

COLORADO HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE: TEN YEARS LATER

Prepared for The Colorado Trust by

Carl Larson, Ph.D.
Alison Christian, M.A.
Linda Olson, M.Ed.
Darrin Hicks, Ph.D.
Catherine Sweeney, Ph.D.

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The mission of The Colorado Trust is to advance the health and well-being of the people of Colorado.

The Colorado Trust
1600 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203-1604
303-837-1200
Toll free 888-847-9140
Fax 303-839-9034
www.coloradotrust.org

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INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Trust's Colorado Healthy Communities Initiative (CHCI) was begun in 1992 to assist communities in defining their own vision of a healthy community and in working to achieve that vision. The \$8.8 million initiative was modeled on "healthy city" and "healthy community" programs developed by the World Health Organization.

The CHCI started with planning grants to 29 communities across the state. Of these 29 communities, 28 completed a 15 to 18 month planning phase, which resulted in action plans for projects growing from their vision of a healthy community. These efforts to improve the health of communities across the state varied widely, from creating bus systems, medical and dental clinics and community centers to establishing programs that provide for positive youth development, quality child care, senior wellness and much more.

Following the planning phase, the communities were eligible to apply for implementation grants to carry out their action plans. Of the original 29 communities, 27 were awarded implementation grants of \$100,000 each and the implementation phase was completed in 26 of the 27 communities. The results of the planning and implementation phases have been described in earlier publications by The Colorado Trust (listed in Appendix A).

A 1999 summary of outcomes from the implementation phase – approximately four to five years after implementation started – highlighted the following preliminary findings:

- The projects were maintaining active partnerships with diverse elements of the communities, exhibiting cooperation and collaboration in varied forms.
- The communities were undertaking new projects and activities, beyond their action plans, and were averaging about six projects per community.
- Most activities focused on specific topics or issues such as transportation; some activities focused on community development processes, such as fostering citizen participation.
- Most projects resulted in important outcomes for the community as evidenced by high levels of community involvement in the projects.
- Most projects produced important results, such as new resources and services, or new forms and levels of citizen participation.
- Small minorities of CHCI projects were beginning to show progress toward long-term goals such as community decisionmaking and governance.

Now, approximately 10 years after the CHCI began and eight years after the implementation phase began, the present research was completed. Its purposes were two-fold:

- Describe the present status of CHCI projects, including differing levels of success
- Analyze differences between successful versus less successful projects, and active versus inactive projects.



RESEARCH METHODS

The research team for this 10-year review consisted of Carl Larson, Ph.D., professor emeritus, University of Denver; Alison Christian, M.A. and Linda Olson, M.Ed., doctoral students, Human Communication Studies, University of Denver; Darrin Hicks, Ph.D., associate professor, Human Communications Studies, University of Denver; and Catherine Sweeney, Ph.D., executive director, American Leadership Forum's Rocky Mountain Chapter, Colorado Mountain College. Drs. Hicks and Sweeney both have worked with Dr. Larson on prior research involving community initiatives.

The methods employed in this research were as follows:

- The individual who signed the implementation proposal for each community was contacted for the names of several people who were involved in and knowledgeable about the community's healthy community projects. Any difficulties in contacting the targeted community member resulted in consultations with Colorado Trust personnel to identify alternate community members considered knowledgeable about the community's projects.
- Interviews were conducted with two to three participants in each of the 26 communities. Four sites involved two interviews each. Twenty-two sites involved three interviews each. A total of 74 interviews were conducted. The taped interviews were transcribed and content analyzed for categories of responses. After the category systems were developed, the transcribed interviews were re-analyzed for coding frequencies of category responses.
- The participants scored their projects on six levels of success (page 5), which have been identified from our prior research for other foundations on community initiatives. These outcomes are discussed in the next section of this report.
- The participants rated their projects on the Working Together index of collaboration which has been used to assess a wide range of collaborative efforts and which asks participants to rate their projects on the degrees of collaboration present.
- The interviews, plus supporting documents and materials as well as site visits, were employed to generate brief descriptions of the major programs and accomplishments of each community.
- The research team rated each project on level of success and on quality of the processes developed and used by the community during the initiative.
- Statistical analyses focused primarily on correlations between success measures and process variables, and on differences between active sites and inactive sites for both success and process measures.
- The reliability of the data is acceptable. Comparing the responses of different interviewees to the same forced-choice questions describing their project resulted in pair-wise agreements above 85%. The correlation between participants' success ratings and the research team's success ratings, across the 26 projects was +.70. These reliabilities are slightly lower than agreement levels found by the principal researcher in other research on community initiatives, which may be due to greater time passage and more participant turnover in the present research.



COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Types or Levels of Success

In other research we have done for various foundations on community projects, we have identified the following six basic ways in which initiatives may be considered to have succeeded:

- 1. The project accomplished its specific objectives.** The goals or objectives established by the original stakeholder group were accomplished. Using this standard for success, 20 of the 26 CHCI projects reported that they had accomplished their objectives.
- 2. The project achieved more than its original goals.** Sometimes projects exceed the initial aspirations of the stakeholder group. For example, the small medical clinic housed in a modular building in Lamar grew into a 13,000 square foot medical clinic and a 4,000 square foot dental clinic. People from all counties surrounding Prowers County and from parts of Kansas made well over 10,000 visits per year. The medical clinic was described by participants as “one of the best things that ever happened to this community.” Eighteen of the 26 projects exceeded the original goals of the participants.
- 3. The project had a concrete impact on the root problem it targeted.** Whether the project made a difference in some tangible way on the “real” problem it addressed is a relatively demanding standard for success. For example, Healthy Mountain Communities (Carbondale) was instrumental in creating a bus system, now the second largest in the state, that allows approximately four million passengers a year to travel to work, recreation, shopping, health and social services, etc. Nineteen of the 26 projects reported concrete impacts on the root problems they targeted.
- 4. The project led to other projects or efforts.** One of the early trends detected in The Colorado Trust’s early reports on the CHCI was the growth and changes that occurred within the projects. Globeville illustrates this tendency for projects to develop in different, often unplanned, ways. On the north side of Denver, confronted by forces varying from freeway construction to city politics, the Globeville project has evolved from activities such as senior programs and a community newspaper to a thrift shop where free food is distributed to people in need. Twenty of the 26 projects report that their original projects have led to other projects or initiatives.
- 5. The project helped change the way the community works together on public issues.** An earlier evaluation conducted by The Colorado Trust stated that “a small minority of CHCI projects were beginning to show longer-term effects of these outcomes on changing community decisionmaking and governance.” As projects have continued, the small minority has become a majority, with 16 of the 26 projects reporting that they have seen changes in the way the community works together. You will see this kind of change reflected in the description of the San Luis Valley Community Connections. I (Carl Larson) would add the following observation to that description: I reviewed a number of newspaper accounts over the last several years which convinced me that the San Luis Valley Community Connections was influential in marshalling community support to stop interests outside the valley from acquiring parts of the valley’s

water, an incredibly valuable resource in this community.

6. **The project led to some individuals becoming new leaders or to more engaged community members.** The most pervasive outcome of the CHCI is that 21 of 26 projects reported that the leadership or civic engagement “social capital” of the community increased.

Observations on Levels of Success

The research team interviewed two to three participants from each project and collected responses to the standards of success. The level of success for each project was rated on a scale from one to six (1 being the lowest, 6 being the highest). The table below shows a composite profile derived from the individual responses:

**Number of Projects Achieving Each Success Level:
Program Participants’ Ratings**

Rating (scale of 1-6)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of Projects	3	2	3	2	6	10

The research team also rated each project using the same one to six scale relative to other collaborative projects we have studied. The number of projects that fell into each of the six rating categories is listed below.

**Number of Projects Achieving Each Success Level:
Research Team Ratings**

Rating (scale of 1-6)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of Projects	0	4	4	4	3	11

The correlation, across 26 sites, of the participants’ success totals and the research team’s success ratings was +.70, a reasonably high level of agreement between independent judges of success.

Highlights of the Community Projects

Brief descriptions of the 26 community projects follow. They are organized in broad groupings of descending success. However, practically speaking, the 26 projects cannot be ranked individually as they fit into general groups, representing different levels of success, but with different goals and existing in different situations.

Healthy Mountain Communities

Garfield, Pitkin and western Eagle counties

Healthy Mountain Communities (HMC) has always had a regional focus: from Aspen down the Roaring Fork Valley, through Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs, and down the Colorado River to Parachute. A growing region known for its skiing and tourism, its residents confront a variety of down-to-earth issues that have become focal points for Healthy Mountain Communities: transportation, affordable housing and growth.

After partnering with an Aspen leadership program to complete a successful community indicators study – a tool to help community members identify measures that capture their own definition of “health” for their community, and then to track those measures over time, HMC focused its energies on what was considered the most pressing regional issue – transportation. The local governments were convened into regional roundtables to discuss transportation problems. A travel pattern study was completed. Regional symposiums on land use and transportation were held. A state legislator from the region was brought into the community’s process. Enabling legislation was passed by the state legislature. Local governments supported the legislation, signed an intergovernmental agreement and created the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority. The region now has a bus system – the second largest in the state – that carries about four million passengers a year.

HMC is following a similar pattern in addressing another regional issue, affordable housing. Local governments have been convened and have discussed legal issues, administrative structures and strategies for creating affordable housing in the region. At the time the interviews for this study were being conducted, local governments were proposing ordinances, which would require new housing developments to commit a certain percentage of units built to affordable housing units, and the creation of a regional housing authority was being discussed. HMC is an excellent case of a community project that succeeds in multiple ways, from making an impact on the root problem to changing how citizens deal with community problems.

San Luis Valley Community Connections

Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache counties

The San Luis Valley region includes six counties, all of which have stakeholders in the San Luis Valley Community Connections (SLVCC) project. The original group of stakeholders opened the process up to the entire region to create their vision of a healthy community. The project developed guiding principles such as the solving of problems

through collaboration, diverse participation and citizen involvement. SLVCC is committed to “creating a responsible, safe, healthy, self-reliant, harmonious community.”

SLVCC is responsible for the completion of the Oral History Project, which was a collaborative effort between high school students and senior citizens to preserve historical knowledge of the local environment. SLVCC also conducted the Community Index Project, which led to a published community health report available to all area citizens. SLVCC puts on an annual Star Shine Festival to allow community organizations to showcase their involvement in and contributions to the region. The project also created the SLV Lasso Tobacco Alliance. This project’s focus was to prevent youth tobacco use and reduce current tobacco use. They succeeded in making all enclosed public areas smoke-free.

SLVCC has many ongoing projects. The Reach Out and Read program is a children’s literacy program and the Youth Assets project works to promote positive youth development. SLVCC also offers its Community Tool Kit to interested parties who seek assistance with organizing and facilitation of various efforts. These are only some of the successes of San Luis Valley Community Connections. The project is still very active. One participant stated, “You have to find your niche. We found that our niche was bringing people together.”

Piñón Project Family Resource Centers

Montezuma County

(including the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe lands)

Montezuma County is spread out and dotted with small population centers, making countywide collaboratives challenging. Yet the Piñón Project Family Resource Centers project has seen success in both identifying root issues and developing sustainable projects to address them. Their original planning committee identified needs to: strengthen the social and economic base of families, develop local citizen leadership and strengthen child development.

Three family resource centers were created to provide critical services such as parent education, literacy classes and life skill classes. A leadership development program, Montezuma Leadership, was established and has annually trained about 20 citizens for the past seven years. That program is now independent and self-sustaining. The Tree House Child Development Center is the first of its kind in the county, providing quality child-care and youth programs from birth to age 13. In addition, the Welfare to Work program, which provides job readiness training, resume writing and other employment skills, is administered through this project.

This site has found ways to partner with other groups to make the programs sustainable and relevant to the needs of the community. One unique outcome of this project is the strong involvement of the Ute Mountain Ute tribal community. This project has an active board, excellent physical facilities and a paid staff that administers the programs.

Mesa County Healthy Community Civic Forum

(formerly Healthy Community 2000)

Mesa County

The initial stakeholders involved with the Mesa County Healthy Community Civic Forum (the Civic Forum) project took a broad look at the definition of a healthy community and decided it included economics, social needs, health, environment and well-being. After an initial assessment of community needs, the Civic Forum was created. The purposes of the Civic Forum were to provide a neutral arena for community members and organizations to discuss issues and to facilitate cooperation.

The members of the Civic Forum have created many successful projects. One of their most successful projects is the Grand Valley Transit. This transit system provides bus transportation to low-income, disabled and elderly citizens. It serves approximately 800 passengers per day.

Two more projects were the formation of separate coalitions for education and prevention of substance abuse, and for teen suicide prevention – two problems for which the young people in this area have been at high risk. Another project created by the Civic Forum is the Build A Generation organization. This organization focuses on working with youth to provide them with tools and the resources to make healthy decisions. Another project begun was STARS (Summer Time Arts & Recreation for Students) to provide an outlet for youth to be creative while not in school. In addition, the Civic Forum provides a website which includes civic events and local resources. The Civic Forum also provides interim health reports to the community as well as a comprehensive summary published every four years entitled “Our Picture of Health.”

Peak to Peak Healthy Communities

Gilpin County and the Nederland mountain area

The mission of the Peak to Peak Healthy Communities Project (PPHCP) is to bring people together to make a positive impact on community issues. The goal of the project is to act as a convener and facilitator to “help organize the most pressing community issues, as the community members see them.” This project provides a place for people to have conversations about what is important to the community and to help them discover ways to take action. This project has created a more collaborative culture in the community, changing the way the community works together.

Many projects and alliances have been created out of PPHCP. Nederland gained a community center and a youth and family center, and Gilpin County is building a new \$6.9 million community center. The Community and School Alliance Fund was created to enhance fundraising for community schools. The Nederland Area Nonprofits Alliance was created to assist area nonprofit organizations with networking, fundraising and collaboration.

Currently, PPHCP is involved in a Quality of Life Indicators Project to determine what people feel are indicative of health in their community. They are implementing the Open Space, Trails, Parks and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan which includes the creation of a

lakefront park area including a baseball field, ice rink, playground and the like. They have also been commissioned to create the Greater Nederland Area Vision 2010 project, which is to become a visual display of the eight original vision statements of the project. With three full-time staff members, the executive director feels that PPHCP has “helped the community come together in a whole new way” and will continue to have a central role in “building the capacity to make some bigger things happen” for the community.

High Five Plains Foundation

Interstate-70 corridor

The High Five Plains Foundation was created to serve the Colorado I-70 corridor communities, which consists of Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers and Deer Trail. The foundation supports these communities by providing funding and assistance to jointly created community programs. The vision of the foundation was that the programs they would support would be based upon the main facets of health, safety, education and the environment.

The foundation has had many accomplishments. Probably their strongest success story is the Regional Economic Advancement Partnership (REAP). REAP was created to stimulate economic development in the I-70 corridor communities by coordinating interests from competing jurisdictions, creating jobs and maintaining open space, among other things. Another accomplishment by the foundation was the creation of the Strasburg Clinic to provide urgent/emergency medical care that had been identified by the community as a need. The foundation also was successful in promoting education in their area. They worked with Morgan Community College to create a satellite school in Bennett. The Port-to-Plains project, another success of the High Five Plains Foundation, provides truckers, especially those who are coming from the gulf port areas, an alternative route through the I-70 corridor to avoid the congestion on I-25. This project has prompted economic prosperity because the truckers use restaurants, gas stations and the like.

Other projects include monthly art and concert series, and providing flu shots for the community. The foundation’s staff includes a president, a director and a 15-member volunteer board. The foundation continues to hold meetings at which members from all communities are welcome to reassess their goals and their future direction.

Yampa Valley Partners

Routt and Moffat counties

Yampa Valley Partners’ (YVP) stated mission is to “support the development of healthy communities in Routt and Moffat Counties by fostering communication, cooperation and collaboration.” In 1995 many stakeholders from both counties gathered and realized how interdependent their community issues were. By convening local governments, citizens, voluntary civic and business communities and philanthropic organizations, they have jointly attempted to solve key issues focused on communication, child health, a livable wage, environmental concerns, community health and transportation needs.

One of their first successful projects was in getting the separate county phone area codes

combined into one local calling area. This relieved a hardship and health risks in many families, as parents were working in one community while children were being schooled in another. They also helped plan and facilitate the Telecommunications Planning Process of Northwest Colorado. This three-county process leveraged \$2.4 million dollars, resulting in the establishment of a nine-county regional telecommunications center called the Moffat County Public Safety Center. Public safety entities from the counties are now housed together in a way that fosters shared information and collaboration, benefiting public safety.

The Community Indicators Project is YVP's most informative and effective public health evaluation tool. They have established this online and find that agencies in both counties use it to evaluate their progress toward community goals and to secure funding to address critical public health issues. A related project, the Community Resource Directory, also on the Internet, provides local residents extensive information on health and community services available to them in both counties.

In addition to these projects, YVP also hosts regional community discussions focused on topics that emerge from the community indicators project, generating citizen input in addressing community needs. Most recently YVP has hosted regional forums on child health, a livable wage, economic development and women's health. Finally, through the leadership of YVP, administrative support is given to the Yampa River Basin Partnership, a project that focuses on water quality, agriculture and wildlife issues in the area. A 12-member board represents the two counties and governs YVP. Because it is highly esteemed, local governments, as well as nonprofit agencies and businesses, fund YVP on a regular basis.

Prowers' Progress to a Healthy Future

Prowers County

While a number of worthwhile projects have been connected, at different times, with the Prowers' Progress project, the standout success of this effort is the High Plains Health Center. The Colorado Trust's Colorado Healthy Communities Initiative in Prowers County was originally convened by a group of citizens concerned about health issues, Health Resources Incorporated (HRI). Once underway, the Prowers' Progress project partnered with HRI to create an assessment of community health needs, grant requests for initial funds and a group of local citizens described as an "investment group."

A small modular building first housed the medical clinic, and when a physician later left town, his office was converted to a dental clinic. The projects quickly outgrew both facilities, acquired another adjacent office which allowed for expansion of the dental facilities, and constructed a 13,000 square foot medical clinic, the High Plains Health center. Two physicians, two physician assistants, one nurse practitioner, one dentist and two full-time dental hygienists staff the center, which was described by interviewees as "state-of-the-art," "they're probably the mainstay of the health care community now" and "they're a leader in healthcare for this community for the unserved and underserved, migrants and others."

In the year preceding our interviews, there were more than 10,000 visits to the medical

clinic from people in all counties surrounding Prowers County, and from Kansas. The project has been inclusive, has involved “all different kinds of folks,” and “people from all walks of life.” One public health professional we interviewed described the center as “one of the best things that ever happened to this community.”

Healthy Pueblo Communities 2010

(formerly Healthy Pueblo 2000)

Pueblo County

The visioning process of Healthy Pueblo Communities 2010 (HPC 2010) identified five areas of common interest early on: promote strong families, curtail teen pregnancy, encourage healthy lifestyles, increase health and human services information in the public and develop school-based wellness. To address strengthening families, they established the Eastside Health Center, La Familia Puerta, which was housed in a local school. This center provides services including parenting classes, health resource education and immunizations, to name a few.

HPC 2010 also supported a project to develop a teen pregnancy prevention center and school-based educational programs on sexual health and abstinence. Because Pueblo has the highest county rate of Type II Diabetes (adult onset) in the country, HPC 2010 initiated a healthy lifestyles program called Pueblo Need Project to educate the largely Hispanic population experiencing this disease. Both this project and La Familia Puerta are now self-standing and independently governed. A successful health and human services database and directory is available online at the Pueblo Library, providing citizens with comprehensive information. A video created by HPC 2010 is used to inform and educate the public, government entities and service providers on health and human services available to all residents.

The Community Indicators Project provides information to the city and county on evaluating projects and for securing funding for special projects. In 1997, HPC 2010 merged with a task force established under the Pueblo 2010 Commission. This has strengthened the group’s collaborative network, particularly within the government. Recently this combined group completed a large research process that hosted many focus groups and surveyed more than 4,000 county citizens to determine needs in the community. A Human Investment Plan, including health and economic development, was created and currently operates with volunteers who meet monthly as an ad hoc task force under the 2010 Commission.

Citizens for Lakewood’s Future

City of Lakewood

The Citizens for Lakewood’s Future (CLF) began with a mission to mobilize people and resources to positively impact community issues. One of its initial goals was to improve communication among segments of the community. CLF also felt it was important to educate citizens about local community and government processes. These initial goals, they felt, would promote community building.

One of the first projects initiated by CLF was a Citizen’s Academy, a forum for citizens

to become more aware of and involved with local government processes. Recently, CLF started the Colfax Community Association. This group, composed of area businesses and residents, works to advance the interests of its members and the community as a whole.

One of the projects of which CLF is most proud is their After-School Arts Program. This program is run at the local Eiber, Molhorn and Stein Elementary Schools to allow children to work with professional artists. The program provides children with high-risk factors a place to go after school and helps them build positive self-esteem. In addition, CLF is involved with the Eiber Build A Generation (EBAG) after-school program at Eiber Elementary School and has started the Stein Project, which is intended to help bring together the local Spanish- and English-speaking communities to work jointly in strengthening Stein Elementary School.

Operation Healthy Communities

La Plata, San Juan and Archuleta counties
(including the Southern Ute Tribe lands)

Operation Healthy Communities (OHC) was started in order to mobilize people and resources around community-related issues. OHC provides a wide range of services to local community members, groups and businesses, including mediation, facilitation and project development for healthy community issues. Recently, OHC held a La Plata County Summit, which was attended by almost 300 community members to discuss important issues in their community.

Many successful projects have been created as a result of OHC's community involvement. Promoting Safe & Stable Families pulls together local organizations to provide education about how to prevent child abuse. The San Juan County Youth and Family Initiative provides many services to help local youth, such as after-school and summer programs and a teen center. Another successful project is the Regional Volunteerism Network, which provides training and networking resources for area nonprofit groups. OHC also provides many workshops, such as Nuts and Bolts for Nonprofits, which teaches nonprofit groups organizational and management skills.

Perhaps one of the most successful projects of OHC was their Healthy Communities Indicators project. In the published report, "Pathways to Healthier Communities," OHC outlined, among other things, what the minimum livable wage was in their community. This led to three local banks raising their starting salaries for employees, as well as the local economic district utilizing the report to make policy decisions.

Uncompahgre Healthy Community Project

Delta, Ouray and eastern Montrose counties and the Somerset area of Gunnison County

In this Delta and Montrose county project three major issues emerged in the original vision and planning process: land usage and growth, early childhood health interventions and education. The first was addressed through Geographical Information Systems that produced overlaid maps of prime agricultural land, waterways and migration routes, providing a better understanding of land development for growth. This led to further studies

and input from seven regions in Delta County, resulting in a 15-year master growth plan.

In addition, an indicators project, conducted over a period of six years, identified 87 keys to a healthy community. Those indicators have provided important information for ongoing evaluation and planning. Another project reassigned home addresses in Delta, where confusing numbering created safety concerns for the community. One particularly successful project was The Academies educational program that provided weeklong learning opportunities in grades 7 to 12. In essence, the schools closed and allowed students to attend these academies, typically taught by members of the community. This single program in the schools is credited with a steady increase in graduation rates and, because of its proven success, the school system has taken over financial and administrative responsibility for The Academies program.

Finally, the Passport Project has successfully increased immunizations in the two counties from 57% to 95%. This success has encouraged participants in the project to spend more time in parent education, with a particular focus on child health and development. The leadership in this site has been tenacious in remaining a voluntary group because they do not want to devote resources to staff salaries. Currently, however, they are struggling with the resources needed to continue the work.

Weld Citizen Action Network – WeCan

(formerly Vision Together)

Weld County

This community project was formed after surveying 1,800 citizens through interviews and involving close to 900 people in vision planning meetings over an 18-month period. WeCan's mission has been to "convene and facilitate collaborative meetings around Weld County issues with hopes of getting action groups formed who would then go out and make positive impacts on those issues." Their slogan, Connecting People and Building Communities, is enacted largely through Community Renewal Days. They host issue-focused dialogue and workshops among 300 to 500 citizens during this annual event, which then generates numerous ongoing action groups. The WeCan director and volunteers then follow up with these visionary groups, helping them accomplish their goals over time.

One visionary group is focusing on the high rate of teenage pregnancy, bringing several community groups together on a monthly basis to channel their similar interests, largely through an abstinence education program. Another group WeCan started is the Coalition to Reduce Traffic Fatalities. This network of agencies and citizens has secured a \$45,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation to find ways to reduce fatalities in Weld County, which has the worst traffic fatalities record in the state.

WeCan also started the Building Bridges Coalition, which focuses on issues of diversity. They have renewed the local government's responsibility in resolving ethnic disparities and strengthening relationships between cultural and ethnic groups in the county. Currently this group is in the talking stages of building a community cultural center to celebrate and facilitate cultural diversity. A second major event/project is Kids Voting, which teaches children responsible citizenry through voting. Twelve thousand children

participated in this educational project in its first year. WeCan also produced a Community Indicators Project, which provided data on trends and health issues that became important in focusing new action groups. A lack of funding has curtailed many of the activities, such as the Indicators Project, and the current board is in the process of determining WeCan's future financial viability.

Shaping Our Summit

Summit County

Shaping Our Summit (SOS) identified several priorities to address in Summit County. One priority was to increase collaborative input and decisionmaking on growth. They established a seven-week course to provide local residents a greater understanding of how plans are created, issues debated and decisions made related to community development. Also, a Community Collaboration Award was established on a semi-annual basis in order to recognize and promote collaboration among business, nonprofit and government organizations.

For the past five years SOS has published the Local's List, a volunteering and activities guide for the county. This guide is available on their website and is now updated by the Summit County Seniors group. They also completed a Healthy Community Indicators Project in 2000 that has been used to monitor quality of life and help the community further identify priority areas for action. Last year SOS hosted the largest "Make a Difference Day" in the state, involving hundreds of volunteers with nonprofits and schools to complete needed projects. A Sustainability Forum was established to actively educate participants about sustainable living choices.

Finally, SOS established Get Involved in Your Backyard: Community Involvement Opportunities, a column in the local newspaper, to increase citizen involvement in local decisionmaking and volunteer opportunities. Although SOS is formally dissolving due to lack of funding, they have been effective in finding other community organizations to continue their projects.

Globeville Community Resource Center

North Denver neighborhood

As Denver expanded and the freeways encroached, a small community on the north side of the city struggled with massive change. Globeville, through a small group of its long-standing residents, initiated a process that grew to include many community members focused on building "community-owned and operated programs for the community."

The Globeville Community Resource Center (GCRC) created a variety of programs in a community center that, according to the director, "brought a lot of little groups together" and helped build a sense of community for a place that is "pretty small and pretty isolated." The programs the community created, with CHCI support, included seniors programs, health fairs, a community newspaper and others – including Globeville Community Connections (GCC), a program that involves 20 children per year in service activities. Now a stand-alone nonprofit, GCC picks kids up after school, serves them

food and engages them in service and educational activities until about 7 p.m.

The Globeville Community Resource Center occupied space in a church owned by the City of Denver, but was forced out of the space in 2001. A sympathetic citizen and hotel owner on the north side offered space in his hotel, and the Globeville Community Resource Center now operates from the Hotel Regency. The GCRC director and two volunteer staff members operate a thrift shop and distribute free food to the needy, typically packages with milk, orange juice, vegetables and bread.

Boulder County Civic Forum

(formerly Boulder County Healthy Communities Initiative)

Boulder County

The Boulder County Civic Forum (BCCF) involved more than 400 citizens in a two-year process of defining health from four perspectives: people, environment, economy, and culture and society. In 1995 BCCF developed a mission statement: “To promote healthy decisionmaking that will sustain the environmental quality, livability and economic vibrancy of the Boulder County region.” To assist in this mission, BCCF produced two Boulder County Community Indicators Reports, one in 1998 and another in 2000. These reports have helped them measure community progress toward their vision.

One particular area of focus has been youth. The Youth Net report was a significant project that produced strategies for youth development. This spawned a collaboration that secured a challenge grant of \$120,000 from Rose Community Foundation to develop a comprehensive and integrated K-12 school health curriculum. The purpose of this program was to provide all kids at all levels with a more integrated approach to knowledge and skill development for health support and the prevention of a range of negative behaviors.

BCCF created an after-school project at several junior high schools providing tutoring, leadership training and constructive social interaction. BCCF has also developed a reputation for convening groups to focus on community issues collaboratively.

Healthy Living Systems

(formerly Kit Carson County Healthy Communities)

Kit Carson County

The initial project, Kit Carson County Healthy Communities (KCCHC), had as its original goal “to create a countywide not-for-profit agency to assume the role of handling community health issues.” KCCHC conducted an initial countywide needs assessment to determine what those issues would be. From this assessment, six main issues were identified, including needs for low-income housing, assisted living, and cancer and cardiac health issues.

Several projects were created under the umbrella of KCCHC. First, two assisted living projects were built – The Beehive and The Legacy. Second, The Frontier Health Network was created to oversee the development of a countywide health insurance program.

Third, Kit Carson Memorial Hospital was able to develop a cardiac rehabilitation program to educate adults on issues of cardiovascular health.

The fourth project was the formation of the Healthy Living Systems (HLS) initiative, designed to create affordable housing for the residents of Kit Carson County. The HLS initiative built Country Roads Housing, a housing project consisting of 20 units of low-income housing located in four different areas in Kit Carson County. The HLS initiative now is hoping to focus on adult wellness; however, they have had some difficulty obtaining adequate funding. All of the interviewees were proud of the way the overall project brought the entire county together for what was described as a collaboration for the first time in the county's history.

Fisher's Peak YMCA

(formerly known as CHANGE)

Las Animas County

The mission of CHANGE (Community Health and New Growth for Everyone) was to “serve the community, to provide what people need.” The original surveys of the community found general agreement on the needs for comprehensive recreational and human services. It was decided that a YMCA would meet the community's recreational and human services needs, providing recreational resources, but also counseling, child care, enrichment outside of schools and other such activities. Therefore, the goal of the project became the creation of a chartered YMCA, and its continuation became the project itself. Thus, the name of the project was changed to the Fisher's Peak YMCA. The initial goals of the Fisher's Peak YMCA were to educate citizens on how a YMCA would benefit the community, as well as raise the money necessary to become a nationally chartered YMCA.

The project is now nationally chartered and operates in the city of Trinidad. The staff includes eight board members, two full-time staff members and a CEO, and several part-time, summer staff members. The project meets a basic community need, which is the offering of after-school activities for youth. Many local children of low-income families now participate in enhancement activities at the YMCA. The project has served nearly 2,000 new individuals in the past three years.

The Fisher's Peak YMCA does not yet have recreational resources on-site (local tennis courts and other facilities are leased); however, they do offer many programs for the community. For example, they offer the “Yes” after-school tutoring program as well as Pee Wee baseball and football. The Y-Buddies program provides an adult companion with whom children can play games and receive homework assistance. The YMCA also offers programs for adults such as life-management counseling, conflict resolution programs and parenting classes, among many others. The YMCA is currently considering building a new, larger facility just outside of Trinidad that would allow for on-site recreation areas such as pools and ice rinks. The Fisher's Peak YMCA hopes to continue addressing community issues around youth and parenting as well as constantly reassessing and meeting current needs for the community.

Vision 20/20

Park County

The Vision 20/20 project involved 60 people in a vision and planning stage to address common issues in this spread-out county. Four key performance areas were identified as people and services, communication, environment and economic health. People met around these four areas and developed strategies to address issues.

Three projects emerged from this process. Two of them – the Recycle the Park program, a volunteer-staffed recycling project, and Adopt a Community Road, through which volunteers did roadside clean up – addressed the environmental performance area. Recycle the Park still exists and is seeking a mill levy in order to continue and grow the program. The third program addressed communication issues in the form of bulletin boards that were set up in public places throughout the county, providing information on meetings, agendas and decisions that affect the public.

Other projects included creating jobs for kids and expanding local child care facilities. This site had tremendous challenges connected with their dispersed population and lack of continuity of leadership. Vision 20/20 is currently in the midst of reconstituting a board to take more active leadership toward accomplishing county goals.

Commerce City: Mission Possible!

Commerce City

In response to the CHCI, 40 to 50 residents, city staff and elected officials founded the Commerce City: Mission Possible! (CCMP) project. The objective of this project was to formulate and implement a range of programs serving the teenage population of Commerce City, many of whom were identified as being at risk.

After a lengthy process of discussion, the stakeholders decided to begin with the parks department, doing various clean up and beautification projects, in exchange for limited payment. The monies earned by the teens are earmarked for buying school supplies and covering other educational expenses. The teens also receive the benefits of increased community involvement and redirecting their conduct in more productive directions.

Enviro-teens has been in operation for seven years and, though limited in scope, has been viewed as a success by both teenagers and their parents. However, due to a lack of resources and permanent staff, the program probably will not stay in operation beyond the next fiscal year. Resource and staffing shortages, along with a lack of community outreach, have also limited CCMP to the Enviro-teens program.

Custer 20/20

Custer County

The Custer 20/20 project conducted an initial survey to determine what the residents of their community felt would be beneficial for them. Overwhelmingly, the community voted favorably for a community recreational center and pool. Therefore, the building of a

recreation center became the main goal for this project. Despite a large number of interested community members initially, the project soon faced a major challenge in terms of community support. Some community members were concerned that the focus of the project would become the creation of a Planned Parenthood clinic. Although this was never a possibility for Custer 20/20, it created a sizeable rift in the community over support of the project. Ultimately, the stakeholders went so far as to release a written statement promising that a Planned Parenthood clinic would never be created. However, the lack of support delayed the creation of the recreation center.

Custer 20/20 was able to build a walking track in the meantime, which is currently in use. And the project does have the land for the recreation center. In addition, the project has undertaken many fundraising projects and has received donations toward the building of the recreation center. Currently, Custer 20/20 is undertaking a mass mailing to community citizens to attempt to raise additional funding.

Center for Self Help and Development

(formerly Neighbors Connecting for a Healthy Future)

Northeast Denver neighborhoods

(including: City Park, City Park West, Cole, Five Points, North Capitol Hill and Whittier)

The overall purpose of the Center for Self Help and Development (the Center) was to assist individuals in taking control of their lives and to lead more independent and productive lives. Welfare dependency, health care access, teen pregnancy, AIDS, substance abuse, hypertension in the African American community, access to child immunization and creating a clean, safe environment rose as root problems in their community health assessment. As the visioning group met, there was consensus that in addition to these social ills, complex race and gender issues and economic disparity required an individualized approach to any program they developed. Because these issues were so overwhelming for one program to solve, the group decided to focus on meeting individuals “where they were,” making a difference in the community one person at a time.

Spurred on by the leadership of the late Hiawatha Davis, at the time a Denver City Council member, the group established a community center to holistically help individuals become aware and responsible in their own self-help and development. The Center was housed by the Full Circle Inter-Generational Project and had two to three staff members during the mid to late 1990s. The Center offered a six-week program of daily classes addressing employment issues, assistance in accessing health care and housing, and productive social and family home life skills. In addition, the Center offered individualized weekly coaching sessions to encourage and hold participants accountable for personal growth. Individuals graduated from these classes and became part of a follow-up program to assist them in healthier life choices.

When the Welfare to Work program was instituted, many of the participants in this program were mandated to participate in the federally subsidized program. The Center became redundant in some aspects of their service and client involvement declined. Although the project itself has been phased out, community leaders felt that it was successful in two ways. First, they were able to offer a more holistic and sustainable approach to helping individuals to transition off of welfare. Second, those who partici-

pated in the visioning process developed collaboration skills that they have taken into other service agencies.

Healthy Plains Initiative

Logan, Morgan, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma counties

The main goal of the original stakeholders in the Healthy Plains Initiative (HPI) was to focus on recycling in the area. In lieu of conducting a survey or indicators project, the six counties in northeast Colorado made the decision that recycling would be a salient issue for the region. According to one former volunteer, there were other concerns initially; however, those were not pursued. The project was successful at the outset with beginning a recycling program. An agreement was formed with a local waste management company to pick up the recyclables at a satellite site. Many volunteers met monthly to fill the truck with the recyclables. Eventually, the waste management company took over the project and began to organize the recycling itself, allowing for 24-hour drop-off. Therefore, local volunteers were no longer needed.

HPI offered financial assistance to local landfills so they could obtain the resources they needed to continue recycling in the region. The project members felt that if a solid infrastructure for a recycling program could be built, it would be easier to continue recycling on a long-term basis. In addition to providing assistance to the landfills, HPI was responsible for additional outcomes in the community. They were able to provide “mini-grants” for local efforts such as proms and fishing derbies. The project disbanded approximately three years ago, primarily from lack of continued citizen interest.

Lafayette Healthy Communities Initiative

City of Lafayette

The original objective of the Lafayette Healthy Communities Initiative (LHCI) was to discover the needs of the community and provide an avenue for those needs to be met. LHCI also wanted to enhance respect for cultural and socioeconomic diversity, and to educate residents about some of the historical aspects of the community.

As a result of a yearlong discovery process, it was decided the main focus for the project would be the development of a city park to be called Old Town Park. LHCI also decided to set aside \$5,000 of the project funds specifically for the local senior center to promote health, activity and wellness among elders. Other issues community needs identified included overall community health issues (teen pregnancy, smoking) as well as healthy attitudes toward public safety. LHCI was able to donate \$23,000 to the local YMCA for the purchase of a van to use for its youth center. They also implemented the repair of sidewalks and new lights for the front entry and parking lot of the senior center.

Discover U, the most successful program to come out of this project, provides workshops for people 55 and older. Housed at the senior center, the program includes activities, workshops, presentations and fitness for the elderly to help improve their involvement in new interests, hobbies, sports and health. The program brings in weekly presenters, workshop leaders, fitness trainers and physicians to facilitate various activities.

Another successful outcome is the creation of the Old Town Walking History Trail, which highlights some of the area's historic homes through plaques about the homes and the area itself. Unfortunately, the Old Town Park was never created and the Lafayette Healthy Communities Initiative has since disbanded. The senior center and the Discover U program are still active, and the program has won some awards for its contribution to senior health.

Linc-up

Lincoln County

This effort focused on three research projects to address community needs. The first was a survey that highlighted housing needs in the county. The second was a youth survey in which every student in every area school was assessed as to their specific needs. The third was an assessment of tobacco, alcohol and drug problems in the community and the corresponding need for a resource center. Linc-up joined other agencies in collaboratively acquiring a doublewide trailer that is now used as a resource center. This center, among other things, provides housing for runaway youth and a meeting place for social service interviewing of children and parents.

In addition to the resource center, many other youth-focused social events, such as dances and New Year's Eve programs, were planned to meet the perceived needs of youth in Limon and Hugo. These programs had lower than expected turnout and eventually were discontinued. The initial collaborative discussions did stimulate other spin-off projects that developed separately in response to assessed needs. One such project was the Gift of Life Foundation, through which hospital needs are identified and funding secured to meet those needs. The initial success of this site was attributed to energetic leadership and focus, and the demise of this site was attributed to leadership turnover.

The Aurora Project

City of Aurora

The stakeholder group in Aurora saw an opportunity to create a nonprofit dedicated to community building, but the vision of the group seems to have been unclear. Some focused energy emerged around the Information on Tap project, which was housed at the South Aurora Family Resource Center. The project was designed to collect and organize information about the resources available in the metropolitan area for those in need and to provide referrals to people calling in to the Center requesting help. The range of help was broad – day care, food, emergency support, etc. This project was described as very successful, even by individuals who gave the overall project the lowest ratings on success received by any of the 26 CHCI projects.

The overall project, the Aurora Project, was described as being beset by vested interests, with some members of the project having institutional affiliations and seeking support for existing programs. The Aurora Project was unable to successfully complete a Healthy Community Indicators project to the extent that other CHCI sites have done. The project failed to accept a grant in support of its work and essentially ended its work in spring 1998, after relationships had decayed and strong resentments had developed.

SUCCESS FACTORS, SUSTAINABILITY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Success Factors

Process Quality. The strongest correlations were found between the successes of the project – whether rated by participants or by the research team – and a “quality of process” rating. The quality of process rating was constructed for a recent project this research team completed for the U.S. Congress, in which the processes were employed by inter-governmental collaboratives, known as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Through that study, the quality of process rating was found to be an unusually sensitive measure for distinguishing MPOs across the U.S.

The quality of process rating was used in the CHCI research to generate overall ratings of the quality of the processes employed by communities, as rated by the research team, based on analyses of the transcripts of interviews conducted with project participants.

These ratings were based upon factors such as:

- The process was free of favoritism
- The people were focused on broad goals, rather than individual agendas
- Decisions made in the process were based on fair criteria
- Everyone had an equal opportunity to influence decisions
- There was sufficient opportunity to challenge decisions.

The correlation between process quality and success is +.71 for the participant’s success scores and to +.83 for the research team’s success ratings. The extent to which a collaborative project succeeds is closely tied to the presence of good processes, which promote confidence, justify the investment of time and energy, and help overcome the tedious and frustrating ways in which some people experience collaboration.

It seems reasonable to conclude that The Colorado Trust designed and implemented a process that, though seen by many participants as “too long,” nevertheless promoted highly successful outcomes.

Reasons for Success. In order of decreasing frequency, the reasons for success are (each site was categorized in terms of their top two reasons as stated by participants):

1. **In touch with community needs.** (69.2%) An important program element in CHCI was the emphasis on assessment. Most of the projects were focused on “real” or clearly felt needs of the community. When the project was not in touch with community needs, low success usually resulted.
2. **Social capital.** (42.4%) The project was supported by committed people, typically volunteers, who were willing to devote time and effort.
3. **Leadership.** (42.3%) Almost as important as the commitment of community members was the presence of a strong individual leader. The profile of this leader is, in this analysis, a person who is energetic, optimistic, focused, positive, knowledgeable and a skilled facilitator.
4. **Resources.** (15.4%) Those involved with the project were successful in acquiring the resources for staff, facilities or other needs. It is important to note that the presence of resources does not contribute to success as much as the absence of

resources challenges success.

5. **Willingness to risk.** (11.5%) The stakeholders were creative, had high aspirations and were willing to “think big.” Some projects benefited by the presence of people who pushed the group to higher goals.

Challenges to Success. The challenges to success reported by the participants, in decreasing order of frequency, are:

1. **Resources.** (57.7%) Obtaining sufficient funds to accomplish the goals, or to sustain the project, was difficult or impossible.
2. **Engaging committed people.** (42.3%) Attracting people who were willing to devote time and energy to the project was difficult.
3. **Broad, long-term objectives.** (23.1%) The objectives of improving community health are complex and require long-term support, making it difficult for many institutions and organizations to provide support.
4. **Overwhelming needs.** (19.2%) The problems addressed were of such extensive or severe nature that having an impact on the problems was daunting and frustrating.
5. **Vested interests.** (15.3%) Individuals seemed more interested in pursuing specific goals not necessarily tied to the community’s needs or priorities.
6. **Community perceptions or attitudes.** (11.5%) The community had significant numbers of people, or influential people, non-supportive of the projects’ goals.

Sustainability

The correlations between sustainability and success are sufficiently strong that they may be, for all practical purposes, the same thing. Nineteen of the 26 sites are still active. They still have some infrastructure, typically a director and a board, a program serving the community, or an ongoing presence in the form of a center (e.g. child care), a clinic (e.g. medical services) or an activity performed by staff (e.g. convening and facilitating community projects).

When we compared the 19 active with the seven inactive sites, we found statistically significant differences between the two groups for each of the rating scales.

Significance Test of Comparison of Active and Inactive CHCI Sites

Rating (scale = 1-6)	Active sites (n=19)	Inactive sites (n=7)	p value
Mean process quality rating	5.05	3.43	p<.000003
Overall success rating	5.21	2.57	p<.000002
Participant’s success score	5.16	2.29	p<.000001

What seems to sustain the projects now, 10 years since the planning phase began, are two things:

- A good process, worthy of the continued investment of time and energy
- Recognizable attainment of goals, concrete impact on root problems and visible signs of impact on community processes and practices.

Recommendations

Effort that is diffused or scattered is less effective. The more focused the effort, the more likely it is to achieve set goals. Therefore, out of the many things that might be suggested to improve the success and sustainability of community projects, this research highlights three critical factors.

- **Process quality.** Provide the support, in training or facilitation, or capacity building that allows participants to create and sustain a process that promotes confidence, that makes sense in terms of goal attainment, that is responsive to the interests and needs of the stakeholders, and that promotes fair and open decisions. More time and effort should be invested in designing the processes before strategies and tasks occupy the stakeholders' attention.
- **Assessment.** Whatever form assessments take, it is clear that community efforts that devote energy to getting in touch with the needs and priorities of the community are more likely to succeed. The pitfalls of collaboration, especially the opportunity to focus on short-term, narrow or parochial interests, are more likely to be avoided if some systematic assessment is used to focus the group's interests and energies. Designing programs on the basis of assessment, or including assessment in the program design, creates a relationship between the program and the community it serves, and that relationship is mutually reinforcing over time.
- **Leadership.** The ability to attract committed people to the effort and to inspire a shared vision, as well as the energy to encourage action and optimism, are qualities that reside in differing degrees in people. The ability to create and sustain a credible and open process with a group of stakeholders may be a rare but critical quality important to the success of community projects. It may be prudent to explore ways of improving the selection of leaders, or the training of leaders, for future initiatives. This is a new and uncharted strategy, but one which might improve program success and sustainability.

One last recommendation grows not so much from the research data, but rather from an impression the principal researcher formed from visiting with those involved with the community projects. It seems that projects with unusually successful outcomes are slightly more likely to adopt a strategy of pushing the money or resources as close to the problem as they can, rather than using resources to build a structure or develop a new organization; however, there are clearly exceptions. But projects that put the resources on the problem, so to speak, and build the structure as the program grows, seem more likely to succeed and last.

APPENDIX A

The following is a listing of earlier Colorado Healthy Communities Initiative (CHCI) publications by The Colorado Trust.

Conner RF, Tanjasiri SP, Davidson M, Dempsey C, Robles G. *Citizens making their communities healthier: A description of the Colorado healthy communities initiative*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1998.

Conner RF, Tanjasiri SP, Easterling D. *Communities tracking their quality of life: An overview of community indicators project of the Colorado healthy communities initiative*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1999.

Conner RF, Tanjasiri SP, Dempsey C, Robles G. *The Colorado healthy communities initiative: Evaluation overview*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1999.

Conner RF, Tanjasiri SP, Davidson M, Dempsey C, Robles G. *The first steps toward healthier communities: Outcomes from the planning phase of the Colorado healthy communities initiative*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1999.

Conner RF, Tanjasiri SP, Dempsey C, Robles G. *Working toward healthy communities: Outcomes from the implementation phase of the Colorado healthy communities initiative*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1999.

Davis, KD. *Lessons from the field: The Colorado healthy communities initiative*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1998.

Thornton, SM. *Citizens at work: Creating positive change in communities*. Denver, CO: The Colorado Trust; 1999.

To request a copy of any of these publications, please contact us at (303) 837-1200 or visit our website: www.coloradotruster.org.