The Colorado Health Foundation™



Sharing Our Refined Strategy for How We Work

About two years ago, I was brand new in my role as President and CEO of the Colorado Health Foundation. I was also in the midst of a whirlwind listening tour of Colorado. We went to every corner of the state to learn about what being healthy means to Coloradans. What we heard changed us. And we want to share the impact, scope and scale of that change with you.

Then, and now, in every community – and in every conversation I have – we hear one thing over and over: that having health in reach means something different for every Coloradan.

Why is this? It's a pretty simple answer with a not-so-simple solution: Not all of us have the same opportunities to be healthy.

We believe that health equity exists when there are no unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, unjust or systemically-caused differences in health status. Where you live matters. Racial injustice matters. Financial and socioeconomic status matters. Toxic stress matters. Access to safe and affordable neighborhoods and homes matters.

So we needed to do something about that. Early last year, we announced a new strategic focus designed for more impact. We spent time digging deep into how that focus should take shape, and we're now ready to share with you more detail and some refinements to our strategy.

We also got specific about what is foundational to both our work and expected of the partners we seek. We call these our cornerstones.

A cornerstone is defined as "an important quality or feature on which a particular thing depends or is based." Ours are designed to help ensure that all we do has an

impact on the people, families and communities in our state who need it most.

Our cornerstones make clear that we only engage in opportunities that:

1. Serve Coloradans who are low income and/or have historically had less power or privilege;
2. Intend to create health equity; and
3. Are informed by the community and those we exist to serve.

Our updated strategic framework is focused on strengthening bodies, minds and communities in the fight for health equity. This strategy keeps equity at the heart of our work, because without it, we will not achieve our vision.

Our focus areas are now organized to:

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  Maintain Healthy Bodies: Having access to comprehensive primary care and ample opportunities to be active are two important building blocks to a healthy life. We are working to ensure that all Coloradans have access to high-quality, comprehensive primary care when and where they need it and that children can be active in a safe and fun way every day.

  Read more about the priorities in this focus area, including **Primary Care** and **Children Move More.**

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  Nurture Healthy Minds: We understand the urgency of providing

Coloradans – of every age – with the resources they need to support mental and social well-being. We are addressing the behavioral health needs of our state by fostering the social-emotional development of children, equipping teens and young adults with resiliency skills, and giving adults – with mental health disorders and substance abuse challenges – continued support on their recovery journey.

Read more about the priorities in this focus area, including **Early Childhood Social-Emotional Development, Teen and Young Adult Resiliency** and **Adult Recovery.**

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Strengthen Community Health: We believe communities deserve the opportunity to elevate their strengths and solve for challenges alongside partners who show up and understand the issues they face. By partnering with communities as they identify and tackle health-related challenges, and investing in quality food and affordable housing, we are creating a foundation for which communities can develop locally-specific solutions that lead to health equity.

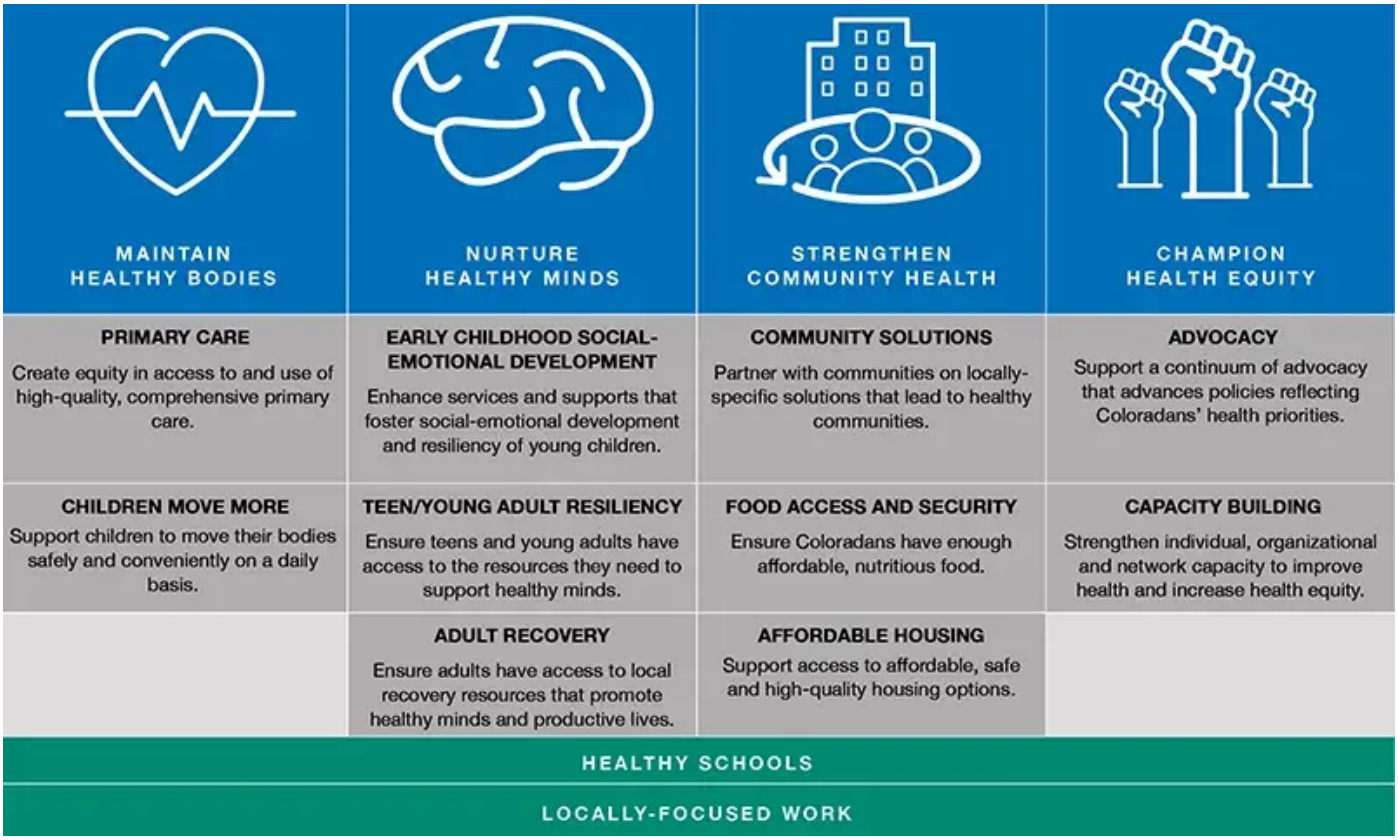
Read more about the priorities in this focus area, including **Community Solutions**, **Food Access and Security** and **Affordable Housing**.

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Champion Health Equity: For equity to be a reality, voices must be heard and skills developed to promote fair opportunities for all Coloradans to be

healthy. We are supporting individuals and organizations as they develop and strengthen the skills necessary to advocate for and promote a more equitable health environment—one where our policies reflect our priorities, and health is in reach for all Coloradans.

Read more about the priorities in this focus area, including **Advocacy** and **Capacity Building.**



We also have long-term **Cross-cutting Efforts** that spans multiple priorities, so we can work deeply within a specific geographic or subject area. These long-term efforts require extended focus and investment, which means that we are careful to take on only a few of these at a time. Currently, the Foundation considers our existing **Healthy Schools** and new **Locally-focused** bodies of work as cross-cutting.

We recognize that by partnering in communities across the state who are part of our Locally-focused signature effort, that we can not only move the needle on specific health-related issues, but that we have an opportunity to build the capacity of local institutions, improve policies and systems, expand local leadership and stimulate broad civic engagement. The four communities we will embark with on this new, exciting path include Alamosa, Eagle and Morgan counties, as well as Pueblo County with a specific focus on the city of Pueblo.

You might be wondering what's between the lines of this update. We wanted a balanced strategy, and we knew that meant some tough decisions about legacy work and new opportunities. Here are some insights into our thinking:

- We are more committed than ever to our legacy work in access to comprehensive primary care and physical activity.
- Rather than combine physical and behavioral health (because we know they are inextricably linked), we intentionally created two focus areas because behavioral health deserves to be called out given Colorado's challenges related to it.
- We settled on certain social determinants of health that we believe are essential for better community health and that we are uniquely positioned to address.
- Our geographic focus intentionally includes rural, frontier, suburban and urban communities.
- We seek relationships and partnerships inside and outside the nonprofit sector, because we know there is strength to be found across both.

So, what's next?

A lot of work, of course. Now that our strategy is set, we have to work with the many partners and colleagues it will take to successfully implement it and achieve the outcomes we seek. We have to continue learning from communities in

Colorado. We have to determine what we will fund and when. We have to decide the best use of our policy advocacy and how to approach private sector engagement. All of that is right around the corner for us and you.

We know that updates to our strategy can be a cause for both excitement and anxiety for those we work with. While we still have some work to do when it comes to exact details related to funding, advocacy and other ways we engage, we want to be clear about what we do know.

- If you're a current grantee with questions, read our FAQs about our updated strategy or reach out to your assigned program officer.
- If you're interested in a potential partnership, we also recommend that you talk with our program staff. Check out our interactive program staff map to see who is assigned near where you live or work.
- Show email when we announce new funding opportunities. We plan to release a funding line-up for our June 15 grant deadline by early May.
- We're not ever done listening to communities. Next week, I'm hitting the road to visit communities in northeastern Colorado. Consider this a shout-out to our amazing grantees and the community members around Burlington, Sterling, Yuma and many other places. We're excited to talk more about this next week, and hear how to bring health in reach for you. Curious about the trip? Show email or follow us on Twitter and Facebook. I'll be tweeting myself, using the hashtag #KMMRoadTrip.
- Tell us what you think! Show email about what it means for you to have health in reach.

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Blog

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