The Colorado Health Foundation™



Disrupting Colorado's Status Quo: Unlocking New Policy Advocacy

Harsh realities of our world were heard so loudly over the past two years they could no longer be muted: The deep inequities experienced in communities of color and only deepened by the pandemic; the harms of upholding a status quo that only benefit some; and the dysfunction of "business as usual" in a new and unfolding context. A clear view of these truths cracked open the opportunity to improve our old ways and embark fully and unapologetically on the path of equity and justice.

Last week, we shared **a snapshot of how we're beginning to disrupt the status quo of our own work**. While there is always more work to do, much of our progress – within our own four walls and across Colorado communities – would not have been possible without challenging assumptions on *how* we go about our work. We have taken a step back to examine our approaches and practices, and often find ourselves asking, *"Do we really need to operate in this way?"* and *"Is there a better way that we could do this?"*

A laser-focus on our mission requires that we break the mold of a "business as usual" mentality and adopt new ways of doing business. Through asking those questions, we discovered and adopted changes that made us more flexible and nimble to be more effective at serving the people of our state. And the work continues.

We are not the only organization that has challenged its status quo in the last two years. The pandemic pushed every organization to examine and change how it operates. Just as changes in the Foundation's work have unlocked essential learnings for us, many other institutions have discovered similar lessons for

themselves – including our government institutions.

Colorado's state government has taken significant steps to change how it operates so that it could be more open, nimble and responsive. For example, regulatory processes kicked into a much faster gear to keep pace with changing times. Our General Assembly also made it possible for people to testify and make their voices heard in legislative hearings without having to be physically present in our state capitol building – a historic first for the state. And just as we have found for ourselves, any change to how an institution operates brings a vital opportunity to learn about what kinds of rules and processes ultimately make us more effective at the work we seek to accomplish.

In light of all the innovation and change that occurred in state government institutions during the pandemic, Foundation staff leaned into this opportunity to learn about what these changes could teach us. In 2021, we listened to the perspectives of a wide range of people about their experiences with how public policy decisions are made. We have summarized what we heard in this new report , which highlights:

- There is unanimous agreement that policymaking processes matter in their own right, simply because the processes themselves affect what kinds of policies are ultimately able to pass in our state.
- People can readily name many things that they appreciate about how Colorado's state government institutions currently operate – and they can also name policymaking processes worthy of reexamination and reform.
- Some key opportunities to improve how policymaking happens in Colorado focusing on enhancing community engagement, increasing transparency and improving language access.

This listening has helped us better understand the areas in which our government institutions can continue evolving to work more effectively for the people of

Colorado. So what comes next? Once we know better, we can do better. That means the Foundation will be advocating for further reforms to how our state legislature and state boards and commissions operate as two of the items on our 2022 policy agenda.

Learn more about why we will be pursuing these reforms and how you can join us by taking a look at our 2022 policy agenda.

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Blog

POST DATE

Apr 13, 2022

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