



From Food Access to Food Justice: Changing the Anti-Hunger Ecosystem in Colorado

About the Work

The Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) invested in two major bodies of work to strengthen the anti-hunger ecosystem in our state: Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger (now called Provecho Collective) and the Community Food Systems Initiative.

The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger is a statewide, cross-sector, policy-focused network transforming Colorado's food system toward food sovereignty—a model rooted in dignity that honors communities' right to shape their own food systems. Through a shared policy agenda, the Blueprint and its partners have achieved significant [policy wins](#) that reduce barriers to accessing food assistance for those who need it most.

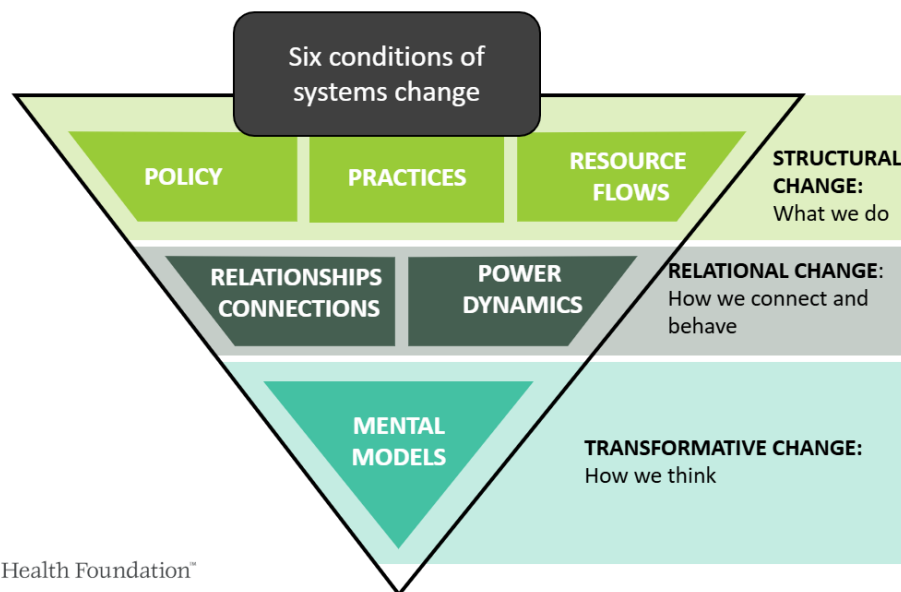
The Community Food Systems Initiative invested in place-based, community-driven coalitions to shift local food systems, power, and access. The coalitions centered the experiences and wisdom of those most impacted by hunger, while CHF supported this work through flexible, multi-year funding, grantee-driven technical assistance, and program officers who served as thought partners.

Water of Systems Change Framework

The Blueprint and coalitions used the [Waters of Systems Change framework](#), which highlights three connected levels that must be engaged to change ingrained systems:

- **Structural:** What’s visible and formal—policies, practices, and where money and resources flow in the food system.
- **Relational:** How the system functions—who has power, who gets heard, and how people and institutions work together.
- **Transformative:** The deepest level—the beliefs, narratives, and values about food access and security that shape all the choices above.

Waters of Systems Change Framework



Systems Change in Action

Stories across Colorado show what systems change looks like at all three levels, from shifting policies and resources to transforming the beliefs and values that shape our food system.

Structural Change: The Blueprint and coalitions worked together to create changes to policies and resource flows across Colorado. Community members engaged with elected officials to share their experiences about the interconnectedness between food justice, affordable housing, childcare, and employment. This engagement, along with the Blueprint's shared policy agenda, increased the anti-hunger field's ability to influence legislation on Nutrition Assistance, free school meals, Medicaid, and tax refunds.

In La Plata County, community members deepened their understanding of local policy and food systems and stepped boldly into their power. In 2024, the Voces de Comunidad and Cuidado Infantil workgroups, part of the [La Plata Food Equity Coalition](#), led a ballot measure reallocating 70% of lodging tax proceeds from tourism efforts (around \$700,000) to childcare and housing, which changed the employment landscape for the county and expanded opportunities for families navigating affordability challenges.

Relational Change: The Blueprint and coalitions shifted more power and agency to those with lived experience and those with deep roots in their communities. The [Summit County Food Equity Coalition](#) increased dignity in its no-cost grocery model by removing identification and income requirements, prioritizing fresh and culturally relevant foods, and reshaping food markets to feel welcoming rather than transactional. People with lived experience of food insecurity led and informed these changes, ensuring the model reflects community values.

In Longmont, Brujulas, a group of Latina moms working to improve food choices in local schools, joined the [Boulder/Broomfield coalition](#). Working with technical assistance providers, they learned how to create formal advocacy and policy plans, conducted needs assessments, and identified transportation policies that needed to be reformed. Brujulas worked with Boulder County to establish new bus stops in strategic areas, increasing access to food assistance and other services. Connecting local voices and those with lived experience to the tools for large-scale systems

change helps create a food access and security system that functions for all Coloradans.

Transformative Change: The Blueprint and coalitions shifted Colorado’s anti-hunger field from a focus on food access toward food sovereignty, honoring communities’ right to shape their own food systems. Storytelling has been a powerful tool to elevate hunger as a pressing public issue, increase understanding of its systemic causes, and reduce the stigma experienced by those who face it. Central to this work, storytelling and other transformative change efforts embrace language justice, the practice and value of allowing community members to share and learn in the language of their hearts.

[SANA in the Roaring Fork Valley](#) is made up of bilingual and monolingual Spanish-speaking members who also have lived experience of hunger. They hold public-facing roles and contribute to decision-making at food distribution sites and coalition meetings that are often conducted in Spanish with English interpretation. SANA leaders are influencing traditional, charity-minded organizations to value community voice and experience, shifting the culture of how anti-hunger work gets done in Colorado.

While the Colorado Health Foundation's Food Access and Security priority has concluded, the work it helped seed continues to grow. The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger shaped statewide conditions, policy alignment, and field capacity. The Community Food Systems coalitions achieved on-the-ground, community-driven change. Together, they built relationships, centered community voices, and demonstrated what multi-level systems transformation can look like across Colorado's anti-hunger ecosystem.

[Learn more about how we got here.](#)

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