reese Jr. Program Officer