The Colorado Health Foundation™

Food Access and Security: The Colorado Health Foundation's Anti-Hunger Journey

In 2016, the Colorado Health Foundation President and CEO Karen McNeil-Miller conducted a statewide listening tour, hearing directly from Coloradans about their concerns around food security. As a result, our policy team, led by Alexis Weightman, facilitated a series of convenings bringing together funders, government agencies and anti-hunger organizations to identify ways to improve food security across the state. Together, these efforts laid the groundwork for the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, an aspirational five-year roadmap to ending hunger in Colorado published in 2018.

In 2019, the Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) launched Food Access and Security, a new priority area specifically designed to support and strengthen the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, which was renamed to Provecho Collective in 2025. This priority area was organized around four objectives:

- Building momentum around community-owned solutions and coordinating existing resources throughout the anti-hunger ecosystem, at both statewide and local levels
- Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative, community-level efforts to reduce food insecurity
- Reducing barriers to public food assistance enrollment and utilization
- Increasing access to culturally relevant foods in areas that lacked access due to racial inequities

The Foundation made a commitment to funding the core operations of the Blueprint for the duration of the five-year plan (2019-2024). The Blueprint served as the backbone of a statewide partner network, facilitating collaboration and resource sharing.

The Food Access and Security priority also included the Community Food Systems (CFS) initiative, through which coalitions were funded and supported to shift local food systems and strengthen community capacity. From the beginning, all partners and collaborators were asked to engage people with lived experience of hunger not as advisors, but as co-strategists, co-designers, and decision-makers.

The CFS initiative lived in communities throughout Colorado and helped local anti-hunger organizations collaborate, share resources, and build solutions to reduce food insecurity. The Boulder/Broomfield Food Security Network, Lake County Food Access Coalition, La Plata Food Equity Coalition, Mesa County Hunger Alliance, Pueblo Food Project, SANA Coalition, and Summit County Food Equity Coalition, have transformed local food systems to meet the specific needs of their communities.

Throughout the duration of our Food Access and Security priority area, CHF invested more than $47 million, including exit grants approved in 2024, and granted 151 awards to 94 grantees. As a result of these financial, relational, and time investments, the Colorado food system is now more responsive to the needs of our communities. While Food Access and Security is no longer an active priority for CHF, the impact goes beyond food access. Together, we have built authentic and enduring community power that will continue to drive change across Colorado.

Read more about our journey in food access.

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