The Colorado Health Foundation™

Bebe Kleinman: Executive in Residence Q&A

Bebe Kleinman, the CEO of Doctors Care, has spent more than 40 years serving her community through roles at nonprofits that make sure people have access to the services they need. For years, she's enthusiastically thrown herself into a career all about others. But for four months, she's stepping back. Bebe is a part of The Colorado Health Foundation's Nonprofit Executive Sabbatical Program and currently an executive-in-residence at CHF's Denver office. Learn from Bebe about the sabbatical process and apply via our grantee portal by December 15, 2025.

How did you know it was time for you to take a sabbatical?

I knew about the sabbatical program for the past few years. People would send me announcements. A program officer from another foundation wrote me and said, "Bebe you're the perfect candidate for this, you should apply."

And I thought to myself: "Okay, I'm going to prove that I'm not the perfect candidate." So, I decided to apply because of that. And I was so pleasantly surprised I was one of the candidates [the Foundation] was looking for.

How would you describe the application process?

It was a huge lift, to be honest. I took it very seriously. I probably spent 60 or more hours working on the application, editing, rewriting, and thinking about it. The good thing is that the application really makes you think about yourself, your career, where you fit, and your history.

How have you been making the most of your Executive-in-Residence time?

If someone asks me, “Should I apply? What should I do?” I would say do as much as you can that the Foundation offers you. Go to meetings, meet with people, but also bring your own reflection or writing so you can fill your time with [things] that are meaningful to you. I don’t have that opportunity at my other job.

This is an incredible opportunity to reflect along with learning new stuff from the people around me. People have been so generous here in terms of sharing their jobs and perspectives.

Why should nonprofit leaders consider applying for Sabbatical?

I think others should apply because it’s a moment in time in our careers where we can look beyond what has absorbed us for so many years. You can look at the bigger picture. When I’m talking to other nonprofit leaders, this concept is so outrageous in some ways, that someone’s going to pay for you to not work for four months. When you work for a small nonprofit, it’s all hands on deck all the time; it’s a big deal taking a week or two-week vacation. That’s what we’re grounded in. So, this opportunity to be away for four months, someone paying my salary, assisting those [at Doctors Care] to do the job well was just so ... out of this world.

What would you say to future Sabbatical recipients?

I would encourage future Sabbatical recipients to take some time in their life to reflect back. The recipients you choose all have lots of experience. Maybe not as much as me in terms of 40 years, but a lot of them have 20, 25 years in the field.

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