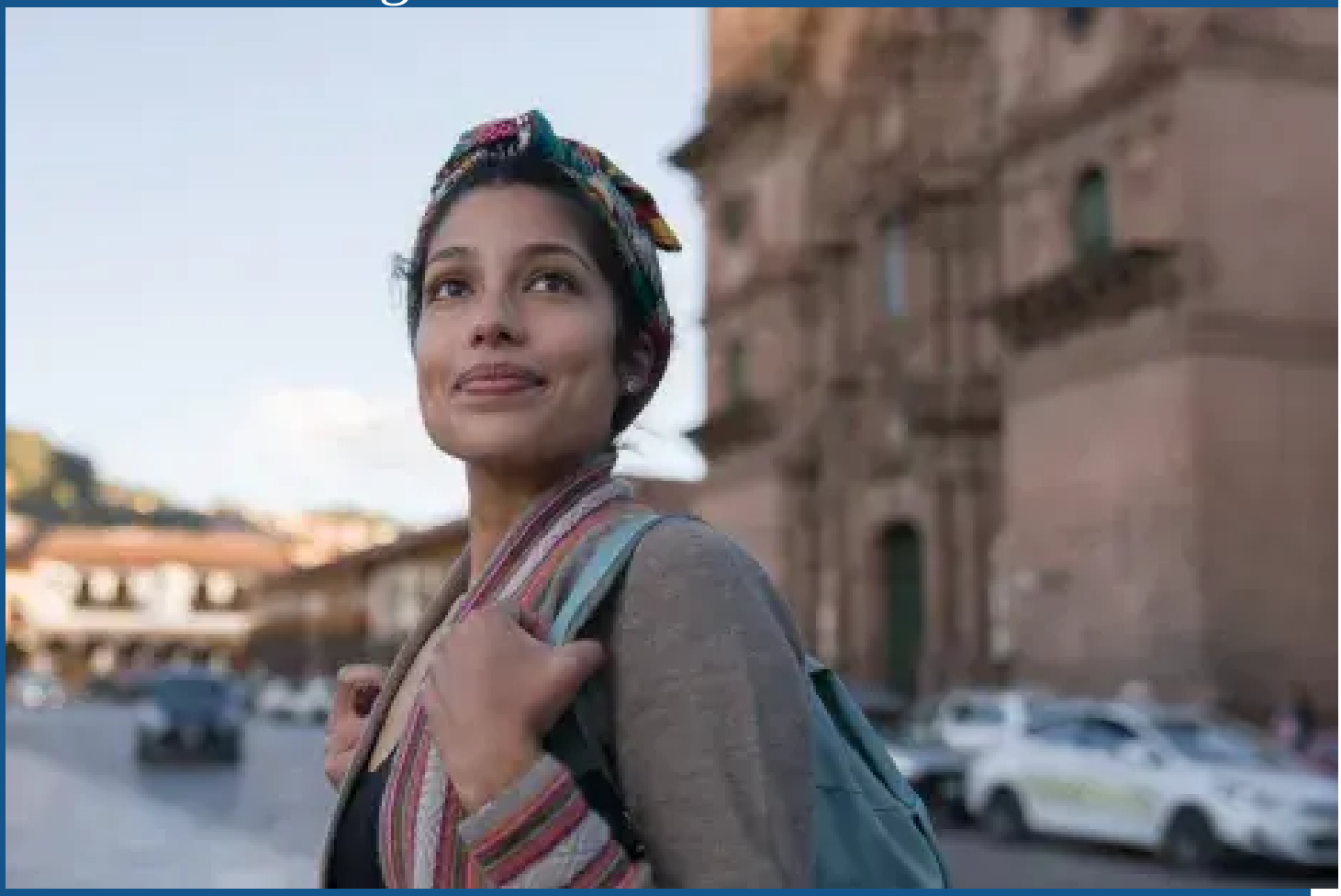
The Colorado Health Foundation™

The Dr. Karen McNeil-Miller Restorative Sabbatical Program



Applications are open until December 15, 2026.

Nonprofit executives make a career out of caring; leading a nonprofit requires strategic skill, endless dedication, and vision. Yet, being constantly in service to others and reacting to crises both big and small can lead to burnout. The antidote to burnout is rest and rejuvenation. But nonprofit leaders can be so committed to

their missions that spending time away to refill their cups is unimaginable.

Dr. Karen McNeill-Miller understood how crucial rest and rejuvenation are for those in the nonprofit sector. After a career spent serving educators and nonprofits, Karen has seen the negative impacts of burnout up close. Her Restorative Sabbatical Program aims to support long-term, respected nonprofit executive leaders in stepping away, avoiding burnout, and returning to their organizations with the energy they need to keep serving Coloradans. During Karen's tenure as CEO of The Colorado Health Foundation, more than 25 Colorado nonprofit executives received sabbatical awards.

The program offers nonprofit executives the opportunity to step away from professional responsibilities and take time for themselves for rejuvenation along with funding for interim leadership and staff capacity building. In addition to filling the cups of nonprofit executives, the Dr. Karen McNeill-Miller Restorative Sabbatical Program also supports the larger Colorado nonprofit sector by helping organizations build the skills of the next class of leaders. By "deepening the bench," more nonprofit professionals will be ready to step into leadership roles when the time is right.

The Colorado Health Foundation's three cornerstones guide us in all we do. We expect our partners to prioritize these cornerstones in their work alongside us. This commitment necessitates that we prioritize a diverse cohort of grantees whose work and values are in alignment with our cornerstones and who represent a range of identities including race/ethnicity, gender identity, ability/disability identity, sexual orientation as well as geographic area.

Up to four sabbaticals will be awarded annually. Each sabbatical must be taken within 18 months of the receipt of the award.

The Foundation has engaged a technical assistance (TA) team who provides support to both interested applicants and awarded grantees. We recommend that

the nonprofit organization and its executive seek professional tax advice separately prior to applying for this grant.

Utilize the Grantee Portal to start a sabbatical application.

Key Program Features

The sabbatical award is made in the form of a grant – up to $100,000 – for charitable support to a Colorado-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and includes:

1. **Grantee executive to take four month hiatus for activities of their choice to reflect, rest and rejuvenate:**
    - Up to $20,000 for sabbatical activities (e.g., personal activities such as travel or wellness activities)
    - Between $25,000-$55,000 subsidy for salary and benefits (dependent on current salary)
2. **Grantee interim leadership needs** (individual or a team):
    - Up to $10,000 to support interim leadership needs while grantee is away on sabbatical
3. **Grantee staff capacity building needs:**
    - Up to $15,000 to help strengthen staff capacity (e.g. professional development, staff well-being, etc.) within the grantee organization to be used during the sabbatical period or up to two years after receipt of the award
    - Organizations will need to demonstrate how staff have been involved in determining the use of these funds to ensure that they are used for employee-directed needs

In addition to providing funding for the above sabbatical activities, the program also includes a one-month executive-in-residence at the Foundation. The executive-in-residence is designed by program grantees and Foundation leadership and staff as a mutually beneficial co-learning experience. Learn more.

Eligibility Criteria

Successful applicants will meet the following individual and organizational eligibility criteria:

Individual:

- Be a Colorado-based executive director, CEO or tribal administrator of a nonprofit organization working to bring health and health equity in reach for Coloradans
- Be an outstanding and respected leader with a demonstrated record of community contribution
- Have served at least three years in current executive role (five years preferred)
- Have at least seven years' experience in an executive leadership role within the nonprofit sector
- Be a full-time employee and resident of Colorado
- Demonstrate commitment to remaining in current position at current organization for at least three years upon return from sabbatical
- Have organization's board approval
- Present an interim leadership plan that sustains the organization during the sabbatical period

- Present an organizational capacity building plan, created in partnership with staff, which addresses the need for growth, development and well-being
- Have at least three full-time employees on staff at the organization
- Be willing to serve a one-month executive-in-residence placement at The Colorado Health Foundation
- Be willing to participate in program alumni activities

Organizational:

- Be located in Colorado and provide services and/or programs that bring health and health equity in reach for Coloradans
- Operate as a public charity, and not a private foundation, under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3)
- Organizations must employ at least three full-time employees (FTE) or a mix of part-time employees that add up to three FTE. If volunteers currently play a role in fulfilling permanent needs, we will consider this scenario with clarity on how/if there will be a transition to a permanent employee base in the near future. Contractors and vendors who support an organization cannot be counted as permanent employees
- At least 50% of the population served must be living on low income
- At least 60% of the services and programming conducted must directly occur in Colorado
- Guarantee maintenance and sustainability of regular operations during the applicant's absence
- Demonstrate a need for and commitment to supporting organizational, employee-driven capacity building that will strengthen the organization's ability to meet its mission

- Guarantee regular health and other benefits to awardee during their absence

Program Expectations

Once awarded, sabbatical grantees must comply with the following program expectations:

- Three-to-four months of consecutive, uninterrupted leave. This timeframe includes a one-month executive-in-residence at the Foundation, which is headquartered in Denver. Details of the executive-in-residence will be determined by grantees and the Foundation.
- No return visits for meetings or events during sabbatical and executive-in-residence.
- No work- or volunteer-related phone or email engagement during the sabbatical or executive-in-residence.
- No work-related activities (outside of any professional development you wish to engage in during the sabbatical)
- Sabbatical must be taken within 18 months of receipt
- Disengage from professional activities (e.g., volunteer boards, committees, teaching assignments, etc.)

Awarded grantees are expected to engage in key program activities, including the following:

- **Pre-Sabbatical Orientation:** The Foundation will provide orientation support with program grantees.
- **Executive-in-Residence:** The Foundation will work exclusively with program grantees to determine an approach for the month-long executive-

in-residence that is an opportunity for co-learning and is mutually beneficial to both the grantee and the Foundation. It is expected that the grantee will reside in Denver during this time period. Housing, food and transit expenses are covered by the Foundation for those who need to relocate (whether the grantees lives in or outside of the Denver metro area) for the executive-in-residence. Grantees are expected to participate in four weeks total of the executive-in-residence portion of the program. However, we offer flexibility to grantees who are unable to engage in the executive-in-residence for a consecutive four-week period (e.g. a grantee may decide to engage two weeks at a time over the course of the sabbatical period). The executive-in-residence is not available during December due to the holiday season. **Watch a short overview of the residency program to learn more**.

- **Post-Sabbatical:** The Foundation requires a short, informal report or debrief meeting about the grantee's sabbatical experience six to 12 weeks out from the sabbatical.

Technical Assistance

The program includes a Technical Assistance (TA) provider, Carolyn Love, PhD., to support both interested applicants and awarded grantees. The TA provider will:

- Consult applicants and their organizations to develop a strong application
- Consult and support orientation for sabbatical grantees
- Consult and support exit and re-entry for sabbatical grantees
- Consult and support interim leadership during sabbatical period

Contact Carolyn Love at Show email

Download Resources

- Sample Sabbatical Program Application
- Sample Budget Template
- Sabbatical Program Application - Capacity Building Plan Template.docx
- Sabbatical Program Application - Interim Leadership Plan Template.docx
- FAQ: Dr. Karen McNeil-Miller Sabbatical Program
- FAQ: Executive in Residence
- Video: Nonprofit Sabbatical Informational Webinar
- Video: Executive Residency Overview