

Funding Opportunity: Equitable Community-Designed Outdoor Spaces

This funding opportunity supports **planning** grants to inform the design and construction of outdoor spaces, such as playgrounds and parks across Colorado that allow children, youth and families to become co-designers of their own reimagined spaces for physical activity while fostering a sense of community, agency and belonging.

Race is a central consideration for the development of healthy communities. Effective strategies that engage all youth, especially youth of color, must recognize race and place barriers that impact opportunities to create lifelong physical activity practices. Limited recreation space coupled with safety concerns restricts the physical activity opportunities of communities of color. Families in rural communities also lack outdoor amenities and safe places to play. Often, the areas with the least access to public play spaces are the most stressed. Rarely are spaces provided for intergenerational physical activity and cohesion in rural communities.

This funding opportunity prioritizes outdoor spaces that center the needs of communities living on low-income, communities of color and rural communities in Colorado in the pursuit of health equity.

This funding opportunity differs from previous opportunities as it emphasizes a more dynamic planning process for how communities are engaged in designing outdoor spaces. Applicants must undertake a planning process that includes deep community engagement bringing community members together to actively co-design spaces that reflect the community's needs, history and culture, and encourages positive physical activity and psychological safety. Projects may utilize the [Community Engagement Spectrum](#), [Equity-Centered Community Design™*](#), or another relevant model to support the planning and design process. We invite you to work with a program officer to determine the right process for your community project.

Planning funds in the range of \$25,000 - \$50,000 can be used to support community engagement and co-design activities. Planning grants may include personnel costs, meeting space needs, stipends for community members, administrative costs, meeting materials, translation and interpretation costs, among other needs. Landscape architects selected by the Foundation will provide technical assistance to support communities through the design process, as needed. Costs for this technical assistance will be covered by the Foundation separately from the planning grant.

At the conclusion of planning grants and by invitation-only, projects will be considered for capital grant support for construction of shovel-ready projects. This funding is not guaranteed. We expect that the strength and depth of the community engagement process will yield a competitive project to be considered for implementation funding by CHF and other funders.

Proposed projects must reflect the [Foundation's cornerstones](#). These outline who we serve, how our work is informed and our intent to create [health equity](#).

Have questions? We are here to talk through your ideas and encourage you to connect with us before applying for funding. If you are not already connected with a program officer, please reach out to us by [email](#) or phone at 303-953-3600.

Si necesita acceder la solicitud de fondos en español, por favor contáctenos a grants@coloradohealth.org.

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Focus Area

Maintain Healthy Bodies

Grant Deadlines

- June 15, 2023
- Feb. 15, 2024
- Feb. 15, 2025
- Feb. 15, 2026

Applicants must meet the following funding criteria:

- Applicant organizations must demonstrate commitment to undertake a comprehensive planning process that includes deep community engagement that leads to a community-owned or community-driven outdoor project co-designed with the community.
- Planned design and construction of outdoor spaces in high-need areas that serve individuals of all ages and create access for intergenerational activities that encourage physical activity and strengthen community, agency and belonging.
- Projects may include age-specific segments, with considerations for those living with physical and/or developmental disabilities in their design as appropriate, such as playgrounds. If on school grounds, the space must be open to the general public during non-school hours.

Preference will be given to projects that center the needs of communities living on low-income, communities of color and rural communities, such that projects:

- Based on enrollment data from the nearest school, will serve a higher than average (50% or greater) number of young people of color and/or young people receiving free and reduced lunch.
- Will result in outdoor spaces and/or amenities that sufficiently serve the most disadvantaged community members.
- Meet a need to replace existing unsafe or outdated equipment in an outdoor space within five miles of a proven rural community-hub, public location or space.

Measurable Reach:

Applicants will be asked to estimate how many individuals will use the outdoor space and to indicate how their work will increase the number of Coloradans who have convenient access to recreational physical activity.

We often partner with third-party evaluators, contractors and other organizations over the course of our work with applicants and grantees. Your application and its attachments may be shared with these individuals or entities during the review process and grant cycle. All third-party organizations partnering with the Foundation have signed a confidentiality agreement and will not use or share the information for purposes outside of the scope of work specific to the



grant application or grant award. If you have any concerns or would like additional information, please email grants@coloradohealth.org or call our senior director of Grantmaking Operations at 303-953-3600.





The Colorado Health Foundation™

Community Engagement Spectrum

The following community engagement scale is designed to support efforts to be more inclusive and elevate community voice. The Colorado Health Foundation holds the voice of those with less power, privilege and income, including communities of color as a cornerstone of our work. For the Equitable Community-Designed Outdoor Spaces funding opportunity, CHF is specifically looking for projects using **community owned** and/or **community driven** approaches.

Approach	Brief Description and Intent	Possible Tactics	Examples
Community Owned: <i>Community Ownership</i>	Community defines the issues, identifies the solutions and goals, and implements the solutions with all of the resources, parameters and decisions determined by community members. Decision-making authority has been turned over to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming community working groups/action teams Community members are engaged in/positioned as key trusted grassroots community organizers/mobilizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community working groups/action teams remain formalized to oversee ongoing efforts around space activation and that the project and its ongoing use meets the needs of the community as identified through the process. Structures of ongoing community engagement and connection are in place, which include mechanisms that can bring new learning and developing community contexts to the table for discussion.
Community Driven: <i>Delegated Power</i>	Community members define the issues, identify the solutions and implement the solutions. Community members are decision makers; however, resources, parameters, and goals are co-created and/or shared with a trusted organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming community working groups/action teams Collaborating organizations are engaged in/positioned as key trusted grassroots community organizers/mobilizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community working groups/action teams remain formalized to oversee ongoing efforts around space activation. Community understands they are the primary audience for the co-created space and are aware how to access and provide feedback to the organizations charged with ongoing maintenance.

<p>Community Shaped: <i>Voice & Power Shift</i></p>	<p>Community members and community trusted partners support defining, identifying, and implementing the solutions; however, the organization sets the parameters/boundaries and goals on which issues and solutions to support. As a result, there is greater intentionality on how community members are shaping decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory engagement, such as participation on planning and implementation teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members are invited to partner with youth serving organizations to help shape solutions, programs, and decision through a specific cultural context, such as through a youth advisory council.
<p>Community Informed: <i>Voice Elevated</i></p>	<p>The lead organization's practice centers on hearing directly from community members and trusted partners and working closely with the community. Strategies and associated tactics are informed by what is heard and learned from the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and involvement from direct community members, those with lived experiences, or partners who are trusted by the community / thought leaders (not just through intermediaries) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members with expertise and lived experiences are invited to inform the decision making team. • Community members are invited to deeply understand and engage in the planning process. • Community members are extended agency and belonging that ensures their honest feedback is not just solicited, but crucial to realizing a meaningful project.
<p>Community Aware: <i>Educated</i></p>	<p>The grantee organization seeks various sources and outreaches to partners and stakeholders to understand community context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass communications and engagement • Discussion forums • Research and data (surveys, focus groups) • Conversations with intermediaries, partners, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation with community members. • Review of targeted survey and focus group data for community themes. • Community needs assessments and other systematic processes for identifying the needs or gaps in service of a neighborhood, town, city, or state.



Breaking Down Equity-Centered Community Design

Inviting Diverse Co-Creators

Inviting diverse co-creators is about bringing together people with different perspectives, values, experiences, and expertise to a design scenario. Here, we critically examine who is invited to decision-making tables, and we make sure community members most impacted by the design scenario are not only invited, but included and heard.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Research subjects vs paid team
- Pop-up event in community center vs town hall

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who is part of the decision-making table? Why?
- Who is missing from the decision-making table? Why?
- How can we make decision-making spaces more accessible to people who want and need to be involved?

Building Humility & Empathy

Building humility and empathy is the step in which we examine how our own identities, values, biases, assumptions, and relationships to power and privilege impact how we engage with ourselves, each others, and the communities we work with. It's not enough to build empathy - we also have to acknowledge what we know we don't know (and what we don't know, we don't know).

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Discussing race publicly (and within teams/projects)
- Noting personal assumptions, privilege, power, and identity when interviewing others

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What assumptions and biases do I have about the people and communities impacted by this project?
- What assumptions have we built into metrics of success?

Defining & Assessing Topic and Community Needs

Work with community -- particularly those who are directly impacted by the scenario -- to learn about the specific needs, goals, values, and perspectives of those community members. Community members' insights -- even when defining the problem -- are crucial for understanding what their priorities and needs are (versus assuming what the community might want).

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Community members as project team members + include history of community efforts

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What local issues matter most to community members? How is this integrated into the project?
- What do community members want to see as a result of this project?

Ideating Approaches

Ideation is the process of brainstorming ideas for potential approaches to the topic of focus, as determined in the previous steps. Ideation happens once we have a clear problem definition and target audience.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Round robin ideation at team meeting
- Public community brainstorm

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does our ideation process include diverse stakeholders? If not, why not?
- How do ideas build on existing resources?
- How are we determining the viability of ideas? Is the process equitable?

Rapid Prototyping

Rapid prototyping is the process of bringing ideas (generated during the Ideation phase) to life. In prototyping, we make the ideas more concrete through tools like sketching, storyboarding, wireframing, and construction/building.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Concept poster planning for program
- Writing a script and creating a storyboard for short video

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does our prototyping process include diverse stakeholders? If not, why not?
- How transparent is the prototyping process?
- How are we determining the success of prototypes?

Testing and Learning

Testing and learning is the process of having others evaluate the prototype, gathering their feedback, and using their feedback to make adjustments to the prototype. Testing is a critical step in learning whether (and how well) the prototype actually meets the goals and needs of the target audience. It's crucial to test with community members with different perspectives. Testing and learning should continue throughout the lifecycle of the project.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Developing evaluation metrics for feedback + diversify places to receive feedback

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How and where are we gathering feedback? Why?
- From whom are we gathering feedback? Why?
- How do we make sure that we genuinely incorporate the feedback we gather as we iterate?
- Whose input are we [still] missing?

History and Healing

The history of the project's topic, target community, and idea must be remembered, considered, and assessed. To understand the motives behind – and the potential impact – of the project, the personal history and trauma of each actor must be considered while integrating healing practices within the process.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Hiring a unbiased counselor to provide regular check-ins for the project team
- Inviting previously involved living experts in problem solving process

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How has the community been impacted by similar projects in the past? How do we know?
- Is the project healing for the people and communities impacted, or does it (re)create trauma? How do we know?

Acknowledging, Sharing, and Dismantling Power Constructs

In every situation and scenario, there are power dynamics. Although usually used in a negative connotation, power is a necessity for improved quality of life and liberation. During any project, power must be acknowledged, dismantled, and/or shared. The sharing of power is necessary from the members with traditional access. Accepting power is beneficial for the historically undersupported.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE?

- Assessing one's permanent and temporary forms of power
- Giving up one's seat at the table (especially those with easy access)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who should have power in this project? Why?
- Who actually has power in this project? Why?
- Does the distribution of power in the project reflect the community impacted by it? If not, why not?

Learn more about the Equity-Centered Community Design Process at www.creativereactionlab.com.
