Colorado’s Health Equity Advocacy Ecosystem
A 2019 Study by Innovation Network in Partnership with the Colorado Health Foundation
Purpose

The Colorado Health Foundation seeks to build out a picture of the health equity advocacy landscape in Colorado in order to support a continuum of advocacy that advances Coloradans’ health priorities.

1. Build an information base about Colorado’s advocacy ecosystem

2. Share and foster discussion about and how this collective landscape appears to different stakeholders

3. Target future efforts to shift power towards organizations led by affected communities
Methodology

The network survey was sent to organizations throughout Colorado in the Fall of 2019 and shared to additional contacts based on their responses.

It was ultimately sent to 358 organizations and received a total of 125 responses, a 35% response rate.

Survey focus:

1. Who do advocates serve and/or represent?
2. Who is represented and informs decisions within organizations?
3. How do advocates do their work?
4. Who do they view as key partners?
About the Respondents

**Primary Work:** 43% of respondents say their primary work is advocacy, including community organizing and movement building, while 38% say service delivery.
About the Respondents

**Budget:** Majority (70%) report organizational budgets from $100,000 - $1.9 million.
Geographic Focus: Most organizations (60%) focus their work statewide in Colorado.

Of those that don’t, the majority focus their work on 10 of the state’s 64 counties (shown in blue). 23% of respondents work in counties that were named by four or fewer advocacy organizations (shown in gray).

Key: Number of organizations that selected each county

- 0
- 1–2
- 3–4
- 5–7
- 8–12
- 12+
### Issue Areas: The most prioritized issue areas reported in the overall ecosystem include healthcare, economic opportunity, mental health, and safe and affordable housing.
2019 Health Equity Advocacy Ecosystem Survey

Priority Populations
A strong and healthy advocacy ecosystem is...

one that serves and/or authentically represents diverse racial/ethnic and lived experience groups

one in which organizations are led by or work directly with the populations that they seek to serve/represent
Priority Populations/Communities

1. Which racial/ethnic groups and lived experience groups do organizations seek to serve and/or represent?
2. How do they engage with these prioritized groups?
Most organizations do not seek to serve or represent any particular racial/ethnic group.

Of those that do, **Hispanic/Latinx** and **Black/African American** were most often named as prioritized groups.
Racial/Ethnic Priority Populations

Looking across all racial/ethnic groups, 50 organizations (44% of respondents) prioritize communities of color.

- **We don't serve or represent any particular racial group**: 61%
- **Hispanic or Latinx**: 42%
- **Black or African American**: 30%
- **White or Caucasian**: 22%
- **American Indian or Alaska Native**: 13%
- **Asian or Asian American**: 11%
- **Another race**: 4%
- **Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander**: 2%
- **Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab American**: 1%

10 organizations that selected “We don’t serve or represent any particular racial/ethnic group” also selected a specific racial/ethnic group. These groups are counted twice in this chart to be true to individual responses.

Respondents could select more than one response.
Most respondents (75%) said that they serve and/or represent individuals who have low income and/or low wealth, followed by youth or children (52%).

Individuals who live in rural communities and individuals who are immigrants or refugees are the next most prioritized groups.
Priority Populations/Communities

**LED BY**
A significant portion of organization leadership and staff is from this population/community; membership and/or base reflecting this population has a role in decision making and decides on organizational priorities.

**WORK WITH**
Organization is not led by this population/community but works directly with them; membership/base may inform/have some influence on organizational priorities; some staff or board may be from this population/community.

**ADVOCATE FOR**
Organization does not work directly with this population, but advocates on their behalf.
Respondents most often **work with** the racial/ethnic groups that they prioritize serving/representing, rather than being **led by** these groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>LED BY</th>
<th>WORK WITH</th>
<th>ADVOCATE FOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian American</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another race previously specified</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Some percentages do not add up to 100%. The remaining organizations said that they engage with the selected racial/ethnic group through key partners who work with those populations.
Organizations serving Hispanic/Latinx communities report being led by these communities much more frequently than organizations serving Black or African American communities.

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Lived Experience Priority Populations

Organizations most often said they **work with** their priority lived experience populations.

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<th>LIVED EXPERIENCE GROUPS</th>
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<th>LED BY</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who have low income and/or low wealth</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth or children</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who live in rural communities</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who are immigrants or refugees</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other group previously specified</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/guardians of children less than 18 years of age</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals or are or have been justice-involved</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals who have disabilities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who are workers or employees</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older adults</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals who are LGBTQIA+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who are veterans</td>
<td>5</td>
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Note: Some percentages do not add up to 100%. The remaining organizations said that they engage with the selected racial/ethnic group through key partners who work with those populations.
The exception is organizations that prioritize women, who mostly say they are led by women.

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Reflecting on your organization....

Who does your organization seek to serve and/or represent? How does that fit into this picture?

Who influences your organization’s advocacy priorities? To what extent do individuals or groups that your organization seeks to serve have a voice?

What would it look like for you to be more engaged with the individuals and communities that you seek to serve/represent? For them to have greater input and influence in your work?
2019 Health Equity Advocacy Ecosystem Survey

Advocacy Targets and Tactics
A strong and healthy advocacy ecosystem is able to...

1. Target different branches of government at the local, state, and federal levels
2. Effectively engage in a range of strategies and tactics to achieve its goals
1. Where do advocates target their advocacy work?
2. What tactics do they engage in and how skilled are they in these tactics?
Advocacy Targets

Advocates are **more focused at the state level overall, with fewer working at the federal level.**

Across each level of government, advocates most often target the legislative and executive branches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative branch</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive branch</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial branch</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot measures</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A – Don’t target this level of government</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizations serving communities of color report less engagement at the state and federal levels overall than the larger ecosystem.

They report about equal engagement at the local level.
The Advocacy Strategy Framework was developed by Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer of the Center for Evaluation Innovation and published in March 2015.

Audiences
- The Public
- Influencers
- Decisionmakers

Changes
- Awareness
- Will
- Action
At a high level, the most common and strongest skill sets across the ecosystem are concentrated on influencers and decision makers.
Fewer advocates report high skill levels in tactics that target the public overall.

*Appointments or nominations for executive branch vacancies, judicial branch vacancies, and public boards/commissions
Advocacy Tactics

Advocates report relying on partners for a few important tactics, including public polling/public opinion research, legal advocacy and litigation, and voter engagement.
Advocacy Tactics for Organizations that Prioritize POC

Organizations that seek to serve and/or represent communities of color report an average of 10% less engagement than the larger ecosystem across tactics focused on policy makers.
Advocacy Tactics for Organizations that Prioritize POC

Organizations that seek to serve and/or represent communities of color report an average of 10% less engagement than the larger ecosystem across tactics focused on influencers and cross-cutting tactics.

KEY
- Organizations serving POC
- Full ecosystem
- Notable gap between organizations serving POC and full ecosystem
Advocacy Tactics for Organizations that Prioritize POC

Organizations that prioritize communities of color **engage significantly more in direct action/protests**, and slightly more in movement building, voter engagement, and leadership development.
Reflecting on your organization….

What tactics are your organization’s strongest and where do you seek support from partners?

How are you sharing your skills, collaborating, and/or receiving support from other advocates who bring different skill sets to the table?

What could you do to share your skills/collaborate/receive support in ways that would increase your ability to effectively do your work/achieve your outcomes?
2019 Health Equity Advocacy Ecosystem Survey

Network and Partnerships

The Colorado Health Foundation

INNOVATION NETWORK
Transforming Evaluation for Social Change
A strong and healthy advocacy ecosystem is...

- one that collaborates, shares resources, and takes collective action

- one that centers the voices and perspectives of communities that historically have had less power and privilege
Network and Partnerships

1. Who do advocates view as key partners?
2. What are the characteristics, perspectives, and priorities of organizations most central to the network?
The reported advocacy ecosystem includes **350** organizations and **438** connections.
Network and Partnerships

Organizations that are serving people of color are **as centrally located** in the network as organizations that do not prioritize these communities.

**KEY**
- Serve people of color
- Led by and serve people of color
- Not serving any particular racial/ethnic group
- No data
Of the top 10 most central organizations:

- All ten work at the **state level of government**, eight work at the **federal level**, and six work at the **local level**
- Nine serve **individuals with low-income/low-wealth**
- Four serve **communities of color**
- Four serve **individuals who live in rural communities and individuals who are workers or employees**
We found **differences in connectivity** for organizations:

- Focused on certain issue areas
- Working in sparse counties
- Prioritizing select lived experience populations
- Led by people of color
- Focused on certain advocacy targets
Network and Partnerships: Issue Areas

More connected organizations focus on:
- Fiscal/tax policy and reform
- Democratic representation and participation
- Early childhood education
- Economic opportunity

Less connected organizations focus on:
- Environmental health/justice
- Homelessness
- Civil rights protections
- Anti-discrimination
On average, organizations working in sparse counties are less connected to the network. Counties have a “sparse” advocacy presence if fewer than four organizations reported working there.
Network and Partnerships: Lived Experience Groups

More-connected organizations represent:
- Families
- Individuals who are uninsured or underinsured
- Individuals who have chronic illnesses
- Individuals who are workers or employees
- Businesses
- Individuals who are parents/guardians
- Women

Less-connected organizations represent:
- Individuals who are LGBTQIA+
- Individuals who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness
- Individuals who have been justice-involved
- Individuals who are veterans
On average, organizations led by people of color are less connected than the network average.
On average, organizations working at the state-level of government are more connected than the network average, ranging from those focused on the executive branch (2.1) to those focused on the legislature (2.3) or state ballot initiatives (2.3).
Reflecting on your organization….

Is your organization most connected to organizations that are similar to you in terms of populations served and tactical strengths, or organizations that are different from yours in those respects?

How does your position in the network impact your work?

If you are less connected, **what would help you to be more connected into the ecosystem?** If you are more connected, **how might you leverage your position in the ecosystem to make space for other organizations** bringing different perspectives and skills?

**What would an ideal network look like to you?**
What stands out to you about these findings?

What else are you interested to learn about the ecosystem?

How can the Colorado Health Foundation better support your work, and the advocacy ecosystem as a whole?

To share your perspective, click here to fill out a very brief feedback form.

THANK YOU!