



Setting the Table to End Hunger:

**The Colorado Health Foundation's
Investment in the Colorado Blueprint
to End Hunger**



Illuminary
Perspectives

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Thank You

This evaluation report summarizes a year-long exploration of the Colorado Health Foundation's five-year investment in the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger conducted by Laura Sundstrom of Illuminary Perspectives. Thank you to all the community partners, community members, state agencies, and staff who graciously shared your time, experience, talents, and insights throughout the process. Your participation and partnership made this work possible.





Table of Contents

Executive Summary

[Page 3](#)

01 Evaluation Overview

[Page 10](#)

02 Blueprint Evolution

[Page 16](#)

03 Contribution Stories

Overview: [Page 40](#)
Connection: [Page 45](#)
Policy: [Page 53](#)
Access & Need: [Page 69](#)
Food Justice: [Page 78](#)
Awareness: [Page 85](#)
Community Capacity: [Page 91](#)
Grantmaking: [Page 98](#)

04 CHF Approach

[Page 110](#)

05 Appendix

[Page 130](#)

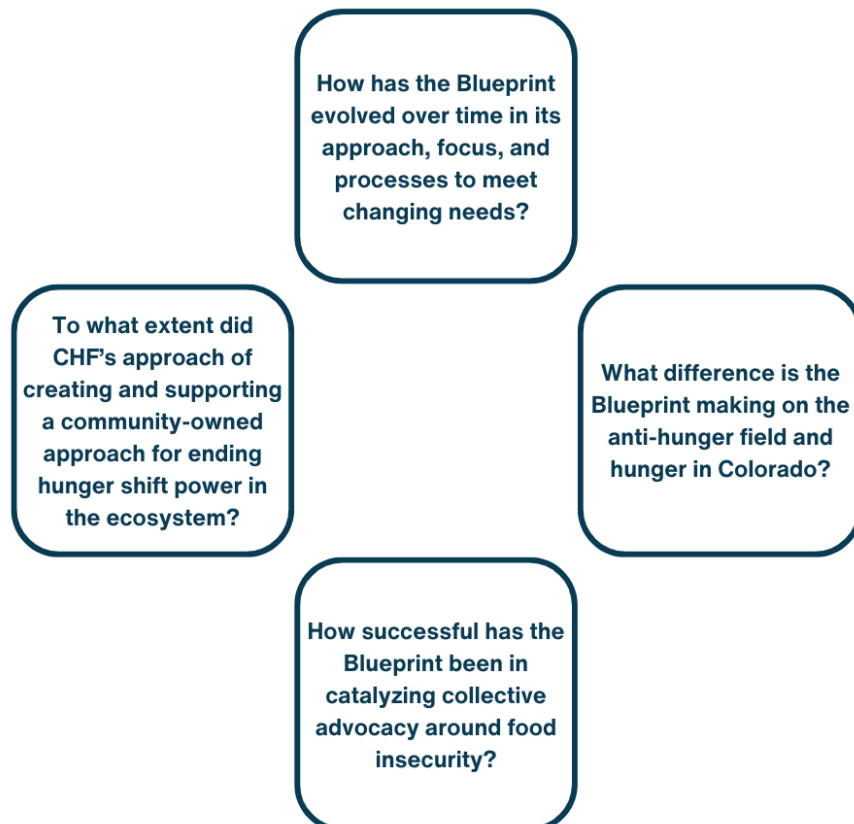
Executive Summary




Executive Summary

Five years ago, the Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) made an important commitment to support an aspirational five-year plan that resulted in the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger (the Blueprint). The Blueprint is a collaborative statewide network of partners seeking to transform Colorado's food system.

The evaluation, funded by CHF, looks at the difference CHF's five-year investment in the Blueprint made on the anti-hunger field and hunger in Colorado. The evaluation was designed to address four evaluation questions:





How has the Blueprint evolved over time in its approach, focus, and processes to meet changing needs?

The Blueprint started as a five-year plan to end hunger in Colorado with five goals focused on maximizing and improving the current food system. Over the course of five years, the Blueprint has evolved into a statewide, community-driven network to advance food sovereignty by building community capacity and laying the foundation for long-term systems change.

The Blueprint's evolution can be seen in three main areas:

Goals

Over the course of the first five years of the Blueprint, they focused on the five goals initially laid out in the [Blueprint plan](#). In response to emerging needs identified by their workgroups, project teams, and Governing Council, the Blueprint building the foundation for systems change, and the Program Office's maturation as an organization, the Blueprint grew into an opportunity to transform food systems to have sustainable, fully self-controlled community food systems in the future. These has been a growing focus on equity, community voice, and local food systems.

Partners

When the Blueprint first started, most of the partners that were actively involved in the work were state agencies and statewide anti-hunger organizations. The Blueprint consistently worked to involve, center, and elevate community members in their work. As the Blueprint moved into their transformation process, they listened to the needs, priorities, and feedback of community to deepen their commitment to being a community-led organization.

Functions & Activities

As the Blueprint evolved, the Blueprint established new or different functions or activities, such as grantmaking and new committees, in response to emerging community needs.

Over the course of its first five years, the Blueprint created systems and laid the groundwork for significant long-term change around food sovereignty. These years were critical to build relationships, establish trust, and garner momentum through short-term wins. These efforts have changed the landscape of the anti-hunger field in a way that has laid the foundation for long-term change in the future. These first five years were critical to align around a vision for food sovereignty and build the anti-hunger field to create systems change.



To what extent did CHF's approach to creating and supporting a community-owned approach for ending hunger shift power in the ecosystem?

CHF used their power within the system to create the Blueprint. Then, CHF intentionally transitioned ownership to the Blueprint's Governing Council. Transitioning ownership to the Program Office and Governing Council and CHF's flexible approach allowed the Program Office to truly lead in response to emerging needs with little direction or interference from CHF. While the creation of the Blueprint was not a fully community-owned approach, CHF's strategy of heavily investing in and trusting the Program Office allowed the Program Office to focus on being community-led and shifting power within the anti-hunger field. Yet, there are arguments that investments made directly in community could have also been effective.

CHF played four main roles in their work with the Blueprint:

Funder	CHF was the primary funder of the Blueprint's core operations for five years. CHF was helpful in supporting collaboration, providing flexibility, and aligning with their other funding strategies. However, CHF's approach to funding created conflict in the field and was perceived to lack coordination.
Convener & Connector	CHF brought people to the table to develop and launch the work of the Blueprint. Now, CHF connects anyone working in food insecurity with the Blueprint. CHF was helpful in elevating the Blueprint through their reputation, sharing information, and addressing power dynamics.
Thought Partner	CHF and the Blueprint Program Office were thought partners for each other and had candid conversations around challenges and needs. CHF was helpful in providing an outside perspective, sharing learning, making connections and being generally supportive. CHF could have directly shared more of their expertise.
Participant	CHF played an active role in Blueprint workgroup and committee meetings and set the direction of policy efforts early on. However, CHF took a step back from this type of participation as to not interfere with Blueprint operations and found other ways to engage with Blueprint work.

Overall, CHF still holds significant power in the anti-hunger field and there is still progress for the Blueprint to be truly community owned. As CHF lessened their visible role with the Blueprint, the Blueprint had autonomy over the direction of the work with less influence from CHF in how partners engaged with the work.



What difference is the Blueprint making on the anti-hunger field and hunger in Colorado?

How successful has the Blueprint been in catalyzing collective advocacy around food insecurity?

To answer the final two evaluation questions, we used an evaluative method called contribution analysis to develop “contribution stories” to assess the Blueprint’s contribution to seven observed changes (or “contribution areas”) in the anti-hunger field.

The Blueprint’s contribution can be seen most clearly and prominently in the Connection and Policy contribution areas. The Blueprint’s efforts in Connection and Policy made their contributions to the other shifts in the anti-hunger field possible. Across each of the contribution areas, the Blueprints work as a convener, in policy, and as a funder played critical roles. The Blueprint’s work in these areas supported the anti-hunger field in building deeper connections and relationships, advancing significant policy wins, increasing access to affordable, culturally relevant food in communities, and bringing more awareness of hunger in Colorado.

Connection

The anti-hunger field is more connected and operates less in silos.

The Blueprint contributed to increased connection in the field through:

- Acting as a convener and connector
- Promoting inclusivity and belonging
- Balancing engagement of local communities and statewide organizations and agencies
- Aligning the network around common goals
- Shifting power

Policy

The anti-hunger field engages in coordinated policy efforts that had led to significant policy wins.

The Blueprint contributed to coordinated policy efforts through:

- Elevating partners and communities’ policy issues
- Coordinating policy committees for partners to engage in policy efforts
- Developing shared policy agendas in collaboration with partners
- Building advocacy capacity and mobilizing communities
- Building effective relationships at the Capitol
- Taking an interconnected and incremental approach to policy



Access & Need

While efforts have increased access to nutritious and culturally relevant foods, the increased need has surpassed these.

The Blueprint contributed to increased access through:

- Promoting equity in the food system
- Providing funding opportunities to support access
- Supporting work to increase access through federal food assistance programs
- Contribution to improvement in school meals

Food Justice

The anti-hunger field is shifting to focus on food justice and addressing root causes.

The Blueprint contributed to shifting focus on food justice through:

- Setting the tone and focusing on food justice
- Focusing on inclusion

Awareness

There is a bigger spotlight on hunger and more awareness about hunger in Colorado.

The Blueprint contributed to more awareness about hunger through:

- Growing the anti-hunger conversations across the state
- Elevating understanding among political leaders
- Increasing awareness through funding opportunities

Community Capacity

There are early signals that communities are building capacity to address their local hunger needs and strengthen local food systems.

The Blueprint contributed to building community capacity through:

- Centering lived expertise
- Connecting local and state efforts
- Supporting community leaders through funding opportunities
- Driving community-led change through workgroups and committees

Grantmaking

A growing emphasis on racial justice and power dynamics among funders has resulted in pockets of grantmaking experimentation and innovation in the anti-hunger field.

The Blueprint contributed to grantmaking experimentation and innovation through:

- Modeling grantmaking processes that centered community voice
- Building community capacity through funding
- Attempting to align funders



These shifts in the anti-hunger field and the Blueprint's contribution to each of these areas was also influenced by key external factors. Across all contribution areas, several external factors played important roles:

COVID-19 Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in hunger, and spurred innovation in the anti-hunger field. The field also saw an increase in funding and federal food assistance programs that made a significant impact for those experiencing food insecurity. However, those additional funding and allotments have ended, causing another increase in need. The pandemic also highlighted and deepened the existing inequities in the food system and prioritized the need for robust local food systems, emphasizing the need to be community-led and elevate lived expertise. The pandemic drove organizations and communities to connect and collaborate more out of necessity.

Equity Focus: The increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in all sectors after the murder of George Floyd and growth of the Black Lives Matter movement influenced the anti-hunger field. This equity focus highlighted the disparities in food insecurity and support the push for culturally responsive food access.

Funding: Communities and organizations need funding and resources to engage in their critical anti-hunger work, including increasing access, engaging in policy advocacy, and implementing innovative programs. The work in the anti-hunger field is influenced by the funding that is available. When there is sufficient funding, it is easier for organizations and communities to engage in collaborative work. However, when there is scarcity, the field becomes more competitive and collaborative work is harder. Funders' priorities also influence what the anti-hunger field emphasizes in their work.

National Attention: There is a growing emphasis on anti-hunger work, equity, and social determinants of health nationally, which has trickled down to Colorado and how partners think about and engage in the work.

Partner Organizations: The work of partner organizations around the state influenced the observe change in each of the contribution areas, from the statewide anti-hunger organizations to local food coalitions to community-based organizations in all parts of Colorado.