The Colorado Health Foundation™

Information Ecosystem Funding



Strengthening Colorado's Information Ecosystem

Information shapes how people understand health, participate in civic life and make decisions for themselves, their families and their communities. That is why

The Colorado Health Foundation treats the information ecosystem as a determinant of health—and as a system philanthropy can help strengthen.

Since 2018, we have invested in journalism and media that serve Colorado communities. Today, our approach extends beyond traditional news to the broader information ecosystem: public and community media, trusted local messengers, content creators, sponsored content, research, media literacy and the long-term work of narrative change. Our goal is not only to respond to misinformation, but also to strengthen credible, community-rooted information and advance stories that support health equity and racial justice.

Why This Work Matters

Colorado's media landscape is changing quickly. Local newsrooms are shrinking, sustainable business models remain difficult to build and many rural communities have fewer trusted sources of local information. At the same time, misinformation and disinformation move rapidly across digital platforms, while artificial intelligence makes misleading health content easier to create and distribute.

These challenges are not evenly distributed. Communities that have historically been excluded from media coverage and decision-making are often least likely to see their experiences reflected accurately. Journalism also continues to rely heavily on traditional sources of authority, leaving community leaders, nonprofit experts and people with lived experience at the edges of many stories.

We see an opportunity to strengthen the information people rely on, expand who gets heard and connect issues such as housing, water, youth well-being and economic security more clearly to health.

What We Have Learned

- **Health stories are often disconnected.** Media coverage may address housing, mental health, addiction, water or youth well-being without explaining how these issues overlap or shape health.
- **Trusted voices extend beyond traditional institutions.** Community leaders, ethnic media, local outlets and people with lived experience can bring credibility and context that audiences may not find in government, corporations or traditional news organizations.
- **Who gets quoted shapes which stories get told.** Officials and other established sources remain prominent, while nonprofit leaders and residents closest to an issue are less often included.
- **Everyday language matters.** Technical terms can distance audiences. Trusted messengers can connect health and equity to the words, experiences and solutions people already know.
- **News coverage alone is not enough.** Individual stories may have a short shelf life. Lasting change requires sustained relationships, shared narratives and the capacity to reinforce them over time.

Our Media Funding Strategies

Two strategies guide our investments.

1. Bolster Media That Shapes Equity-Centered Public Discourse

- We invest in media that can reach Coloradans with relevant, accurate and community-centered information. This includes:
- Public media and statewide media outlets
- Spanish-language, ethnic and hyperlocal media
- Sponsored content and issue-specific media partnerships
- Journalism and storytelling that reflect Colorado communities more fully
- Media and culture investments connected to our emerging narrative change initiative

2. Rebuild Trust in Colorado's Information Ecosystem

- We support the relationships, skills and infrastructure communities need to navigate information and participate in public life. This includes:
- Polling, public perception research, media audits and social listening
- Support for local journalism and collaborative efforts such as Colorado Media Project and Press Forward Colorado
- Research and partnerships involving trusted messengers, influencers and content creators
- Training and capacity building in community journalism, equitable sourcing, trauma-informed reporting, media literacy and strategic communications
- Convenings that help nonprofits, funders and community partners understand and strengthen the information ecosystem

From Media Investing To Narrative Change

Funding a stronger media ecosystem is an essential first step. We are also building toward narrative change: the long-term work of changing the stories, assumptions and ideas that shape what people believe is possible.

Dominant narratives can frame health as a matter of individual choice, obscure the structural causes of inequity, normalize exclusion or suggest that unequal outcomes cannot be changed. We are working toward a shared story of a Colorado where every person—regardless of race, income, geography, language or identity—can belong, thrive and help shape the future.

Our approach centers collective well-being, fairness, belonging, dignity, hope, abundance, stability and safety. It is grounded in community listening, public opinion and messaging research, our Centering Race Framework and learning from narrative-change practitioners.

How We Are Building Narrative Infrastructure

Narrative infrastructure is the coordinated capacity to learn, create, share and reinforce transformative stories over time. Our emerging initiative is organized around three objectives:

1. **Build foundational elements.** Create and maintain a durable health equity and racial justice narrative framework, along with practical tools and resources.
2. **Use the Foundation's influence.** Align our communications, relationships and investments to share transformative narratives.
3. **Collaborate with partners.** Work with nonprofits, journalists, media organizations, funders, content creators and trusted messengers to bring

these narratives into communities across Colorado.

We are moving from planning to implementation. Current work includes developing educator resources, aligning our external communications, building a resource hub and exploring new ways to engage nonprofits, journalists and trusted messengers statewide.

What We Look For

Media funding may be structured as grants, partnerships, sponsorships or other investments and may not always be available through an open application. To find out more about our strategic investments and partnerships aimed at shifting public discourse toward a more equitable future, please contact Taryn Fort at Show email.