**Building and Bridging Power Strategy**

**Mid-Year Report**

**September 6, 2022**
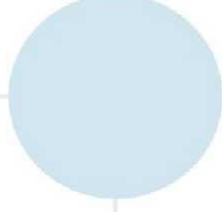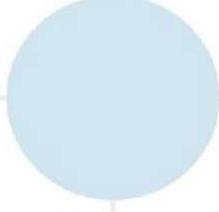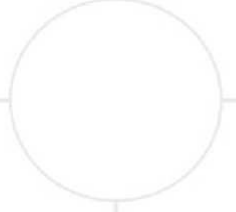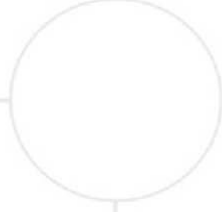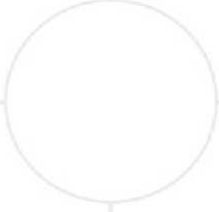
## Preface

This report was commissioned by The Colorado Trust to evaluate and learn from the Building and Bridging Power strategy which supports 23 organizations across the state of Colorado. We would like to thank Felisa Gonzales (Evaluation and Learning Manager) and Johanna Ulloa (Advocacy Program Manager) for the guidance and input on the work reflected in this report. Celesté Martinez of Celestial Alegría 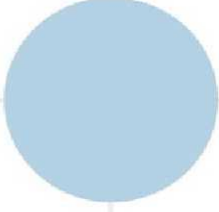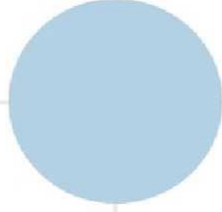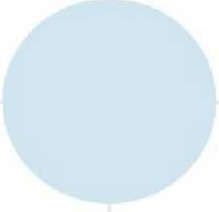also made several valuable insightful contributions to this report. Most of all, the Community Science team would also like to thank the grantee staff and community leaders that have contributed in many ways to the content and framing of the report as well as the reviews of data collection instruments. Their time and struggle to bring justice and equity to the community is both honored and appreciated. The Community Science team members contributing to this report are Michael Webb (deputy project director), Elisa Gonzalez, Maria Mata, Dillon Nguyen, Manal Sidi, and David Chavis (project director).

## Executive Summary

The Colorado Trust's (The Trust) Building and Bridging Power Strategy aims to build power among communities that have been historically disenfranchised in order to make systems more equitable and give these communities more influence over the policy decisions that impact them. Under this strategy, The Trust has funded 23 grantee organizations across Colorado—16 of whom are classified as 'grassroots' organizations and seven of whom are considered 'grasstops' organizations. Grassroots organizations are locally based, community-led organizations deeply embedded in organizing and service work to meet the needs of residents in their communities. In contrast, grasstops groups are state-wide policy advocacy organizations, most of whom are based in Denver.

The Community Science team has developed a multi-year, multi-method evaluation of the Building and Bridging Power Strategy. The evaluation will address the following learning questions:

- What activities support the building of community power, and under what circumstances are those activities most successful?
- How can the statewide policy infrastructure shift to better reflect community voice and their priorities?
- How does the Building and Bridging Power team negotiate power differences and community voice in its efforts to support power building and relationship development among grassroots and grasstops organizations?

The findings in this report are primarily based on three sources of information:

- Interviews conducted with leadership of all 23 Building and Bridging Power grantee organizations between December 2021 and February 2022.
- Interviews with 23 community leaders—one identified by each grantee organization—between February and April 2022. These community leaders were identified by grantee organization leadership as members of their community who could speak about the grantee's power-building work. Importantly, none of these community leaders were employees of the grantee organization.
- A capacity assessment, which grantee organization leadership completed in May 2022. The assessment queried perceptions of 48 power-building and organizational capacities through an online, self-report survey.

Key topics discussed in this report include background on the Building and Bridging Power strategy and evaluation, key grantee organization accomplishments, factors that both facilitated accomplishments and challenged progress, and lessons learned for consideration. We have identified key findings for each of these topics in bulleted form below; the headings correspond to chapters in the report. More information on each bulleted item is provided in the body of the report.

## Accomplishments: Building Power

The report begins by highlighting key grantee accomplishments across the three primary components of the pathway of change: building power, exercising power, and having power.  Overall, we find that grassroots grantees and community leaders reported that a variety of strategies and activities have

proven successful in building power and developing community members. Furthermore, grasstops grantees have worked to incorporate grassroots and community voice into the policy-making process.

Key findings discussed in greater detail in the body of the report include:

- Both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations used many models for involving community members in making their organizational decisions and setting priorities, including formal membership programs, participation on advisory committees, and regularly scheduled and *ad hoc* meetings and convenings of community members.
- Community members have been more engaged in educational, community building, or collective action initiatives organized by grantee organizations since Summer 2021.
- Community members have also participated in and/or supported grantee community building and direct service programs to address community needs over the past year.
- Community leaders reported that grantee organizations implemented effective activities to gather residents' input on organizations' work and priorities; disseminate relevant information; strengthen connections and promote collaborations; and increase awareness of the issues affecting community members.
- For grasstops grantee organizations, community input is one of multiple strategic considerations for determining what legislative priorities to undertake.

## Accomplishments: Exercising Power

Grassroots and grasstops organizations are critical components of the statewide policy infrastructure. The findings so far showed that the improved capacity as well as support from The Trust strengthened these organizations, thereby strengthening the statewide infrastructure ability to reflect community voice and priorities.

Key findings discussed in greater detail in the body of the report include:

- Grantee organizations established processes and allocated resources (staff time, workshops, trainings, conferences) to develop community members' leadership capacities.
- Grasstops grantee organizations were more likely to report collecting community data and informing community members on issues of concern than grassroots grantee organizations.
- Community leaders reported that grassroots grantee organizations involved community members in collective actions to exercise their power more often than grasstops organizations.
- Grantee organizations provided community members with resources to develop leadership skills and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes through the organization and partners, but diverse community members still need significantly more opportunities to learn about and participate in decision-making.

## Accomplishments: Having Power For Health Equity

The final stage of the Building and Bridging Power Pathway of Change is for communities to 'have power,' and even at this early stage of the evaluation we find that many grantee organizations have secured 'wins' for their communities. These wins include policy reforms addressing social determinants of health like affordable housing and increasing health care access; and assisting community members in securing positions of institutional power, including being elected to a school board. Many community

leaders report that, as a result of these wins, they have noticed increased responsiveness by powerful institutions—like city or county officials—to community concerns.

Key findings discussed in greater detail in the body of the report include:

- Both grassroots and grasstops organizations report securing policy 'wins' both at the local and state levels.
- Grassroots grantee organizations more often than grasstops grantee organizations reported successfully involving community members in collective action and advocacy efforts to effect policy and legislative change as well as greater accountability among elected officials and decision-makers.
- Several grantee organizations have succeeded in placing community members into positions of power.
- Community leaders reported that grantee organizations' work led to increased responsiveness by powerful institutions to community members' concerns; greater participation in and attention to initiatives organized by residents; and greater representation in staff and leadership of powerful institutions.
- Community leaders reported that some grantee organizations' efforts to promote policy reforms related to health care access, law enforcement, and housing as well as to increase resources to address issues of concern to local communities could result in policy actions or wins in the future.
- In addition to its primary goal of building power for historically marginalized communities, the work of grantee organizations contributed to health equity by addressing social determinants of health for these communities.
- Beyond addressing these social determinants of health, community leaders reported that their work with the grantee organizations led to personal growth and healing and helped them overcome traumatic events.

## Factors Facilitating these Accomplishments

The next section of the report discusses factors that facilitated grantee organizations' accomplishments, including the flexibility of Building and Bridging Power supports and the ability to customize responses to grantee organizations' own communities. Overall, grantee organization leaders are appreciative of the flexibility of the strategy's supports, especially the general operating funding. Additionally, grantee organizations have utilized capacity building funds to strengthen their organizing and organizational leadership capacities through attending relevant workshops and bringing in trained facilitators.

Key findings discussed in greater detail in the body of the report include:

- The flexible and multi-pronged support provided by the Building and Bridging Power strategy has been invaluable to grantee organizations' power-building work.
- The long-term nature and lack of specific outputs and reporting requirements are especially appreciated by grassroots grantee organizations.
- The flexibility of Building and Bridging Power funding has allowed grantee organizations to customize their power-building approach to health equity issues in their communities, including their response to COVID-19.
- Grantee organizations believe several categories of capacities are most essential for community power-building, including building relationships and trust with community members; hiring and

retaining skilled organizers; understanding equity, diversity, inclusion, and power; and the ability to communicate vital information to community members.

- Grassroots grantee organizations have strategically strengthened their organizational capacity, which is essential to conducting their activities.
- Other Building and Bridging Power supports have allowed grantee organizations to strengthen their power-building and organizational capacities by attending courses on organizational leadership and bringing in trained facilitators to lead all-staff workshops on topics like equitable advocacy.
- Grassroots leaders report stronger capacities related to power building and organizing.
- Grasstops organizations rated their capacities as higher on topics related to engaging community members for power building and organizing.
- For both grassroots and grasstops groups, leaders highlighted developing organizational capacities as 'high priority' needs.
- Despite rating their capacities in these areas as relatively high, grassroots leaders also see developing power-building and organizing capacities as a 'high priority' need.

## Factors that Challenged Progress

The report then turns to discussing challenges that grantee organizations faced in their efforts to build and bridge power in their communities. While grantee organizations have secured impressive wins in their power-building and bridging work, they also faced challenges both within their organizations and externally. Additionally, they noted several areas where they felt the Building and Bridging Power strategy could work to address those challenges.

Key findings discussed in greater detail in the body of the report include:

- While grassroots grantee organizations understand the need to address longer-term health equity goals, they often found themselves focusing on more immediate community concerns caused by the pandemic and social unrest such as police violence.
- Other Trust funding strategies had unexpected impacts on some grantee organizations.
- Staff changes at The Trust raised concerns and complications for grantee organizations.
- There were few intentional connections between grassroots and many grasstops grantee organizations to strengthen their ability to address equity and power issues.
- Grantee organizations expressed mixed opinions on the helpfulness of connections fostered through the Building and Bridging Power strategy so far.
- Grantee organizations felt that they did not have many opportunities to connect and learn from each other, especially in informal settings.
- Grasstops grantee organizations felt they lacked opportunities to go further in bridging power with grassroots grantee organizations and communities.

## Lessons Learned for Consideration

Overall, our evaluation findings reveal that even in this early stage of the Building and Bridging Power strategy, both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations have made substantial progress toward building and bridging power. Both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations have worked with community members to build, exercise, and have power through incorporating community voice into the policy process.

Based on these findings, we highlight the following considerations for future strategy implementation:

- Continue fostering connections between grassroots and grasstops organizations.
- Promote further learning and relations across grantee organizations.
- Encourage grassroots grantee organizations to connect their day-to-day work with health equity goals.
- Identify ways for The Trust to increase their assistance to building grantee capacities related to organizational leadership, board development, and other areas of need.

This report covers the early stages of the Building and Bridging Power strategy implementation. The evaluation will continue to investigate and further learning about how the Colorado Trust can best support grantee organizations to build and bridge power in their historically disenfranchised communities and others throughout Colorado.

# Contents

## Introduction

The Colorado Trust's (The Trust) Building and Bridging Power Strategy supports the development and capacity of organizations building power among community members across Colorado. It also aims to intentionally bridge power between communities, community organizing organizations, and grasstops policy advocacy organizations so that community voices can lead the development and implementation of policy at all levels. Finally, it is supporting journalism efforts that call attention to systems contributing to inequities, elevate community voice and build newsroom capacity for considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A key component of the Building and Bridging Power strategy is *flexibility.* Grantee organizations can use the various funding supports—including general operating funds, capacity building funds, and Rapid Advocacy Support Funds—in ways they deem most appropriate or necessary. We discuss how grantee organizations perceive the value of this flexibility later in the report.

To that end, the Building and Bridging Power Strategy provides various types of funding support to grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations. These include:

- General operating support
- Capacity building assistance (up to $23,000 annually)
- Response advocacy support funding (between $5,000 and $30,000 annually) to respond to pressing advocacy needs that arise over the course of the year

The Building and Bridging Power strategy has funded 23 grantee organizations—16 of which are classified as 'grassroots' organizations and seven of which are considered 'grasstops' organizations. In general, grassroots organizations are locally based, community-led organizations that are deeply embedded in organizing and service work to meet the needs of residents in their communities. Many of these organizations are led by individuals who are directly impacted by the issues central to their organization. Grassroots organizations funded by the strategy are located throughout Colorado in urban, rural, and more isolated frontier communities. In contrast, 'grasstops' groups are state-wide policy advocacy organizations, most of which are based in Denver. One should note that applicants choose their designation and may not necessarily fit clearly in one group or the other.

- For grassroots organizations, funding ($30,000–$90,000 per year) could be used to "organize a base of constituents and have a power-building strategy."
- For grasstops organizations, funding (up to $75,000 per year) could be used to "develop a plan of action to shift organizational practices and policy efforts to be in service of community needs so that authentic relationships are build that enable community connections throughout the policy process."

In addition to grassroots and grasstops organizations, the media/narrative component of the Building and Bridging Power strategy supports media outlets in Colorado to conduct accountability journalism, elevate community voices, and expand capacities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These efforts are evaluated separately and will not be discussed further in this report.

## Pathway of Change

In the first year, the evaluation team reviewed a wide range of existing materials and worked with key stakeholder groups—including Building and Bridging Power leadership and grantee organization leadership—to develop a pathway of change that illustrated how the strategy is expected to achieve its outcomes (see Exhibit 1). This pathway forms the "story line" that guides the analysis and reporting for this report.

The Trust's Building and Bridging Power strategy provides several supports to further develop the capacity of grantee organizations to build and exercise power to make needed changes in their community and other systems. This process of building and bridging power occurs within the larger context of urban, rural, and frontier communities facing a diverse economic and social conditions.

*Exhibit 1: Building and Bridging Power pathway of change*
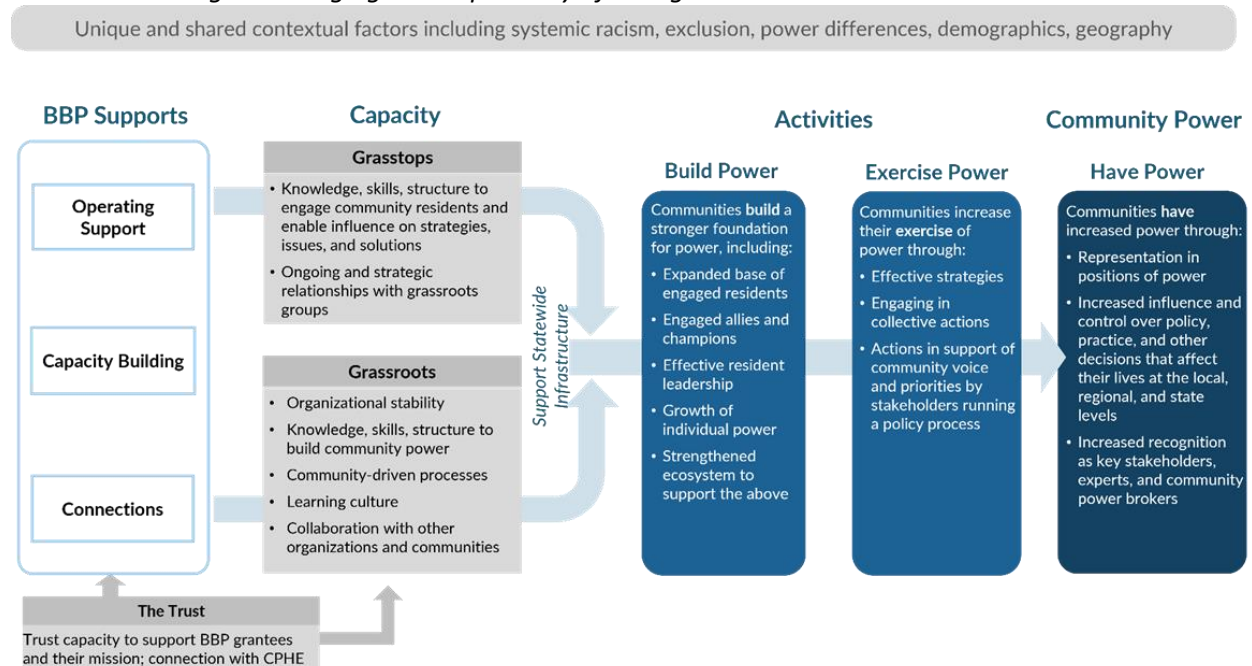


## Overview of the Evaluation and Learning Questions

The Community Science team has developed a multi-year, multi-level evaluation of the Building and Bridging Power Strategy. The overarching goal of the evaluation is to advance understanding of what is required to:

- Build power by organizing people and resources for direct involvement in issues and in decision making; and
- Build a durable, long-term policy infrastructure that bridges the expertise of community organizing and policy advocacy organizations with the lived experience of community members.

The evaluation will also examine The Colorado Trust's capacity to support grantee organizations, their missions, and their power-building efforts.

Beyond those broad goals, the evaluation will address the following learning questions:

- What activities support the building of community power, and under what circumstances are those activities most successful?
- How can the statewide policy infrastructure shift to better reflect community voice and their priorities?
- How does the Building and Bridging Power team negotiate power differences and community voice in its efforts to support power building and relationship development among grassroots and grasstops organizations?

The penultimate section of this report offers preliminary answers to these learning questions from the Community Science team.

## Evaluation Methods

The findings in this report are primarily based on three sources of information (see Appendix 1 for more information on data collection methods):

- Interviews conducted with leadership of all 23 Building and Bridging Power grantee organizations between December 2021 and February 2022
- Interviews with 23 community leaders—one identified by each grantee organization—between February and April 2022. These community leaders were identified by grantee organization staff as a member of their community who could speak about their organization's power-building work. Importantly, none of these community leaders were currently or had ever been employees of the grantee organization or a member of its leadership team (e.g., on the board).
- A capacity assessment, which grantee organization leadership completed in May 2022. The assessment (described later in this report) queried grantee organization leaders' perceptions of 48 power-building and organizational capacities through an online, self-report survey. See Appendix 2 for the contents of the capacity assessment.

Throughout the report, we refer to the percentage of interviewees who, in their interviews, supported the finding statement. For the purposes of the percentages, each interview is considered a single point of evidence (so, if there were two grantee leaders from one organization in an interview, it would only count as one piece of evidence).

The report also draws, where applicable, on interviews with leadership at all 23 grantee organizations conducted during summer 2021. These interviews were the first meeting between the Community Science team and grantee organizations and were primarily intended to inform the development of the evaluation, though they also included questions regarding grantees' organizational capacities, relationship with The Trust, and accomplishments.

We systematically analyzed the data looking specifically for patterns regarding the following:

- Types of accomplishments, outcomes, and challenges
- Factors that both facilitated these accomplishments and challenged grantees
- Grantee capacity

- Contextual factors affecting grantees

This report uses the pathway of change to tell the story of the Building and Bridging Power strategy so far. It concludes with a summary of what has been learned to this point by responding the initiative's learning questions.

## Key Grantee Organization Accomplishments

The report begins by highlighting key accomplishments across the three primary components of the pathway of change: building power, exercising power, and having power.

### Building Power

Building a collective base of power is the starting point and ongoing pursuit for building and bridging power within and for traditionally disenfranchised members of communities. The source of power for change in this strategy comes from the recruitment and sustained involvement of community members at the grassroots and grasstops levels. Building power through organizing is "essentially the process of creating politically active constituencies out of people with problems by focusing on their strengths and the solutions embedded in their experience" (Sen 2003). The following findings depict the activities and other practices undertaken by grantee organizations to build their base of power for future actions.

***Both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations used many models for involving community members in making their organizational decisions and setting priorities.*** Common elements across these models included:

- Formal membership programs
- Participation on advisory committees/councils
- Representation on board or staff
- Regularly scheduled and *ad hoc* meetings and convenings of community members
- Identifying community needs through canvassing, surveys, interviews, focus groups, gathering stories, needs assessments, daily interactions with clients
- Partnering with other organizations that have community connections.

> *"[This organization asks] the right questions to get the appropriate details and information and they'll continue to do this. Then when they have their monthly meetings and engagement with the community, all these details are shared out. They discuss how the community feels about the situation and how to move forward." (Community leader from a grassroots organization)*

Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction, many grassroots organizations are led by community members who are also directly impacted by the advocacy work they are pursuing.

***Community members have been more engaged in educational, community building, and collective action initiatives organized by grantee organizations since summer 2021.*** According to community leaders working with grantee organizations, since summer 2021 community members were more engaged with specific initiatives or activities offered by grantee organizations to disseminate information and facilitate relationship building (e.g., Know your Rights workshops, celebratory activities,

social media programming) (grassroots=44%, grasstops=43%). Community leaders also reported that community members participated in grantee-organized events to discuss pressing issues impacting themselves and their communities (e.g., increase in deportation orders, farmworkers compensation issues) and develop collective strategies to address them (grassroots=31%; grasstops=29%).

***Community leaders have participated in and/or supported grantee community building and direct service programs to address community needs over the past year.*** Other community leaders further noted that community members participated in direct service programs offered by grantee organizations (e.g., food assistance, language access support, childcare services, small business support) as recipients and as volunteers (grassroots=19%; grasstops=14%).

***Community leaders reported that grantee organizations implemented effective activities to gather residents' input on organizations' work and priorities, disseminate relevant information, strengthen connections and promote collaborations, and increase awareness of the issues affecting community members***. According to community leaders, grantee organizations effectively engaged community members in efforts to gather input on organizations' work and priorities (e.g., community/coalition meetings, surveys, one-on-one meetings) (grassroots=19%; grasstops=29%). Community leaders also described how grantee organizations implemented effective strategies to disseminate relevant information through educational events (e.g., 'Know Your Rights') and information hubs as well as to connect residents with resources available such as legal aid, grant programs, and financial assistance (grassroots=19%; grasstops=29%).

Community leaders also described grantee organizations' work to engage community members through social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram) and other virtual tools such as websites and newsletters as part of their communications and outreach efforts (56% grassroots; 29% grasstops). Other community leaders reported that grantee organizations also used traditional media such as TV, newspapers, and radio stations to raise awareness about issues affecting residents, foster support for

> *"In the last meeting, we talked about the proposal to increase farmworkers' salaries. Colorado was going to vote on that proposal. It took time but this proposal was approved."* (Community leader from a grassroots organization)

strategies to address them, and disseminate information to target audiences (e.g., Spanish-speaking communities) (grassroots=31%; grasstops=14%). Finally, community leaders considered that activities to strengthen connections and promote collaborations (e.g., entertainment events, celebrations) (grassroots=19%) and to increase the visibility of the issues affecting residents (e.g., documentary screenings) contributed to residents' involvement in grantee organizations' work (grassroots=13%; grasstops=14%).

***For grasstops grantee organizations, community input is one of multiple strategic considerations for determining legislative priorities***. Importantly, representatives of grasstops organizations admitted that community input—including input from grassroots organizations—is not always the deciding factor and that it must be balanced by input from other grasstops groups and board priorities. When grasstops organizations solicited input from grassroots organizations, it was often through formal membership programs (for grasstops organizations that operate as a coalition, such as Colorado Immigrant Rights

Coalition) or through engaging grassroots organizations as sounding boards or in an informal advisory capacity. Many grasstops grantee organizations, however, noted that receiving Building and Bridging Power funding had moved them to be more intentional and less transactional in how they considered grassroots and community input in the policy process.

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### How Grasstops Groups Incorporate Community Input

The Trust intends for grasstops funding to allow organizations to "develop a plan of action to shift organizational practices and policy efforts to be in service of community needs so that authentic relationships are build that enable community connections throughout the policy process." As noted earlier, most grasstops organizations are state-level policy advocacy organizations based in Denver. However, an important difference across grasstops organizations is that some operate as coalitions of other grasstops and grassroots groups, while others operate without the coalition framework.

For grasstops grantee organizations that operate as a coalition, they often already have robust processes for involving community input into the policy advocacy process. One grasstops grantee hosts an 'assembly' where their coalition members come together to debate and decide on a policy agency for the upcoming year. This organization also convenes steering committees of community members who are directly impacted by these policies. For these grasstops groups, funding has allowed them to continue to shift their organizing model to focus more deeply on elevating community voice.

Grasstops grantee organizations that do *not* operate as a coalition are often at an early stage of incorporating community input into the policy process. They may lack deep relationships with community-based grassroots groups, instead partnering with other grasstops groups. These grasstops grantee organizations see the value in the Building and Bridging Power strategy of working to deepen relationships with grassroots groups and community members and to make those relationships less transactional.

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## Exercising Power

Community power needs to be exercised for there to be actions that promote more equitable changes both within their communities and across systems (Staples, 2004). Well-organized efforts with effective leadership and strategic relations result in initially small but increasingly impactful changes. The following are the practices and activities that grantee organizations use in the exercising of the grassroots power.

*Grantee organizations established processes and allocated resources (staff time, workshops, trainings, conferences) to develop community members' leadership capacities.* While many grantee organizations have established these processes, the specific form they have taken differs across grantee organizations (grassroots=63%). Methods used to develop community members' leadership capacities included:

- Formal trainings and workshops
- Peer learning
- Connect community members to leadership positions in the community, such as serving on an advisory board
- Providing opportunities within the organization (volunteer or paid) to exert leadership as part of ongoing power-building work (e.g., lobbying, testifying, collecting community data)
- Recruiting and developing community members as organization staff or board members

Across these approaches, many grantee organizations worked to find ways for community leaders and residents to "own" the work and for the grantee to aid as needed. For instance, a resident would "own" a neighborhood cleanup event which the grantee organization would support by, for example, providing meeting space, training on securing permits, or offering funds for materials.

*Grasstops grantee organizations were more likely to report collecting community data and informing community members on issues of concern than grassroots grantee organizations.* Community members noted that grantee organizations supported collective actions by offering information about issues of concern (e.g., abuse by law enforcement agencies, the impact of tax policies, access to COVID-19 vaccine) and implementing data collection activities (e.g., surveys, one-on-one conversations, community canvassing) to understand needs from the perspective of those most affected (grassroots=19%; grasstops=43%).

*Community leaders reported that grassroots grantee organizations more often than grasstops organizations involved community members in collective actions to exercise their power.* These actions included activities like letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations and rallies, and delivery of testimony to lawmakers and the media (grassroots=25%; grasstops=14%). Other community members also described activities to increase accountability and elected officials' responsiveness by engaging the media and providing mechanisms to report issues (grassroots=13%; grasstops=14%).

> *"In the last meeting, we talked about the proposal to increase farmworkers' salaries. Colorado was going to vote on that proposal. It took time but this proposal was approved."* (Community leader from a grassroots organization)

*Grantee organizations provided community members with resources to develop leadership skills and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes through the organization and partners, but there still is a great need to have more opportunities for diverse community members to learn about and participate in decision-making.* Community leaders described how opportunities accessed through grantee organizations helped them to develop leadership skills and increase their influence (e.g., by serving as a facilitator, gaining experience as an organizer, leveraging connections, and attending DEI trainings) (grassroots=19%; grasstops=43%). Other community members belonged to boards, advisory bodies, or committees organized by grantee organizations and/or partners to develop and implement advocacy strategies (grassroots=25%; grasstops=14%). However, some community leaders also noted that there is a need to increase the availability and accessibility of opportunities for diverse community members to influence decision-making, particularly those who face unique social barriers such as being immigrants, having non-traditional work schedules, or having a disability (grassroots=19%; grasstops=14%).

## Having Power

When historically disenfranchised communities build and exercise their power successfully, they can bring about the changes they seek in their communities and larger systems that will equitably improve the lives of their members (Pastor et al, 2020). Communities that have power, "develop, sustain, and grow and organize basic people will act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity. "[1]

*Most grantee organizations achieved notable successes in their building and bridging of community power across Colorado.* Even at this early stage in the Building and Bridging Power funding strategy, many grantee organizations successfully placed community members into positions of institutional power, and some have achieved notable policy wins. In these following paragraphs, we summarize some of these wins, and the evaluation will continue to probe both small and large accomplishments toward increasing community members' power. The following are examples of what has been achieved so far due to increased power and ability to influence equitable change.

*Both grassroots and grasstops organizations report securing policy 'wins' at both the local and state levels.* Examples of these policy wins included:

- Securing funding for a neighborhood legal clinic to address affordable housing issues (grassroots)
- Supporting a successful ballot initiative to tax vacation rental properties, with tax revenues used to fund affordable housing (grassroots)
- Receiving funding to conduct a survey of childcare needs among low-income families (grassroots)
- Opening a legal defense clinic for undocumented immigrants with funding from the city government (grassroots)

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[1] Lead Local was a collaborative project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that brought together community power building organizations and a core set of partners, including USC Equity Research Institute, to answer the question: How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities. For more, see www.lead-local.org.

- Supporting state-level expanded tax credits and improved ID laws for undocumented immigrants (grasstops)

***Grassroots grantee organizations reported successfully involving community members in collective action and advocacy efforts more often than grasstops grantee organizations, enabling them to have the power for policy and legislative change as well as greater accountability among elected officials and decision-makers.*** Community leaders described how grantee organizations successfully advocated for the passage of legislation or the implementation of other policy changes at both state and local levels (grassroots=44%; grasstops=14%). These wins included the creation of an immigration legal defense fund, reforms limiting the use of eyewitness identification techniques by law enforcement officials, and the establishment of language access requirements for Denver city programs. Grantee organizations also worked with community leaders to successfully advocate for affordable housing measures and Medicaid coverage expansion. Other community leaders believed that their work with grantee organizations helped to promote accountability to diverse constituencies—including immigrants and individuals with disabilities—among elected representatives and government officials (grassroots=13%; grasstops=14%).

> *""[The grantee] reached out to all the constituent organizations and invited us to crash that meeting, so that essentially, we had four times as many of us present talking to the zoning board compared to the opposition and we won." (Grassroots grantee organization leader)*

***Several grantee organizations have succeeded in placing community members into positions of institutional power.*** Examples of these included community members securing elected offices on the school board or city council and achieving appointed positions on municipal commissions (grassroots=19%). Other positions of power that community members obtained include serving on the boards of both grantee organizations and other non-profit organizations. In addition, some grantee leaders shared that they have been able to support community members in launching their own non-profit organizations so they can more effectively address issues in their local community.

> *In the last six months some of these leaders have been placed in powerful positions that are being paid, we're giving back to them and their families and their community, because they're now not just advisors to us who are giving voluntarily of their time, but they're also being paid for their time and outreach in the community. (Grassroots grantee organization leader)*

***Community leaders reported that grantee organizations' work led to increased responsiveness by powerful institutions to community members' concerns, greater participation in and attention to initiatives organized by residents, and greater representation of staff and leadership in powerful institutions.*** Community leaders considered that grantee organizations' work contributed to increasing accountability and responsiveness to residents' concerns among government agencies, elected officials, and other decision-makers (grassroots=38%; grasstops=57%). According to these community leaders, elected officials and other decision-makers were participating more frequently in events and initiatives organized by residents and grantee organizations related to issues of concern (e.g., youth mental health,

farmworkers compensation, disability rights, tax reform). Other community leaders noted that more institutions are also staffed and/or led by individuals sharing the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the communities served, making them more representative and responsive to their needs (grassroots=13%; grasstops=14%).

*Community leaders reported that some grantee organizations' efforts to promote policy reforms could result in policy actions or wins in the future related to health care access, law enforcement, and housing as well as to increase resources to address issues of concern to local communities*. Apart from describing community wins achieved with grantee organizations' support, community leaders reported on potential future successes that could result from ongoing efforts. For instance, community leaders noted that some grantee organizations are supporting residents in ongoing advocacy efforts to promote policy reforms related to health care access, law enforcement, and housing (grassroots=6%; grasstops=43%). Other leaders also noted that grantee organizations continue organizing residents in efforts to increase public attention to and investments in issues of concern to local communities such as youth mental health and the impact of existing tax policies on public infrastructure (grassroots=6%; grasstops=29%). Given this early stage in the strategy implementation, it will be important for the evaluation team to track progress toward realizing these accomplishments in the coming years.

## Connecting Accomplishments to Health Equity

*In addition to its primary goal of building power for historically marginalized communities, the work of grantee organizations contributed to health equity by addressing the social determinants of health for these communities.* Per the CDC's Healthy People 2030 program, the social determinants of health include:[2]

- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities
- Polluted air and water
- Language and literacy skills

We have linked grantee accomplishments to these social determinants of health in Exhibit 2*.*

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[2] See https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health

*Exhibit 2:How Grantee Accomplishments Link to Health Equity*

| Social determinant of health | Grantee accomplishments |
|---|---|
| Safe housing and neighborhoods | • Established a legal clinic to address neighborhood housing issues (grassroots).<br>• Supported affordable housing ballot initiative (grassroots).<br>• Supported extended operating hours for a community center in their neighborhood (grassroots). |
| Racism and discrimination | • Established local and statewide legal defense clinics for undocumented immigrants (grassroots and grasstops).<br>• Supported statewide ID law reform that allows undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses (grasstops). |
| Access to nutritious foods | • Partnered with community groups to deliver healthy meals and groceries to seniors (grassroots). |
| Education, job opportunities, and income | • Advocated for expanded childcare options for low-income families (grassroots). |

**Beyond addressing these social determinants of health, community leaders reported that their work with the grantee organizations led to personal growth and healing and helped them overcome traumatic events**. These contributions included:

• Increased confidence in their ability to contribute to facilitating change and address the issues that affect their communities. This included valuing their voice and perspective, increasing their willingness to reach out to others, and appreciating their communities' assets and strengths (grassroots=38%; grasstops=29%).

• Developed new relationships and accessed support through these connections (e.g., financial support for initiatives, access to policymaking spaces) (grassroots=19%; grasstops=29%).

• Helped to overcome or address traumatic situations such as experiences of homelessness and fear of deportation (grassroots=31%).

*"[My work with this organization] has helped me realize my fear of being publicly recognized or talking in public events. In the beginning, I was attending these meetings because I felt compelled after they helped my husband with his [traffic] ticket, but then, I understood how they were creating ways for us to feel welcome and empowered. [They have] helped us see our power and hear our own voices." (Community leader from a grassroots organization)*

## Factors that Facilitated these Accomplishments

### Flexibility, Security, and Stability of Operational Support

***The flexible and multi-pronged support provided by the Building and Bridging Power strategy has been invaluable to grantee organizations' power-building work.*** All grantee organizations emphasized how valuable The Trust's flexible mode of support was in terms of long-term, flexible general operating funding and capacity-building funds. They also noted how distinct it was from support received from other funders, which typically has far more restrictions and requirements.

> *"We have felt a lot of flexibility from [Building and Bridging Power funding] … This is very important as this is long and systemic support for an organization like us. We are very grateful for this support and for the flexibility of not having weekly meetings, as we did before. Now, we have more flexibility to do and focus on our work." (Grassroots grantee organization leader)*

Grassroots grantee organizations reported the strategy's general operating funding as essential to supporting their work, based on having the (previously unavailable) flexible funding to support professional staff and build their core team to conduct their organizing and advocacy activities (see earlier headline). For grasstops grantee organizations, funding enabled them to increase staff time for engaging grassroots organizations and community members in their policy advocacy processes.

***The long-term nature and lack of specific outputs and reporting requirements are especially appreciated by grassroots grantee organizations.*** Grassroots grantee organizations often have more short term and unstable funding streams, and much of their funding is tied to specific outputs. Grassroots staff stated that the Building and Bridging Power funding model provides a level of security and stability that allows organizations to scale up their activities. It has also allowed them to engage in power-building work that often lacks the tangible outputs of direct services.

### Ability to Customize Responses for their Own Communities

***The flexibility of Building and Bridging Power funding has allowed grantee organizations to customize their power-building approach to health equity issues in their communities, including their response to COVID-19.*** The flexibility of the funding strategy has allowed grantee organizations to tailor their response to COVID and to meet unique community needs. Also, the focus on community organizing (in contrast to direct service, for example) has allowed organizations to fund advocacy work. Nevertheless, for many grantee organizations, COVID challenged them in unique ways, and they

> *"Because it is a power building grant, a community organizing grant, it's given us the impetus to go in that direction and take on these community organizing challenges. I talked on my board about it, we don't want to drift and become another social services organization, doing direct service. So, this grant, it's funding us to do this advocacy work." (Community leader from a grassroots organization)*

have spent much of the last few years doing direct service work to affected community members.

## Capacity Building, Information Technology, and Other Supports Provided by The Trust

***Grantee leaders believed several categories of capacities are most essential for community power-building.*** These included:

- Community outreach, listening, building relationships and trust, convening, creating a welcoming space for community membership development, power analysis.
- Having sufficient staff, hiring, and retaining skilled organizers (including being able to appropriately compensate organizing staff), and securing adequate funding.
- Understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, and power
- Communicating and messaging vital information to community members, including writing and formatting content, and use of social media and other tools to ensure messaging is relevant, accessible, and digestible.

***Grassroots grantee organizations have strategically strengthened their organizational capacity, which is essential to conducting their activities.*** Several grassroots groups used their general operating grant funding to establish or expand their full-time and part-time staff members, which has in turn allowed them to expand their power-building work. Grantee organizations also invested their capacity-building grants in programmatic capacity such as knowledge and skills for organizing residents, and organizational infrastructure such as strategic planning. Grassroots grantee organizations made strategic decisions around which capacities they need to build themselves versus partnering with other organizations that specialize in a particular area. For example, several organizations reported partnering with organizations that specialize in online communications rather than trying to build this skillset in-house.

***Other Building and Bridging Power supports have allowed grantee organizations to strengthen their power-building and organizational capacities.*** Examples of these supports include Capacity Building Grants and Rapid Response Advocacy Grants. These grants have allowed grantee organization leadership to attend courses on topics like organizational leadership and anti-racism, to invite trained facilitators to lead workshops for staff and board members on equitable advocacy, and to acquire software programs and other technology solutions.

***Grassroots leaders report stronger capacities related to power building and organizing.*** As noted in the text box below, grantee leaders could rate their capacities on a 1–5 scale, with 5 being the highest capacity rating. On average, grassroots leaders rated themselves as a 3.2 on capacities related to engaging for power building, which translates to a rating just above "We're doing OK but we can do better" (3) (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

## The Capacity Assessment

In a co-design process with Trust staff and grantee leadership, the Community Science team developed a capacity assessment with 48 capacity areas across seven domains. Capacities were divided between "power-building capacities" and "organizational capacities." While the instruments were customized for both grasstops and grassroots groups, in practice roughly 90 percent of the capacity areas were the same across both. The full version of the capacity assessment instrument is available in Appendix 2.

In responding to the capacity assessment, grantee organizations could rate their capacity using the following scale. In analyzing the results, the Community Science team converted each response to a number (in parentheses), with lower numbers corresponding to a lower capacity rating.

- We don't know how to do this at all = 1
- We're starting to develop these skills=2
- We're doing OK but we can do better= 3
- We're able to do it well =4
- We know everything we need to know and could teach others=5

The capacity assessment instrument also allowed grantee leaders to rate how important they perceived each capacity as a need, with the choice of selecting:

- Not a need or not applicable= 1
- Long-term (not an immediate) need =2
- Short-term (immediate) need= 3

The chart below shows the average capacity rating for both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations across the seven domains of the capacity assessment.

*Exhibit 3: Capacity assessment ratings*
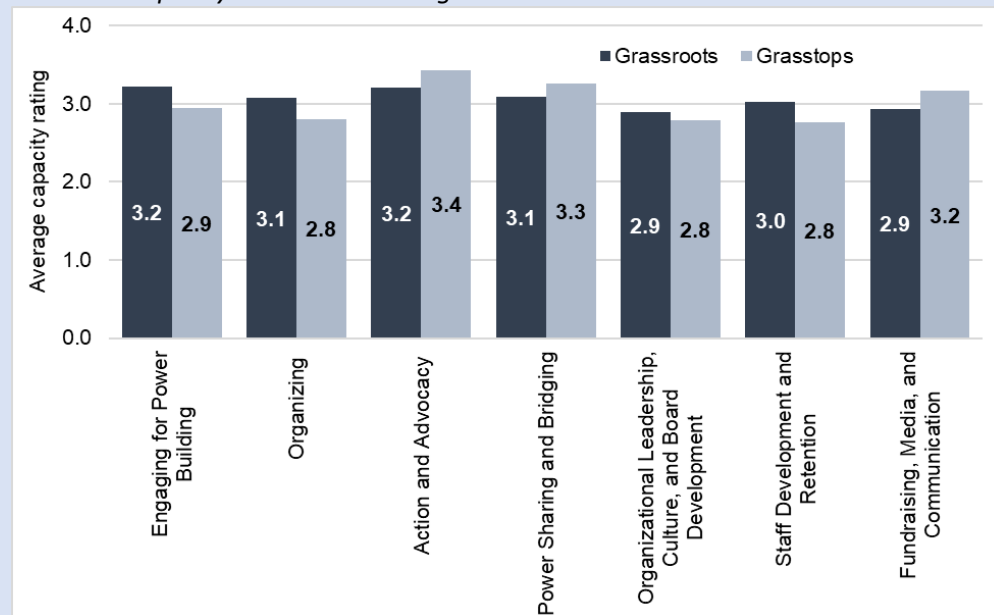
Grassroots leaders rated themselves at a similar level on capacities related to organizing. Within these categories, grassroots leaders rated themselves especially high on the following capacity items (see **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**).

*Exhibit 4: Highest-rated capacities for grassroots organizations*



*Exhibit 4: Highest-rated capacities for grassroots organizations*

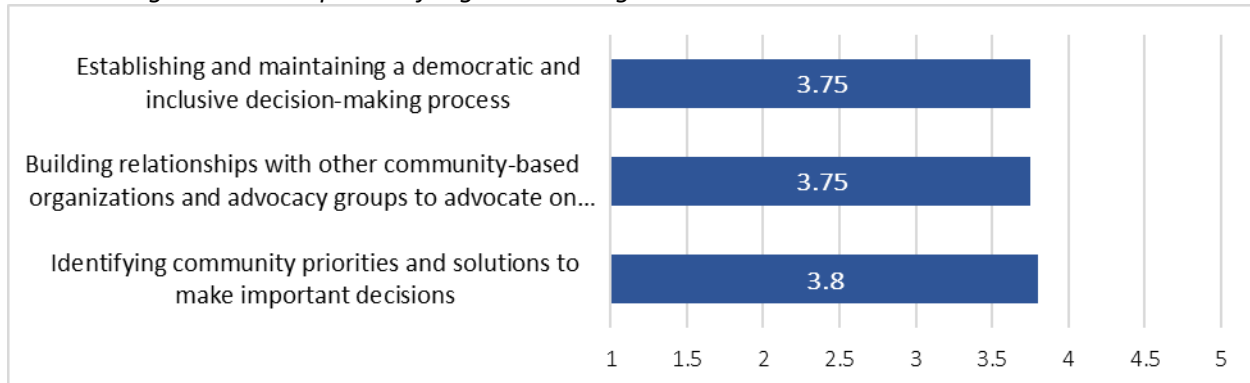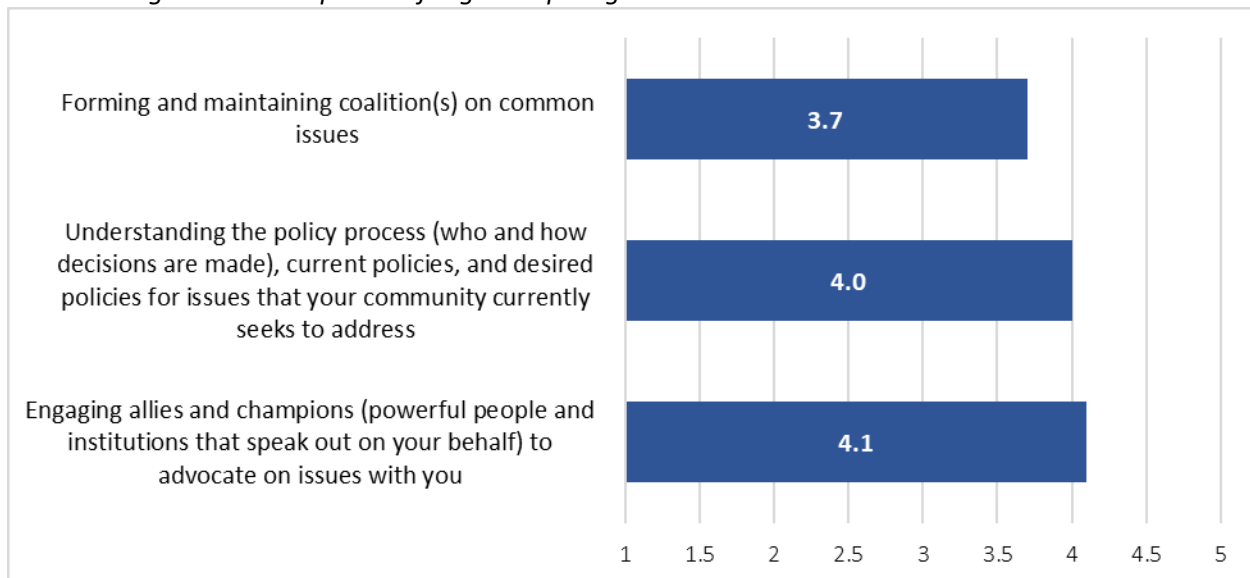| Capacity | Rating |
|---|---|
| Establishing and maintaining a democratic and inclusive decision-making process | 3.75 |
| Building relationships with other community-based organizations and advocacy groups to advocate on… | 3.75 |
| Identifying community priorities and solutions to make important decisions | 3.8 |

***Grasstops organizations rated their capacities as higher on topics related to engaging community members for power building and organizing.*** Conversely, grasstops leaders rated their organizations higher on items related to 'action and advocacy' and 'power sharing and bridging' (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). For the latter, grasstops leaders' average rating was a 3.4—the highest average rating across all the capacity domains. Within these areas, grasstops leaders rated their capacities as especially high on the following capacity items (see Exhibit 5).

*Exhibit 5: Highest-rated capacities for grasstops organizations*



| Capacity | Rating |
|---|---|
| Forming and maintaining coalition(s) on common issues | 3.7 |
| Understanding the policy process (who and how decisions are made), current policies, and desired policies for issues that your community currently seeks to address | 4.0 |
| Engaging allies and champions (powerful people and institutions that speak out on your behalf) to advocate on issues with you | 4.1 |

***For both grassroots and grasstops groups, leaders highlighted developing organizational capacities as 'high priority' needs.*** For both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations, some of their highest-need capacities relate to the domains of organizational leadership, culture, and board development on the one hand and staff development and retention on the other. For grantee organizations, their highest need capacities in this area are:

- Grasstops: ensuring board awareness, support, and overall alignment with power-shifting community engagement (average of 2.9)
- Grasstops: conducting board development activities to strengthen decision-making, leadership, inclusiveness, and diversity (average of 2.9)
- Grassroots: Establishing practices, policies, and procedures that prevent burnout of staff and volunteers (average of 2.8)
- Grassroots: Communicating effectively with members of your community (average of 2.7)

Grantee leaders rated many of their organizational capacities as some of their least-developed as well. These include 'conducting board development activities' (grassroots average of 2.7, grasstops average of 2.1) and 'establishing organizational leadership development, support, transition, and leader succession' (grassroots average of 2.6, grasstops average of 2.6).

***Despite rating their capacities in these areas as relatively high, grassroots grantee leaders also see developing power-building and organizing capacities as a 'high priority' need.*** As noted earlier in the report, grassroots grantee organizations rated their capacities related to power-building and organizing as relatively high. Nevertheless, grassroots grantee leaders also feel that developing their capacities in these areas are a high priority need for them. Specific capacity areas that leaders saw as a high priority to develop include:

- Using social media to inform and recruit community members (average of 2.8)
- Developing youth and adult leaders from historically marginalized communities through such activities as training, succession planning, etc., for advocacy and community organizing (average of 2.8)

## Factors that Challenged Progress to Build and Bridge Power

The report now turns to discussing challenges that grantee organizations faced in their efforts to build and bridge power in their communities.

## Tensions between Immediate Needs and Longer-Term Health Equity Goals

***While grassroots grantee organizations understand the need to address longer-term health equity goals, they often found themselves focusing on more immediate community concerns caused by the pandemic and social unrest such as police violence.*** As community-based non-profits, grassroots grantee organizations have deep connections within their communities and often find themselves responding to resident concerns and crises. Taking time to address these day-to-day issues can consume a substantial portion of their time and energy, and many of them have not yet explicitly noted the connection between these efforts and building longer-term health equity goals, if such a connection exists.

## Effects of Other Foundation Strategies and Decisions on Grantee Work

***Other Trust funding strategies had unexpected impacts on some grantee organizations.*** Nearly all grantee organizations reported that other Trust funding strategies impacted their work. For instance, some grassroots groups believed that other Trust-funded strategies duplicated grantee organizations' existing work in their communities. These duplicative efforts, they felt, sometimes operated in

competition with their work, making it more difficult to hire organizing staff and engage residents. Others also worried that other Trust efforts could create conflicts of interest if (hypothetically) the grantee was organizing for certain efforts in opposition to efforts that other Trust-funded organizations are doing.

***Staff changes at the Trust raised concerns and complications for grantee organizations.*** Nearly all interviewees noted the impact of turnover amongst Trust leadership and staff including how it impacted their relationship with The Trust. Losing existing relationships worried some grantee organizations, and several expressed that they did not know with whom they should communicate. Some grantee organizations tied the lack of networking opportunities with other grantee organizations to The Trust's staff turnover and its lack of staff capacity to foster those connections and to engage with grantee organizations.

## Underdeveloped Linkages between Participating Grasstops and Grassroots Organizations

***There were few intentional connections between grassroots and many grasstops grantee organizations to strengthen their ability to address equity and power inequities.*** Several grassroots grantee organizations report feeling left out or excluded from state-level policy processes and unsupported by grasstops grantee organizations. In more extreme cases, grassroots grantee organizations were concerned that grasstops groups are bypassing them when engaging residents instead of collaborating with grassroots organizations. On the other hand, some grasstops grantee organizations (especially those outside coalitions) admitted that community input is only one of many considerations when adopting a policy agenda for a specific legislative session and not necessarily the highest priority.

***Grantee organizations expressed mixed opinions on the helpfulness of connections fostered through the Building and Bridging Power strategy so far.*** Some grassroots groups appreciated connections fostered among other grantee organizations and learning from other grantee organizations, and they noted that The Trust opened doors to organizations across the state and to people in power. Grasstops groups, meanwhile, appreciated making connections to grassroots groups that they might not have been aware of previously, especially those in rural Colorado (given that most of the grasstops groups are based in Denver). Other grantee organizations, though, would appreciate if The Trust would be more explicit in the connections among groups that they are hoping to foster. For instance, does The Trust expect grasstops grantee organizations to work with grassroots grantee organizations in their policy work? This sentiment was more common among grassroots groups regarding grasstops groups, and some interviewees would like The Trust to better explain their goals for how the two groups can learn from each other.

***Grantee organizations felt that they did not have many opportunities to connect and learn from each other, especially in informal settings.*** At the time of our interviews, grantee organizations had not yet participated in the June 2022 convening, and we understand that their feedback was used to inform the design of that convening. Nevertheless, during our year-end interviews (conducted December 2021–February 2022), many grantee organizations expressed a desire for more opportunities to learn from other grantee organizations. They also felt that networking at the formal convening did not result in

longer-term connections with other grantee organizations and that these convenings were over-facilitated.

***Grasstops grantee organizations felt they lacked opportunities to go further in bridging power with grassroots grantee organizations and communities.*** Overall, the majority of grasstops grantee organizations reported making more and stronger efforts to engage grassroots voices in their policy process, and are looking to strengthen their connections, knowledge, skills, and methods to do so more effectively. As noted earlier in the document, some grasstops grantee organizations operate as coalitions, and these organizations already have robust power-bridging relationships with grassroots grantee organizations. However, for those grasstops groups that do not operate as coalitions, there is a desire to strengthen their connections to grassroots groups as well as their knowledge and skills related to power bridging.

## Contextual Factors Affecting Grantee Organizations

Underlying many of our conversations with both grantee and community leadership was the issue of *context*—meaning the geographic, social, and cultural situation in which grantee organizations operate, in addition to factors related to the organizational nature of grantee organizations.

In analyzing the interview data, the evaluation team noted the following ways in which context impacted the work of grantee organizations:

- ***The challenges and differences facing rural, urban, and more isolated frontier communities:*** Grantee organizations are located and operating in urban, rural, and frontier areas within Colorado. Their geographic location impacted the availability of funding, the number of organizations with which they had opportunities to connect, the roles of leaders, and their relationships to those in power. In rural and frontier communities, the lack of other funding sources meant that The Trust and its capacity in rural and especially in the smaller frontier communities, community and nonprofit leaders are often the same people. Organizations' location also underlies the issues for which they advocate (discussed in a following bullet point) and the political context in which they operate.
- ***Stages of organizational development:*** Another key contextual factor distinguishing grantee organizations is their position within the organizational lifecycle. Some grantee organizations— especially grasstops groups—have operated for many years, have a professional staff and board, and have forged deep relationships with other organizations in the state. On the other hand, many grassroots grantee organizations are relatively young organizations, and Building and Bridging Power funding allowed them to hire some of their first organizing staff members. While rooted in community, these organizations might lack relationships with other non-profits and with those in power in their communities.
- ***Organizations advocate for different issues.*** Another key contextual factor affecting grantee organizations is the issues that grantee organizations advocate for. Most of the grasstops organizations are well-established groups and, while the specific policies that they advocated for may vary from session-to-session, their focus area has already been determined (e.g., the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition will prioritize issues related to disability). For grassroots groups, though, their focus areas are largely resident-driven and can vary substantially across grantee organizations. Examples include promoting affordable housing, working to provide services to undocumented immigrants, promoting healthy food access, among many others. To a certain extent, the issues for

which an organization advocates—as well as their geographic location—also underlies the arenas in which they advocate. For instance, advocating for affordable housing to city governments in an urban context, or advocating for expanded childcare options to a county government in a more rural context.

## Summing it all up: Answers to Learning Questions So Far

We return to the previously presented evaluation's learning questions in this final section and identify what we have learned each at this early stage in the implementation of this strategy.

***What activities support the building of community power, and under what circumstances are those activities most successful?*** Grassroots grantee organizations and community leaders reported that a variety of strategies and activities have proven successful in building power and developing community members. In analyzing successful strategies, two factors appear to occur in common across them.

The first is that *context matters*, and the issues and strategies that galvanize a particular community may not be applicable in another. Some grantee organizations engaged their communities around issues related to affordable housing, while others prioritized services for undocumented immigrants, childcare concerns, farmworkers rights, and other relevant topics. In speaking with grantee organizations, it appeared these issues have been determined either by grantee leadership in cooperation with residents or have been elevated by residents themselves.

Context also matters in how grantee organizations engaged community members to build power. As highlighted earlier in this report, grantee organizations used a plethora of strategies—including allowing residents to 'own' certain advocacy and service efforts, inviting community members to speak at advocacy efforts, and providing residents with paid and volunteer positions—to build power among community members. In some cases, strategies were adopted through trial-and-error, especially during the uncharted waters of the COVID-19pandemic. Grantee organizations would try a certain type of event, and if it galvanized the community, they would continue holding it—and if not, they would pivot. Given the virtual nature of many of these activities, capacity building and technology funding through the Building and Bridging Power strategy was invaluable in holding these events.

***How can the statewide policy infrastructure shift to better reflect community voice and priorities?*** Grassroots and grasstops organizations are critical components of the statewide policy infrastructure. The findings so far showed that improved capacity as well as support from The Trust strengthened these organizations and therefore strengthened the statewide infrastructure ability to reflect community voice and priorities. Broadly speaking, grasstops grantee organizations either operate as a coalition of organizations where grassroots voices and community input are regularly incorporated into the policy process, or individually, in which such voices are incorporated on a more *ad hoc* and informal basis. Nevertheless, it appeared that the non-coalition grasstops grantee organizations had moved to formalize how they incorporate community voice into their policy processes. Several of these grantee organizations pointed to the importance of Building and Bridging Power funding for either supporting positions or work specifically tied to those goals and/or focusing the organization's efforts to better incorporate community voice in their work.

*How does the Building and Bridging Power team negotiate power differences and community voice in its efforts to support power building and relationship development among grassroots and grasstops organizations?* In interviews with Trust leadership and team members, there was wide acknowledgement of the power differences inherent between The Trust and grantee organizations. While some staff feel more comfortable with a very 'hands-off approach' whereby grantee organizations have the flexibility to utilize funding as they wish, others would appreciate providing grantee organizations with more guidance toward achieving health equity goals within their communities. Grantee organizations, on the other hand, often look to The Trust and its staff as knowledgeable and able to provide them with more specific guidance on how to handle problems. Discussions around the right role for foundation's staff regarding the balance of being directive or instructive and being merely facilitative will be worth considering.

## Lessons Learned for Consideration

Our evaluation findings reveal that, even in this early stage of the Building and Bridging Power strategy, both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations have made substantial progress toward building and bridging power. Both grassroots and grasstops grantee organizations have worked with community members to build, exercise, and have power through incorporating community voice into the policy process.

## Lessons Learned

Based on these findings, we highlight the following considerations for future strategy implementation:

- ***Continue fostering connections between grassroots and grasstops organizations.*** The Building and Bridging Power strategy is unique in that it brings together two arguably very different types of grantee organizations—community-facing grassroots organizations and state-level grasstops policy advocacy groups. A statewide policy advocacy infrastructure will not only require that the entity is being placed, but also require active and reciprocal relationships among those entities that make up this infrastructure. While some grasstops organizations already have robust relationships with grassroots groups (often because they operate as a coalition), other grasstops organizations would like to go deeper in how they embed grassroots groups and community voice in their policy work. With pandemic restrictions easing, The Trust may find additional formal and informal opportunities to foster grassroots-grasstops collaborations.
- ***Promote further learning and relations across grantee organizations.*** Beyond fostering greater connections between grasstops and grassroots organizations, The Trust can explore additional ways to further learning across grantee organizations. Likely due in part to the pandemic, many grantee organizations feel somewhat isolated from other grantee organizations, and they would appreciate more opportunities to learn about the work that other grantee organizations are doing.
- ***Encourage grassroots grantee organizations to explicitly connect their day-to-day work with health equity goals***. As noted earlier, grassroots grantee organizations often find themselves responding to the concerns and issues raised by residents, leaving them with little bandwidth to connect these issues to health equity goals. The Trust could identify ways and make spaces where grantee organizations can connect these day-to-day efforts with broader health equity goals, and to

identify intermediate steps that grantee organizations could undertake to further health equity in their communities.

- ***Identify ways for The Trust to increase their assistance to building grantee capacities related to organizational leadership, board development, and other areas of need.*** In responses to the capacity assessment, both grasstops and grassroots grantee organizations consistently rated their capacities related to organizational leadership and board development lower than other capacities. The Community Science team also heard from many grantee organizations at the June 2022 convening that they would specifically appreciate capacity building assistance related to their board. The Trust could consider ways to intensify or increase their capacity to build capacity for the complex and multiple needs identified among grantee organizations, both individually and in groups in order to help address these needs as early on as possible in order to see more results sooner.

## Conclusion

This report covers the early stages of the Building and Bridging Power strategy. Grantee organizations have two remaining years of funding to build power among community members and to bridge power between communities and powerful institutions. Moving forward, the evaluation will continue to evaluate how the various funding supports provided by the strategy empower grantee organizations to build and bridge power in their communities and throughout Colorado.

# Appendix 1:

# Data Collection Methods

## Appendix 1: Data Collection Methods

As noted in the introduction, the Community Science team has conducted three rounds of interviews with grantee leaders and community leaders in addition to the capacity assessment instrument. In this appendix, we provide greater detail on the data collection methods and instruments.

*Mid-year 2021 interviews*. In June and July 2021, Community Science staff interviewed grantee leaders of both grassroots and grasstops organizations. The purpose of these interviews was to acquaint leaders with the Community Science team, for the Community Science team to become knowledgeable about grantee organizations and their organizational capacities, and to inform the evaluation plan. Topics covered in these interviews included:

- Working partnership and experience working with The Trust
- Work to build community power
- Organizational capacity and connections
- Funding, capacity, and connection supports
- The grantee's evaluation needs

*Year-end 2021 interviews.* From December 2021–February 2022, the Community Science team again interviewed leaders from all 23 Building and Bridging Power grantee organizations. The primary purpose of these interviews was to understand grantee organizations' work to build and bridge power over the previous six months (since the mid-year interviews), as well as to understand grantee organizations' capacity building needs. Topics covered in these interviews included:

- Grantee organizations' organizational capacity, including their work to develop community leaders and how they collaborate with other grassroots and grasstops organizations.
- Successful examples of how members of their community have gained greater power
- Examples of community members exercising power through, e.g., supporting community members in initiating and engaging in collective actions.
- How grantee organizations communicated with and recruited community members, as well as efforts to build allies and champions (other organizations, community leaders, and people in power with shared interests).
- The role of Building and Bridging Power supports and grantee organizations' relationship with The Trust.

*Community member interviews.* In late January 2022, Community Science contacted grantee leaders at all 23 grantee organizations to identify a community leader who could speak to the grantee organizations' work to build and bridge power. This individual was to be someone the grantee had worked closely with yet represented an external perspective (i.e., they do not and have not worked as an employee or a member of the organization's board). From February–April 2022, Community Science worked with grantee leaders to identify these community leaders and schedule and conduct interviews with these community leaders.

Key topics covered in the community member interviews included:

- How long the community member had worked with the grantee, and the type of work they had done.

- Whether the grantee's leadership and priorities were representative of community voice, and the grantee's efforts to communicate with the community.
- Community involvement in grantee activities.
- Community engagement in collective actions like petitions, attending city council meetings, contacting elected officials, and protests.
- Examples (if any) of community members securing positions of power, policy wins due to collective actions, and increased engagement and responsiveness from powerful institutions
- Whether (and if so, how) the community member's relationship with the grantee resulted in personal growth and healing

# Appendix 2:

# Capacity Assessment Instrument

## Appendix 2: Capacity Assessment Instrument

## Welcome Page

Capacity building is an essential component of the Building and Bridging Power Strategy. The following assessment has been codesigned by grantee organizations, The Colorado Trust staff, and the Community Science evaluation team. It is intended to help in the capacity building planning by your organization and The Colorado Trust for all grantee organizations, future capacity building grant applications, and the strategy evaluation. Please note that only the Community Science team and the Trust staff will see your individual responses.

We would like to know how well you believe your organization is doing for each of the following capacities.  You can complete the capacity assessment yourself (as a leader of the organization) or with your leadership team.  We would like you to answer questions as they pertain to your entire organization and its leadership, not just you as an individual. We anticipate that the survey will take about 30–60 minutes.

It is important to remember that **there are no wrong answers** and completing this assessment honestly will help your organization and the Trust plan for future capacity-building efforts.  Your answers here will not affect your BBP (Building and Bridging Power) funding or future funding from The Colorado Trust in any way.

Again, there are no wrong answers, and we appreciate your honest responses.  If you have any questions about the capacity assessment or any of the measures, please contact Michael Webb at mwebb@communityscience.com or 240-813-9302.  If you have any technical issues with the survey, you can contact Dillon Nguyen at dnguyen@communityscience.com.

## Defining Terms

We have included definitions of some terms that were mentioned in the office hours below as had been requested by grantee organizations reviewing this questionnaire.

- **Trauma-informed approaches**: Trauma is defined as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.  The work of nonprofits and community organizing efforts (e.g., racism, equity) often expose them to traumatic events or trigger their reexperience of prior traumas resulting from their identities and lived experiences. Trauma-informed approaches are those things an organization does that are informed by cultural and research best practices. As a result, an organization's work is informed by how trauma manifests and impacts the people they serve and work with.
- **Anti-oppression Approach**: Anti-Oppression incorporates Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) principles and social, political, and economic theory, philosophy, historical perspectives to inform community engagement and how these conditions have led to unfair treatment and systemic inequities against communities of color and other communities. An anti-oppression approach creates greater equity with a framework that works on more than one social identity and system of oppression area at a time such as race, gender, class, immigration, ability, etc.

- **Team culture**: Identifying and establishing shared team values, beliefs, and social norms to create a safe, healthy, engaged and thriving work environment.
- **Democratic decision**-making process: Adheres to principles that every voice in the organization is valued and have an equal say either through direct voting on issues, electing officers, deciding on priorities, etc. All opinions are valued regardless of an individuals' place in the organization.
- **Authentic community engagement:** intentional, consistent, and persistent involvement of community members and leaders that influences decisions made by organizations or government entities.

Note: Definitions for trauma-informed, anti-oppression, and team culture is based on the work of Celesté Martinez with grantees.  Definition for authentic community engagement comes from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, [https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/d2/ea/d2ea81ee-0d8b-45e1-be55-0c1f17684e88/authentic_community_engagement_smart_suite_2016.pdf](https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/d2/ea/d2ea81ee-0d8b-45e1-be55-0c1f17684e88/authentic_community_engagement_smart_suite_2016.pdf).

# Power-building Capacities

**Instructions:** For each capacity, we are interested in two things.  The first is how you would rate your organization.  For this question, please choose the option that best describes how well your organization has developed this ability:

- We don't know how to do this at all.
- We're starting to develop these skills.
- We're doing OK but we can do better.
- We're able to do it well.
- We know everything we need to know and could teach others.

We are also interested in how important you perceive the capacity as a 'need' for your organization.  For this, please choose one of the following three response options:

- Not a need or not applicable.
- Short-term (immediate) need.
- Long term (not an immediate) need.

Again, there are no wrong answers, and we appreciate your honest responses.  If you have any questions about the capacity assessment or any of the measures, please contact Michael Webb at [mwebb@communityscience.com](mailto:mwebb@communityscience.com) or 240-813-9302.  If you have any technical issues with the survey, you can contact Dillon Nguyen at [dnguyen@communityscience.com](mailto:dnguyen@communityscience.com).

## Power-building Capacity Area 1: Engaging for power building

- Having a community organizing model or strategy that works for your community and the issues you will address.
- Having an engagement strategy for the communities that will be most affected by the issues you are addressing. (Grasstops only)
- Creating a welcoming and engaging environment for residents to participate in the organization's activities. (Grassroots only)

- Using traditional forms of media (radio, newspaper, television) to inform and recruit community members.
- Using social media to inform and recruit community members.
- Using other online resources like your own webpage or digital media you created (e.g., videos) to inform and recruit members.
- Building relationships with other community-based organizations and advocacy groups to advocate on common issues.
- Using in-person (door to door) and other personal methods of outreach and recruitment of community members. (Grassroots only)
- Identifying and engaging youth and adult leaders from historically marginalized communities. (Grasstops)
- Identifying community priorities and solutions to make important decisions.
- Understanding the diverse types of power in a community to consider for organizing or advocacy strategy planning.
- Establishing procedures to track long-term community engagement for internal evaluation and planning.

## Power-building Capacity Area 2: Organizing (Build Power)

- Developing youth and adult leaders from historically marginalized communities through such activities as training, succession planning, etc. for advocacy and community organizing.
- Establishing and maintaining a democratic and inclusive decision-making process.
- Facilitating a leadership decision making structure for community organizing, engagement, and or advocacy efforts (e.g., establishing leadership and committee structure).
- Being able to address conflicts with other groups and organizations so they result in positive outcomes such as improved capacity to address those issue in your community.
- Using personal and collective trauma-informed approaches to working with community leaders and members.

## Power-building Capacity Area 3: Action and Advocacy (Exercise Power)

- Understanding root causes and systemic factors contributing to health inequities and other inequities.
- Understanding the policy process (who and how decisions are made), current policies, and desired policies for issues that your community currently seeks to address.
- Developing and implementing campaigns or strategies and tactics (identifying issues, targets for change, how to make change, etc.) that advance health equity.
- Conducting formal analysis of power to determine what organizations and individuals have the most influence over the issues the community is addressing and who doesn't have influence.
- Being able to get community leaders and members into decision-making and other powerful positions in community (e.g., elected positions, boards, etc.).
- Authentically engaging community members and others in actions or inform your organizations decision making.

- Engaging allies and champions (powerful people and institutions that speak out on your behalf) to advocate on issues with you.
- Inclusively reflect on actions and improve strategies and tactics.
- Developing organizational relations with larger institutions.

## Power-building Capacity Area 4: Power Sharing and Bridging

- Forming and maintaining coalition(s) on common issues.
- Developing practices, policies, and procedures to effectively partner with other organizations in a coalition.
- Developing practices around shifting power to build up and mentor grassroots organizations (Grasstops only)
- Sharing power with grassroots leaders on decisions regarding issues to be addressed, strategies, and tactics. (Grasstops only)
- Managing "partnerships" with more powerful institutions. (Grassroots grantees only)
- Negotiating successfully with government agencies and more powerful organizations.

# Organizational Capacities

## Organizational Capacity Area 1: Organizational Leadership, Culture, and Board Development

- Establishing organizational leadership development, support, transition, and leader succession (preparing for future leaders) practices.
- Ensuring board awareness, support, and overall alignment with power-shifting community engagement.
- Conducting board development activities to strengthen decision-making, leadership, inclusiveness, and diversity.
- Developing a team culture and dynamics aligned with your organization's values and mission.
- Incorporating principles of Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Justice into your organizational practices.
- Using data to make organizational or strategy decisions (skills, resources, practices).

## Organizational Capacity Area 2: Staff Development and Retention

- Recruiting, developing, and retaining organizing or community engagement staff.
- Establishing practices, policies, and procedures that prevent burnout of staff and volunteers.
- Establishing human resources supports such as fringe benefits and other policies that will help retain staff and support their well-being.
- Building staff organizing capacity (e.g., community organizing skills, anti-oppression/antiracism approaches, organizing models, etc.).
- Engaging staff in organization decisions and sense of ownership over what your organization does and how it does it.  (e.g., strategic planning, organizational policy development).

- Creating staff alignment or agreement on the organization's power advocacy, bridging, and engagement goals.

## Organizational Capacity Area 3: Fundraising, Media, and Communication

- Fundraising for organizing, community engagement, and advocacy work.
- Fundraising for support for the administrative operations of your organizations.
- Communicating effectively with members of your community.
- Communicating effectively with staff and other members of your organization.
- Communicating effectively with partners or other collaborating organizations.
- Working with local media to get your message out in a way that supports your work and an accurate view of your community.
- Having sufficient Information Technology (IT), such as computers and software, for administrative and program purposes (e.g., resources such as equipment and skills to use that equipment and essential software).
- Developing internal evaluation practices and procedures to collect evidence about the effectiveness of your organization's successes and learn how to improve the effectiveness of your work.

## Final Questions

- Is there anything else we should know about your organization's capacity and its capacity-building efforts? [open ended]
- Do you have any suggested improvements for the capacity assessment instrument in the future? [open ended]
- Your name [open ended]
- Your role with the organization [open ended]
- If we have any questions about your responses, what is your email and phone number? [open ended]
- Did you complete the assessment with anyone else? [Yes/No response]
- If yes, what are their roles at your organization? [open ended]

# Appendix 3:

# References

## Appendix 3: References

Pastor, Manuel, Jennifer Ito, Madeline Wander, Ashley Thomas, Cynthia Moreno, Dalia Gonzalez, and Emma Yudelevitch. (2020) A primer on community power, place, and structural change. Los Angeles, CA: USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute

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Staples, Lee. 2004. Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.