The Colorado Health Foundation™



A Year of Learning and Listening

A couple months ago, I was in Colorado Springs on a road trip visiting in the community. I spent a few hours at the Sand Creek Library, where I had the great honor of taking over story hour for the local 4-year-olds. The educator in me delighted in it, sitting with a group of children whose only objective in that moment was to hear a good story. Likewise, I tried to simply enjoy their interest. I tried to not get too far ahead by asking their parents if health is in reach for their families – especially with the young children sitting before me.

Like our program officers at the Colorado Health Foundation, I've been hitting the road the last few months to see, hear from and be in community more. I enjoy being on the road. Each trip reconfirms that our vision is critical to Coloradans having all they need to be healthy. We still have too many children and families who aren't set up in life to be successful. Too many teens and youth are vulnerable. Too many adults lack access and opportunity to live equitable lives. And, much of it is fixable or preventable.

While we've spent the last year learning a lot about what makes Colorado tick, we've learned a lot about ourselves too. We've made some changes to address what we're learning. We've implemented new practices and approaches to help us achieve the greatest impact. We're listening more intently than ever to better understand how Coloradans really experience life. And, when we're not on the road, we have equally important learning and listening to do back in the office.

Here's a recap of how all of this has been taking shape:

- **We made a deeper commitment to understanding what Colorado's communities need and have to offer.** Why? So we can be more thoughtful in our engagement and smarter about investing our resources. How are we

doing it? We've changed how our program staff work in community. They have new accountabilities for relationships and knowing what makes a community tick. Community engagement is now both a process *and* an outcome for us.

- **We are gaining clarity on how our focus areas can be organized for the most impact.** Why? Our current focus areas are big and vast. We don't have limitless resources, so we have to focus on how to tackle these big, intractable health issues. How are we doing it? By listening to community needs and understanding how our resources can address equity gaps in Colorado. Early next year, we anticipate being able to communicate much more about this.
- **We established an organizational commitment to learning a piece of the truth from every segment of Colorado.** Why? We want to eradicate health inequity – that's our value proposition to Colorado. How are we doing it? I believe every person has a piece of the truth, so we have to create opportunities to hear it. I often tell our staff that equity is the air we want to breathe. It's the lens we use in decision-making and an essential part of our internal operations when it comes to staff and culture.
- **We created a new vision for the Foundation that anchors us to individuals, families and communities.** Why? Our prior vision risked leaving out too many we need to reach. Our new vision is that across Colorado, *each of us* can say: "*We* have all we need to live healthy lives". This new vision shows who we serve, connotes the value set we bring to the work and a judgement we bring that inequity is wrong.
- **Even with all the "new," there are core types of work we always engage in.** Indeed, we have continued making grants, engaging in advocacy and policy work, speaking out on equity issues and convening people around complex issues and discourse that is essential to addressing health inequity.

What’s next? We want to thank Colorado and our partners for another great year of improving health. We want to thank you for your perspectives and insights. We want to thank you for believing in our vision and letting us join the tables you’ve set. We’re looking forward to the future and all it brings. To each of you, we wish you happy holidays and a healthy New Year.

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