

Recommendations for Colorado's Next Governor



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

Who We Are

The Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) is a statewide, nonprofit and nonpartisan philanthropic organization with a mission to improve the health and wellbeing of Coloradans. Through community engagement, research, grantmaking, and private sector investments, the Foundation aims to ensure that everyone in Colorado has what they need to be healthy.

The Foundation is deeply committed to listening to communities across Colorado and to amplifying their voices and interests. We develop nonpartisan educational resources to help Colorado's future leaders cultivate productive working relationships with the communities they serve. The Foundation does not endorse candidates for public office or engage in lobbying activity to support or oppose ballot measures or specific pieces of legislation. However, we do seek to inform policymakers with relevant nonpartisan research, analysis, and factual community context.

Our health is influenced not only by our individual choices but also by the conditions of our neighborhoods and the public policies that govern our lives. We believe all Coloradans should have the tools and opportunities to be healthy where they live and have a voice in the decisions that impact them. Colorado's Governor plays a critical role in advancing this vision by setting statewide priorities, directing state agencies, proposing the state budget, appointing executive branch leaders, and using the Office's public platform to make state government more coordinated, accessible, transparent, and responsive to the needs of Coloradans.

How the Governor Can Support Coloradans' Health

The following recommendations highlight how the Governor can help build a Colorado **where everyone belongs, where everyone has a say, and where everyone can thrive**. All recommendations are rooted in years of deep community engagement, statewide listening, and nonpartisan research and analysis (see resource list below).

A Colorado where everyone belongs

Belonging is shaped by whether people can count on the public systems, legal protections, and community infrastructure that make daily life safer, healthier, and more stable. Belonging exists when Coloradans live free from targeted harm or discriminatory treatment and trust that community-based organizations and government institutions respect and affirm their identities. Belonging is not only a personal experience; it is a shared responsibility that requires state leaders to defend the programs, protections, and conditions that signal every Coloradan is valued, included, and able to contribute fully to community life. The Governor can set clear expectations for state agencies, propose budgets that reflect community priorities, appoint leaders who are committed to accessible and equitable public services, and work with other statewide offices to respond when Coloradans' health, safety, or economic security are threatened.

ACTIONS THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE CAN TAKE TO ENSURE BELONGING

Defend community-based organizations and protect public health systems

- **Support a strong and sustainable nonprofit sector of community-based organizations.** Use the Governor's budget authority, agency oversight, executive leadership, and public platform to strengthen accountable partnerships with community-based organizations, reduce barriers to state funding and contracting, and protect the nonprofit sector's ability to serve Coloradans when federal, state, or local actions threaten community health, safety, or access to essential services.
- **Protect public health data, research, and evidence-based decision-making.** Ensure state agencies collect and use accurate public health surveillance data, rigorous research, and community-informed evidence to guide decisions that affect health equity and the allocation of public resources.

Protect communities experiencing discrimination and targeted harms to ensure everyone in Colorado feels safety and belonging

- **Shield Colorado communities from unlawful government overreach and targeted harm.** Use the Governor's executive leadership, agency coordination, emergency preparedness tools, and partnership with the Attorney General and legislature to protect Coloradans living on low income, Coloradans of color, rural residents, LGBTQ+ people, and immigrants and refugees when federal, state, or local government actions threaten their safety, access to services, or ability to thrive.
- **Set clear expectations for inclusive and accessible delivery of state services.** Direct state agencies to use plain-language materials, improve language access, strengthen community outreach, and deepen culturally responsive practices so Coloradans can understand, access, and trust the state government services for which they are eligible.

A Colorado where everyone has a say

Having a say means Coloradans can understand, trust, and influence the government's decisions that shape their lives. Responsive and accountable government institutions are not just a cornerstone of a healthy community--they are essential pathways to greater health and well-being for everyone in Colorado. Yet public trust depends on more than good intentions. The Governor can strengthen public trust by directing agencies to make rulemaking, public meetings, boards and commissions, grantmaking, contracting, procurement, and statewide planning more transparent, consistent, and accessible and by promoting a fair, accurate, and complete 2030 Census count that ensures every person is represented.

ACTIONS THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE CAN TAKE TO ENSURE COLORADANS HAVE A SAY

Strengthen government transparency, accessibility, and accountability

- **Implement consistent standards for inclusive community participation across rulemaking entities.** Create or designate a coordinating body to support public access to rulemaking, increase consistency between and across state agencies, and strengthen rulemaking standardization through executive direction, agency guidance, and partnership with the legislature.
- **Improve operation of boards and commissions.** Provide training for incoming board and commission members, improve public-facing information about vacancies and appointments, standardize procedures where appropriate, strengthen boards' public accountability and independence from state agencies.
- **Improve community representation of historically overlooked community members on boards and commissions.** Prioritize appointments that include community members, people with applicable lived experience, and forms of professional, regional, cultural, and issue-area expertise that are not typically represented on state boards.
- **Strengthen community engagement in policymaking processes.** Support structured opportunities for Coloradans to shape public policy decisions through mechanisms such as civic assemblies and other community-led methods that build trust, broaden participation, and make government more responsive to the people it serves.
- **Strengthen systems to make rulemaking and public meetings more accessible.** Direct agencies to provide plain-language materials, translation and interpretation, consistent public outreach, accessible meeting practices, and meaningful opportunities for people to participate in regulatory policymaking before decisions are finalized.

Protect and advance a fair, accurate, and complete 2030 Census count for all people in Colorado, particularly historically undercounted communities

- **Make a complete census count a visible statewide priority starting in 2027.** The Governor should use the Office's public platform to make census participation a clear, nonpartisan priority for Colorado. This should include early public education about why the census matters, how census data are protected, and how an accurate count supports fair representation and equitable distribution of resources for schools, healthcare, housing, transportation, emergency response, and other community needs. Early, consistent leadership from the Governor can help normalize participation and counter false information before it takes hold.
- **Prioritize active 2030 Census planning and implementation within the Governor's Office and state agency leadership.** Designate a state census lead within the Governor's Office and a lead state agency to coordinate statewide census efforts, align state agency roles, and leverage partnerships with the community and local governments.

- **Direct state resources to support 2030 Census efforts.** Provide support in the form of funding, staff capacity, coordination with local governments and community partners, and public communications, with special emphasis on outreach and education for historically undercounted populations.

A Colorado where everyone can thrive

Thriving requires more than individual effort; it depends on strong public systems, fair access to economic opportunity, accountable public systems, safe and affordable housing, and community-serving organizations that help people meet their basic needs and build stable lives. The Governor can help strengthen these conditions through budget leadership, agency direction, appointments, statewide planning, and partnership with local governments, nonprofits, small businesses, philanthropy, and the legislature.

ACTIONS THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE CAN TAKE TO HELP COLORADANS THRIVE

Advance safe, stable, and affordable housing

- **Allocate state dollars for greatest impact by prioritizing permanently affordable housing.** Direct the Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, and other relevant agencies to prioritize funding for permanently affordable housing projects such as community land trusts and other shared equity housing models.
- **Streamline and modernize government funding mechanisms.** Continue supporting and improving governance innovations that make state resources for affordable housing more efficient, accessible, and transparent.

Reduce administrative burden in state procurement, contracting, and grantmaking

- **Reduce administrative burden for organizations seeking funding from state government agencies.** Direct agencies to standardize or simplify grant applications, streamline reporting, ensure greater transparency and accessibility of grant opportunities, and prioritize collaborative relationships between state agencies and state-funded entities.
- **Reform the state's funding model to ensure streamlined access to state dollars.** As permitted by HB26-1274, expedite payment to organizations by providing a portion of grant funding up front in lieu of the state's current reimbursement-based model. Direct state agencies to implement multi-year flexible funding mechanisms where appropriate.

Expand economic opportunity for small businesses and workers

- **Resource and expand support for employee ownership of businesses in Colorado.** Ensure continued administrative and funding support for the state's Employee Ownership Commission, the Colorado Employee Ownership Office, and the tax credits it administers. Explore ways to further expand state support for employee ownership of businesses.
- **Increase access to capital and other support for small businesses.** Expand Colorado small businesses' access to capital such as loans, grants, and government procurement opportunities, as well as technical assistance and training. Increase access to supports for employees such as health insurance, childcare, and workforce training opportunities.

Defend and innovate safety net services

- **Protect funding and access to core safety net services.** Use the Governor's budget authority, agency oversight, and leadership to prioritize funding and access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other public programs focused on healthcare, food security, and housing stability, particularly when federal or local government actions threaten eligible Coloradans' ability to receive services.
- **Work across sectors to reimagine Colorado's healthcare system.** Direct HCPF and other state agencies to work together with providers, community organizations, philanthropy, local governments, and other partners to improve access to essential healthcare services and identify innovations that respond to the far-reaching impacts of Medicaid changes, federal funding shifts, and growing affordability challenges.

Additional Resources

- [Educational Resources for Candidates Seeking Public Office in Colorado](#)
- [The Colorado Health Foundation Policy Agenda: Transforming State Governance](#)
- [Report: The State of Procurement and Grantmaking in Colorado](#)
- [Pulse: The Colorado Health Foundation Poll](#)
- [Local Ballot Measure Tracker](#)
- [The Good Neighbor Guide Toolkit](#)
- [Housing on the Ballot](#)
- [Coming Together Across Differences: Messaging Recommendations](#)
- [Pride and the Power of Belonging](#)