The Colorado Health Foundation™



Listening for Answers and Looking in the Mirror

Everything we do is with an eye and ear toward community. That's why during these tumultuous weeks, we've been anything but isolated. We're using every means possible to stay connected and we continue to try to be a funder who listens first, acts second and then listens again. Listening to the stories and perspectives of Coloradans is among my favorite aspects of my role at the Foundation.

People bearing the brunt of injustices are the real experts. There's a lot of noise out there right now and it's crucial that we cut through it. Mothers and fathers have answers. Nurses, behavioral health workers and shelter staff have answers. School cafeteria workers, bus drivers and teachers have answers. Grocery stockers, food bank staff and delivery drivers have answers. Leaders of community-based, grassroots organizations have answers. We must listen.

The stories we're hearing are helping us determine how and when we can open more doors with and within the communities we serve. One thing is crystal clear: While all of us remain in crisis management mode at present, the road to recovery is going to be long.

We have a responsibility to do everything we can for communities right now, and when the time for recovery is upon us, we shouldn't act surprised by the headlines. Injustices related to race and socioeconomic status have long plagued our country. We must put an end to it.

Supporting Disproportionately Affected Communities

The coronavirus pandemic is exposing a long-held truth at a frightening pace: disparities endured by people of color and people who live on low incomes can cost them their livelihood and life. What we know today is Coloradans of color are infected at higher rates and Black residents are dying at an alarming pace in

comparison to their share of the state's population.

We must not inadvertently perpetuate systematic biases. While these times are unprecedented and disorienting, our funding efforts cannot merely reflect good intentions and quick action. Instead, they must signal a deliberate, methodical approach around racially- and socioeconomically-based inequities to deploy the most impactful investments of resources in communities.

To that end, we're working quickly in partnership with Healthier Colorado, to conduct a statewide poll to learn about the concerns, needs, experiences and attitudes of disproportionately affected Coloradans on the coronavirus pandemic. We expect to share findings by early May with key decision makers – federal, state and local leaders in every sector – with information they need in this critical moment to protect the public's health and support a full recovery.

We also recognize incidents of racism are surging toward the Asian-American community. We're proud to join Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) and 130+ philanthropy serving organizations in signing a call to action against racist targeting.

Opening More Doors

It has been said that the emptying of office buildings, businesses, public transportation, town squares and centers of faith is likely the most remarkable act of global solidarity we may witness in our lifetime. What if we could say the same about how we come together to ensure we don't perpetuate past wrongs that have landed families with historically less power, privilege and incomes in unspeakable circumstances – generation after generation – simply due to the color of their skin or the dollars in their wallet?

What if, 10 years from now, we could say that the actions we took in 2020 to dismantle systems that prolong the cycle of poverty and powerlessness was the most remarkable act of national solidarity we may witness in our lifetime? Let's

show the country we can do this in Colorado – by opening more doors, together.

It's usually not as simple as walking up to a closed door and opening it. In some cases, we have to bust the lock or knock down a door that's been sealed shut. Some doors even have folks on the other side, pushing back to stop our entry.

What keys will unlock those doors? What policy and practice changes? What inconvenient truths must we face in our towns, cities and state – or in our own mirror? Which of our neighbors have we unconsciously deemed unworthy, less than or even accused of reaping what they've sown? On the other side of this reflection, we need action. How ready and willing are we? I know we're capable of it.

We'll get through this if we take meaningful action. Although the current state of things is unlike anything we've seen in over a century, it's making inequities that have long affected the daily lives of some harder to ignore. Let's leverage this moment by looking and listening for doors we can open – together – to usher in real progress.

An Update on Our Funding Efforts

To keep you up to date, here's the latest on the funding front:

- We're going to increase our investment in communities in 2020 at least 25% over our initial budget to help address the unfolding and long-term implications of the pandemic in the coming months.
- We're modifying the funding opportunities available for our June 2020 grant deadline to meet communities where they are in light of this new landscape. Specifically, we're closing our responsive grants program and two funding opportunities (Capital Infrastructure – Intergenerational/Family Physical Activity and Out-of-School Time Physical Activity) for the June cycle. We'll communicate more later this month. Questions? Contact your program officer (find them under "Community Investment & Impact") or

Show email if you're unsure who yours is.

- This week, we're making donations to organizations that make up Colorado's mental health safety net, totaling $760,000. One in five adults in the U.S. experience mental illness, but that number is climbing during this turbulence. Providers are expanding telehealth and keeping their doors open to meet the uptick in support needed.
- We're continuing to support the statewide, coordinated Colorado COVID Relief Fund, which is releasing its first round of funding this week. The next application deadline is this Saturday. We are offering $2 million in matching funds to double gifts of $10,000 or more from corporations, philanthropies and individual donors.

Note: For more information, take a look at our Grants FAQs and our COVID-19 resource webpage, and reference this list of relief funds maintained by Philanthropy Colorado.

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