The Colorado Health Foundation™



Putting Our Cornerstones into Practice

It's been more than a year since we announced our refined strategy. Since, we've diligently dedicated time and resources to really "live into" our strategy across all aspects of our work. Our cornerstones guide our approach, outline who we serve and how we stay informed by community, and keep equity at the heart of our mission to improve the health of Coloradans.

Much of our focus this year has been to bring our cornerstones to life in our day-to-day work — both at our headquarters in Denver and on the ground across the state.

Take for example, the Colorado Health Symposium in July, where we discussed the intersection of housing, health and inequity. We carefully crafted this year's conference with the commitment to our cornerstones front and center. We also leveraged relationships with experts in the housing space, as well as those with lived experience, to inform topics, sessions and speakers that would resonate with attendees. Doing so helped us shape an event experience intent on addressing housing inequities that impact people we exist to serve.

We're also working deeply within communities — playing an active listening role so we can better understand what it means to have health in reach within the context of a specific region, community or neighborhood. Our program staff are on the ground across Colorado, taking it all in — the places, people, cultures, histories and what makes each community unique. This new way of engaging helps us get clear on the ways in which we can best support communities on their path to advancing health and health equity.

Internally, we recently integrated our cornerstones into our grant application review and decision-making process. We now look for alignment with all three of

our cornerstones when reviewing every grant application. We do this, in part, through the addition of questions about health equity and community engagement in our due diligence process, and our program officers explicitly describe how a grant proposal aligns with our cornerstones in their written recommendations.

This month, we take another critical step in making our cornerstones visible and tangible by introducing new questions into our grant application. We now ask applicants to share how they:

- **Serve populations living on low income and who have historically experienced less power and privilege**
- **Keep informed in their work by the communities they serve**
- **Seek to address health equity through their programs and/or projects**

In an effort to avoid adding length and complexity to our grant application, we re-worded, changed or deleted some questions. We hope you even find some questions are now easier to understand. When determining the value of a question, we asked ourselves, “Is this information absolutely necessary to decide whether we make a site visit or ask for further information?” If we couldn’t answer “yes” to that question, we didn’t include it in the application.

Through the process of refining our grant application, we leaned on current and former grantees for their insights and past experiences. We are grateful for their input, which was critical in helping us achieve greater clarity about and connection with our cornerstones. In the near future, we will evaluate whether and to what degree these revisions help us identify organizations, programs and/or projects aligned with our mission and cornerstones. We’ll also consider additional changes to further our understanding of the work and priorities of organizations seeking funding.

While we’ve made a lot of progress on this front, there’s certainly much more to do. Over the next year, we will identify more ways to put our cornerstones into

practice. Part of this work includes getting clear about what we look for in our partners with regard to their dedication to equity and community engagement.

We are committed to ensuring those we engage with live into our cornerstones alongside us. We will continuously seek input and guidance from grantees and other partners about how we do that, because we know health and health equity cannot become a reality for all Coloradans without your voice and the tireless work you do every day.

Learn more about applying for a grant and access our applicant info webinar for more information before you submit a grant application.

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