



**THE
COLORADO
TRUST**

A Health Equity Foundation



DEDICATED TO ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL COLORADANS

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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH EQUITY: Accomplishments of Participating Communities, 2014-22



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Photography on cover: upper left, Barton Glasser / Special to The Colorado Trust; center right, Parker Seibold / Special to The Colorado Trust; all others by Joe Mahoney / Special to The Colorado Trust

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, The Colorado Trust (The Trust), a statewide health conversion foundation, built a model of participatory grantmaking called Community Partnerships for Health Equity (CPHE). The strategy intentionally shifted resources and decision-making power from the foundation to communities to determine locally relevant issues and solutions to advance health equity. A total of 27 communities throughout Colorado were a part of this strategy, from small, rural towns with fewer than 700 residents to large, urban neighborhoods and cities—all with varying degrees of racial, ethnic, cultural and language diversity. Exhibit 1 illustrates the communities and their locations. In June 2022, The Trust announced its decision to end the strategy by the end of that year.

The communities became part of the CPHE strategy at different times and were in varying stages of their work when the strategy concluded. A few communities disengaged from the strategy during those eight years. Because of this variability, the information about each of the 27 communities also varied, as shown in Exhibit 2. Nevertheless, across the state, teams of community members forged partnerships, built relationships and contributed to meaningful activities and change in their communities. It was hard work, and the COVID-19 pandemic made it even more challenging.

This article begins with an overview of the CPHE strategy. The rest of the paper highlights the accomplishments and impacts of the community teams participating in CPHE. The descriptions are not meant to be exhaustive, but are illustrative of the types of achievements by community teams that were in the position to implement and advance their work. Consequently, not all the community teams will be referred to in this paper. This paper is a tribute to the community teams' hard work, tenacity, perseverance and courage.

Brief Overview of the CPHE Strategy

The CPHE strategy applied two approaches. In the first approach, Trust staff identified and selected an initial group of communities to participate in developing, planning and implementing health equity plans for the foundation's consideration and approval. These communities received grants—administered by the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center, a Denver-based fiscal sponsor—to implement their projects. This approach continued until the end of the strategy. The second approach, the Community Partnerships Organizing Strategy, emerged later. This approach utilized a community organizing action cycle that emphasized quicker action sequences to support four goals: 1) develop leaders; 2) take collective action; 3) establish a community-appropriate organization; and 4) build and support a community organizing infrastructure.

The communities that were part of the phased approach and the community organizing approach all achieved different types of accomplishments and under varying conditions.

The Trust's CPHE implementation was fraught with many challenges, which this article will not explicate. What is most important is that community teams and Trust staff were proud of the community leaders' and residents' work and the relationships built. This article is not intended to analyze or make any conclusions about these accomplishments, but to recognize the communities for their hard work and achievements—no matter how small or large. In addition, the data available about the community teams and their achievements varied; consequently, some descriptions may be more extensive than others.

EXHIBIT 1: Locations of Communities

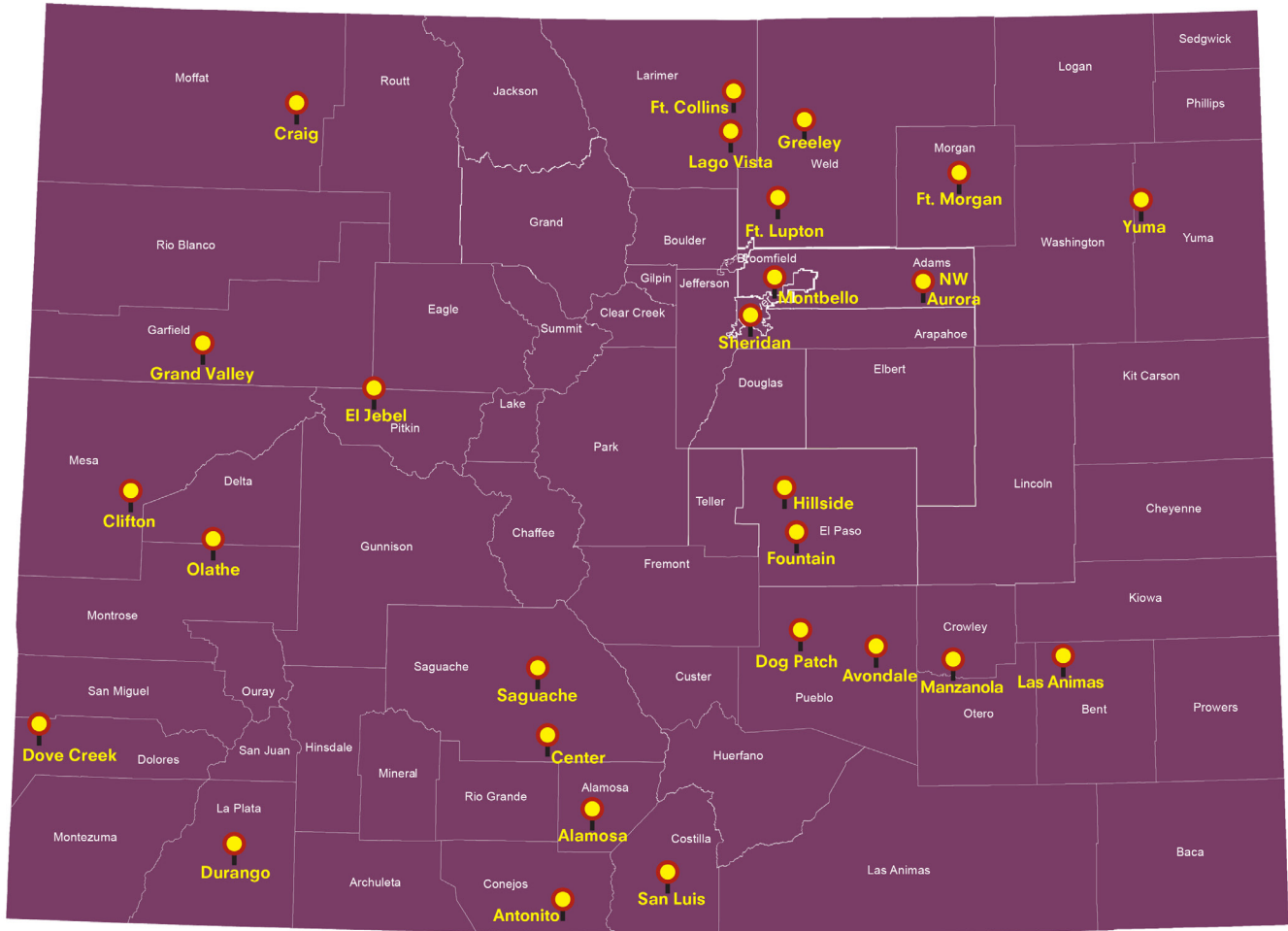


EXHIBIT 2: Communities That Participated in the CPHE Strategy

CPHE Community	Population Served or Represented	Priority Issues
Alamosa	Young adults 18-30 years old	Housing and youth development
Antonito	Latinx residents 12-35 years old	Sense of community and economic development
Avondale	Youth, elders and monolingual Spanish speakers	Sense of community and food security
Center	Migrant workers	Housing for migrant workers

CPHE Community	Population Served or Represented	Priority Issues
Clifton	Residents	Food security, community engagement and other basic needs
Craig	Youth and young adults	Substance use disorder and mental health
Dog Patch (Pueblo)	Neighborhood residents	Sense of safety and community
Dove Creek	Young families and residents 0-45 years old	Sense of community and economic development
Durango and SW Colorado	Indigenous community	Concerns and experiences of Indigenous women and families
El Jebel	Not identified	Was being created when CPHE concluded
Fort Collins	Not identified	Community engagement and language justice
Fort Lupton	Not identified	Not identified
Fort Morgan	Immigrants and residents who speak languages other than English	Language justice, affordable housing and recreational opportunities
Fountain	Downtown residents	Youth engagement, food security and economic development
Grand Valley (Parachute and Battlement Mesa)	Low-income residents, monolingual Spanish speakers and undocumented residents	Language justice, economic development, sense of community and food security
Greeley	Not identified	Food security
Hillside (Colorado Springs)	Neighborhood residents	Sense of safety and leadership development
Lago Vista (Loveland)	Black and Latinx residents, Spanish-speaking residents and youth	Sense of safety and youth development

CPHE Community	Population Served or Represented	Priority Issues
Las Animas	Not identified	Not identified
Manzanola	Youth and families	Economic development
Montbello (Denver)	Neighborhood youth	Literacy and youth development
Northwest Aurora	Not identified	Housing and homelessness
Olathe	Monolingual Spanish speakers, people living in poverty, and middle and high school youth	Economic development and language justice
Saguache	Seniors, youth and immigrants	Poverty, youth development and community engagement
San Luis	Young Hispanic adults	Sense of community and economic development
Sheridan	Low-income residents, youth and monolingual Spanish speakers	Sense of community and engagement of impacted people in public process and education
Yuma	Youth, residents who speak a language other than English and low-income communities	Housing, youth development and recreation

COMING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE: IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

Community members came together to create meaningful change in their communities and collaborated with local governments, businesses, nonprofits, schools and other key stakeholders. Members worked to learn about local power dynamics and power brokers, and built relationships in their communities to begin to understand and shift these dynamics. Community teams took time to identify the root causes of community issues and understand how their community’s historical trauma contributed to present-day inequitable community dynamics and conditions. They forged partnerships that allowed them to navigate systems, advocate and strategize for fundamental community changes. Community teams uplifted and amplified the voices of youth, Hispanic people, older adults and community members from other historically marginalized groups by involving members from these groups to inform decision-making.

According to the documentation and data available about the communities, community teams of all sizes emphasized the importance of centering community voices by engaging the community to identify issues and priorities of concern. For example, in Sheridan, a city of about 6,000 people in the Denver metropolitan region, the community team, Sheridan Rising Together for Equity (SRTFE), spoke with Sheridan residents to assess their views about what needed improvement. SRTFE conducted 400 community conversations and focus groups to identify how community needs are being met and where systems can be improved. In Manzanola, an agricultural community of about 400 people in southern Colorado, a group of residents came together to envision a better future for the town.



In Olathe, a southwestern Colorado town with half the population of Sheridan, the community team, Making Olathe Better (MOB), interviewed community members to identify critical issues and areas that needed change. MOB identified matters including the quality of the physical environment (roads, sidewalks, street lighting), a lack of community activities (especially for youth) and the need for more communication between large institutions and residents (due to language barriers and information delivery channels). Not far from Olathe, Clifton, a suburban unincorporated community of over 20,000 adjacent to Grand Junction, also worked to assess community needs. The Clifton community team administered a survey to community residents to identify their priority issues, which included a lack of safe activities for youth, unsafe parks and streets, drugs, crime and a lack of cleanliness and code enforcement. It used findings from the survey to develop a strategic plan outlining the team’s priorities.

REDUCING THE RISK OF POVERTY: HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

A 2023 Colorado Health Foundation poll indicates that 85% of Coloradans say the rising cost of living is an “extremely” or “very serious” problem.¹ Nationally, nearly one in five people spend more than half of their income on housing.² Housing affordability disproportionately affects low-income households and households of people of color. Increased housing availability and affordability facilitate community growth, as people can more easily set up longer-term opportunities.³ Affordable housing can also attract new residents and businesses that stimulate and contribute to the local economy. Research by the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that increasing access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing poverty and increasing economic mobility in the U.S.⁴

Yuma United Making Advances (YUMA) and Fort Morgan Cultures United for Progress (FMCUP) worked to reduce poverty and improve economic stability by addressing their communities’ lack of affordable housing in northeastern Colorado. The two communities

demonstrated that housing affordability could affect communities of any size, with any kind of economy or in any location. Yuma is a rural municipality with a population of around 3,500, about one-third of whom are of Hispanic and Latinx heritage. The community's primary industries are agriculture (farming, ranching), education (the school district) and medicine (the hospital). Also located in northeastern Colorado, Fort Morgan is a relatively diverse urban municipality in Morgan County with just over 11,500 people. Its primary industries are agriculture and meatpacking.

Regardless of their demographic differences, YUMA and FMCUP both worked to help residents find and maintain affordable housing. YUMA addressed housing affordability by building community capacity to understand renters' rights and the pathway to homeownership. YUMA created and distributed flyers and brochures to the community with information and resources regarding renters' rights, warranty of habitability laws and eviction processes. It printed the materials in English and Spanish. YUMA also partnered with 9to5 Colorado and Colorado Poverty Law Project to host virtual and in-person renters' rights training. YUMA wanted to increase the community's awareness of resources and programs to help people, especially first-time home buyers, purchase a home. It hosted a workshop on homeownership, in partnership with Equitable Savings and Loan, a local bank and U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. YUMA described the seminar as "most beneficial" to their community, because the team members felt that many people stay in difficult renting situations due to a lack of knowledge about the tools and resources needed to purchase a home.

FMCUP received a \$70,000 grant from the Colorado Health Foundation to assess housing needs in the community. Through this work, FMCUP agreed to contract with an economic and financial consulting firm (which has offices in Denver and specializes in urban and regional planning) to assist in the development of a comprehensive housing needs assessment. This work 1) deepened FMCUP's critical understanding of community planning processes; 2) facilitated FMCUP's identification of community housing solutions; and 3) culminated in a detailed housing analysis and action plan that will serve as FMCUP's future blueprint. The comprehensive housing needs assessment included representation from Fort Morgan residents and resulted in a publication describing local housing needs and providing recommendations. The 102-page report included an executive summary; information on housing demand, housing supply and the housing system; an affordability analysis; community survey findings; recommendations; and an action plan. Following the assessment, FMCUP embarked on an educational process in which it focused on establishing a base of knowledge around housing and the components of the housing process and ecosystem. It examined local zoning laws and ordinances and explored the economic challenges of traditional development and funding strategies available to aid in planning and developing various housing options. FMCUP has begun working with the city council to create a new action plan.



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY: LANGUAGE JUSTICE

Due to the history of migration and settlement, many CPHE communities have large populations of Hispanic and Latinx residents, immigrants, temporary migrant workers and other people for whom English is not their first language. Residents with limited English proficiency may have challenges accessing community services and resources due to a lack of awareness or difficulty navigating application processes. Additionally, these residents often struggle to get involved in their community or use their voices to participate in political advocacy.

Across Colorado, community teams incorporated language justice into their efforts, as they sought to create more inclusive communities. Language justice seeks to ensure that people with limited English proficiency feel like they are a part of the community. Language justice goes beyond merely providing translation and interpretation services; it includes providing opportunities for these residents to 1) have a voice in decisions impacting them by participating in town halls and community meetings; 2) advocate for themselves and their families when needs or issues arise within the community (e.g., work, school) and 3) build a sense of connection by attending community events and celebrations.⁵

Unfortunately, interpreters and translation services require resources that many communities, especially rural ones, do not have. It takes time, resources and expertise to hire and train translators and interpreters who can provide support at medical appointments, town hall meetings, business meetings and other events. In rural and smaller communities, the availability of interpreters is limited, which prevents residents with limited English proficiency from fully engaging and participating in the community. Also, organizations often do not have bilingual staff or funds to pay for external translation and interpretation services. When public and private organizations—including city councils, school boards, health clinics, businesses and other community groups—publish materials only in English or use Google Translate, the information does not reach the intended populations, and if it does, it is not usually accurate or culturally appropriate.

Many communities worked to improve language justice for their diverse residents; approaches varied by community. Grand Valley's community team surveyed Spanish-speaking families in Garfield County School District 16 and presented district leadership with the data to show that nearly all families surveyed desired translation and interpretation services within the schools. When families were surveyed after school conferences from 2021 to 2022, over 90% of respondents said that the services were necessary and helpful for them to communicate with their child's teacher. Surveyed families often mentioned that they could not effectively communicate with their child's teacher, preventing them from taking an active role in their child's education. With comments such as "because [with interpretation] parents know how well their children are doing in school," the Grand Valley community team demonstrated to the district the ongoing need for these services. With the continued advocacy of the community team, School District 16 finally included translation and interpretation as a regular line item in its yearly budget.

In Sheridan, the community team SRTFE also focused its language justice efforts on schools. It partnered with Sheridan School District No. 2 to build the school district's capacity to engage parents and involve them in decisions about their child's education. SRTFE worked with an elementary school and Sheridan High School to hire Spanish-

speaking principals, to increase the schools' capacity to engage and involve parents. SRTFE also worked to improve the retention rate at all Sheridan schools by advocating for improved teacher professional development and greater transparency in hiring practices.

In rural Colorado, communities created language cooperatives. YUMA started a community language cooperative and provided interpretation training to over 40 people in the community who worked in local hospitals, schools, health departments, nonprofits and other places throughout Yuma and northeastern Colorado. It purchased interpretation equipment and used it regularly at team meetings. YUMA also frequently lent out equipment and provided interpreters for local groups, including schools and the city council, as well as community events. It fought for translation and interpretation at a few town halls and city council meetings and provided it at those meetings. As a result, the city began providing more translated materials on its website and offering interpreter equipment at events. When CPHE concluded, YUMA donated the interpretation equipment to a nonprofit organization to allow the community to continue its language justice work.

The Olathe community team MOB also built a language cooperative. Communication in Olathe has been a challenge for Spanish-speaking residents. Business and local government websites and newsletters had been written only in English, with the occasional use of Google Translate, which was usually inaccurate. Many organizations did not have materials or written information in Spanish. MOB surveyed 57 community organizations to establish the level of language translation and interpretation services being provided. MOB then hired a bilingual project manager to lead the team in developing its pool of interpreters and provided training for people to become interpreters. There were five interpreters ready to work in the Olathe area by the end of the team's CPHE efforts.

In Lago Vista, a mobile home park in northeastern Colorado, its community team, Residentes Unidos, organized and secured signatures to get the community to translate the park's rules and regulations into Spanish. The translated documents enabled residents with limited or no English proficiency to better understand the rules and regulations.



An interpreter from Community Language Cooperative provides simultaneous English-Spanish interpretation at a Sheridan Rising Together for Equity meeting in 2018. Photo by Joe Mahoney / Special to The Colorado Trust

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY: ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND FRESH FOOD

Food insecurity is a significant problem across Colorado. In 2021, nearly one in five (16%) Coloradans skipped meals because they could not afford food.⁶ Some CPHE communities are no exception; they have large populations of low-income people who struggle with food insecurity. Residents must travel outside their communities—and long distances—to access grocery stores and affordable food. Community teams sought to reduce these barriers by increasing food access and availability in their communities.

Community teams partnered with organizations to bring food into their communities. For example, the Clifton community team delivered food to homes in geographically isolated areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Dog Patch, a neighborhood in Pueblo, the community team delivered food boxes to members of their community. These “blessings boxes” were created “to provide food access to the Dog Patch Community” while “ignit[ing] the community to start actively working again.” In Greeley, community team members funded a food bank to address food security issues.

Avondale residents must drive 12 miles to Pueblo to get fresh produce because there are no grocery stores in their community. The Avondale Resident Team (ART) partnered with Care and Share Colorado to bring a mobile food market to Avondale to ensure food access for older adults, migrant farm workers, undocumented families and others. ART described its mobile market as having “made the biggest impact.” The market served an average of 88 families twice a month. Residents were asked to provide their ZIP code and household size instead of identification, which enabled undocumented families to have access to this resource. The market allowed residents to “shop” and select their items rather than being handed preselected, prebagged food, to preserve residents’ autonomy and dignity. There were also avenues for shoppers to make suggestions to ART about desired items and improvements to the shopping experience. To ensure a more sustainable solution, ART



The Eastside Action Support Team organized a mobile food pantry in the Dog Patch neighborhood of Pueblo in 2018.
Photo by Joe Mahoney / Special to The Colorado Trust

obtained a building on U.S. Highway 50 and began working with the building owners to get grants to open an official grocery store in Avondale. It also collaborated with local farmers to allow residents to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits at farmers markets.

Fountain, a community of about 30,000 in the suburbs of Colorado Springs, is a food desert. Residents must travel 10 miles north to grocery stores. Efforts to open a grocery store in Fountain began in the mid-2000s. When Fountain residents came together to establish a community team, the team became part of the effort and helped bring to fruition the plan to bring a grocery store to the community. It held community meetings to draw support from residents and then engaged in a campaign to advocate before city government to bring a grocery store to downtown Fountain. In March 2023, the city announced that a local grocery store chain will open a new store in 2025.

The Lago Vista, Sheridan and Dove Creek communities all worked to grow community gardens. Residentes Unidos in Lago Vista created a community garden and held gardening classes. The team invited the community to join in cultivating the produce from that garden, which helped struggling families keep fresh vegetables and fruits in their pantries. Dove Creek's community team, Community Voice, also created a community garden and distributed fresh fruits and vegetables from the garden to families.

LEAVING A LASTING IMPRINT: INFRASTRUCTURE

Some CPHE community teams used their funds to create long-term community changes by addressing infrastructure, to support transportation, recreation and other activities. For example, Grand Valley's community team began planning to build bus shelters throughout the community. Community members felt that the shelters were vital for the most vulnerable populations—children and older adults—to protect them from inclement weather while they wait for a bus. Residentes Unidos in Lago Vista collected signatures and held a community meeting in which residents came together to share feelings of unsafety because there are no sidewalks in areas with a lot of vehicle traffic. Their stories helped to convince the county commissioner to build a sidewalk at the entrance of Lago Vista Mobile Home Park.

ART in Avondale leveraged existing resources and assessed the need to obtain resources to replace streetlights and maintain sidewalks. ART identified streetlights that needed to be upgraded or replaced and then clarified with the county the process for streetlight replacement. It also advocated for funding support from Pueblo County and Black Hills Energy. ART assessed sidewalk needs for Avondale, identified priority areas and clarified county processes. It worked with Pueblo County's McHarg Park Community Center, Pueblo schools and local churches to develop a collaborative granting strategy to fund the sidewalk project.

Outside of Colorado Springs, Hillside neighborhood's community team, Hillside Advisory Team (HAT), partnered with a local nonprofit to build a community kiosk to disseminate information to residents. Community leaders designed the HAT community kiosk in partnership with a local neighborhood nonprofit, The Concrete Couch. The design process helped to strengthen community relationships and expand the base of the team's network

and influence. Through HAT's community build day, residents had an active hand in constructing and installing the kiosk at the Helen Hunt Campus, where the former HAT office was located. HAT also applied for and received a Community Development Block Grant to renovate a park.

Clifton's community team successfully started planning a community hall and recreation center that would provide a safe, accessible space for youth, families, elders and those with disabilities to gather, recreate, learn and access services to counter health inequities. The team worked with Mesa County commissioners to provide input on the location and design of the hall and recreational center.

Community Voice in Dove Creek renovated the local baseball field to allow teams to play locally instead of traveling to other towns. Community Voice knew the renovated baseball field would attract teams from neighboring towns, who could travel to play in Dove Creek and bring revenue to the community. It also worked with a local trails expert to develop a plan for biking, off-highway vehicle and jeep trails.



The Hillside Advisory Team hosted a block party at the Leon Young Pavilion in Colorado Springs in September 2021 to celebrate the pavilion's revitalization. The event included a youth performance from the Genesis Church of Nazarene. Photo by Parker Seibold / Special to The Colorado Trust

STIMULATING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Many CPHE communities relied on one or two primary industries, and when these industries deteriorated, the communities' economic security was weakened. Communities like Avondale, Craig, Olathe and Grand Valley all share this experience and have struggled to recover. Limited or lack of education and employment opportunities diminish economic development and contribute to cycles of poverty.⁷ Residents, especially young people, often have to move to another community to be closer to education, employment and other opportunities. Across Colorado, community teams worked to increase residents' employability by teaching new skills and increasing access to job fairs and workforce pipelines.

In southeastern Colorado, community teams from Avondale and Dog Patch partnered with local businesses to host job fairs to promote networking and access to employment opportunities. In northeastern Colorado, FMCUP held classes to teach residents tailoring and seamstress skills. FMCUP sought to build workforce capacity for local women of color to create a business while being self-sufficient.

The digital divide—or the growing gap between those with access to computers and the broadband internet and those without—contributes to economic disparities, especially in rural communities that may rely more on telework and remote services, including telehealth.⁸ Recognizing this challenge, MOB and ART in Olathe and Avondale, respectively, improved their communities' access to Wi-Fi and technology. MOB built a coworking space to increase the community's access to the internet. The space was named Conexión and featured signage and written communication in English and Spanish. MOB began working with the Rural Technical Assistance Program, formerly known as Colorado Blueprint 2.0, to secure a technical assistance grant through Colorado's Office of Economic Development and International Trade. The coworking space was open briefly, and a few people used it daily. The team also hosted workshops and meetings there. However, the space was closed during the COVID-19 pandemic because it was not considered an essential business.

In Avondale, ART created a community technology center. It researched best practices and case studies, developed a community technology assessment, identified community partners, created a collaborative planning process to support funding requests and evaluate funding options, met with the Pueblo County energy planning team and other community partners, and wrote two community technology proposals.

INVESTING IN YOUTH: ACADEMIC SUPPORT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOB READINESS

Community teams worked directly with youth to help them develop leadership, entrepreneurial and workforce skills. As mentioned above, many communities experience population decline as residents leave to move closer to education, jobs and other opportunities. Especially in rural and smaller communities, young people tend to leave after high school for employment and postsecondary education opportunities, and many do not return. To mitigate population loss, community teams worked to raise awareness about postsecondary opportunities that encourage young people to stay in the community. Across the state, rural communities partnered with schools, businesses and other local organizations to provide youth residents with workforce and leadership development opportunities.

The community teams in Antonito, Avondale, Saguache and San Luis engaged youth through hands-on capacity-building opportunities. San Luis' community team, Adelante San Luis, partnered with local schools to host an "entrepreneurship strategy initiative" to teach youth about owning their own business. Antonito Together partnered with schools to teach young people about different types of careers and education paths. It hosted career fairs and entrepreneurship camps in high schools and provided internship and job shadowing opportunities that allowed youth to grow skills and expertise. Antonito Together also contacted businesses in the region to enable young people to do job shadowing, visit

businesses and interview with firms to ask general questions and learn what kind of training or education businesses required for employees. For example, for youth interested in working in the health care industry or forest services—two of the biggest industries in Antonito—Antonito Together helped expose them to those kinds of opportunities and what it would take to qualify for jobs in those industries. It also taught youth about the processes for starting their own small business in Antonito.

In Saguache, the community team Health Equity Action Resident Team (HEART) combined strategies that resembled those in San Luis and Antonito. It conducted a workforce skills assessment to identify local businesses and collect information to inform future workforce development training. It also developed a semester-long entrepreneurial class for high school students; the course was an elective credit toward graduation. HEART hosted an entrepreneurship camp, which developed into an entrepreneurship club in 2018. For several years, HEART successfully hosted a career fair for middle schoolers across three schools so students could explore career opportunities in San Luis. The team also conducted Career Cabs, a job shadowing event that allowed high schoolers to explore career opportunities.



ART partnered with the Avondale Youth Council to provide academic support to middle and high school students and a workforce development program to help students plan their future. ART developed clubs to help students remain on track for graduation, create plans for their future and develop leadership skills. ART provided homework help, tutoring and “high-yield learning activities” and worked to increase parental involvement in schools. Members of the clubs attended career fairs and financial literacy workshops and received career counseling, job readiness and job placement services. ART also created partnerships with the county high school technical trade program and Pueblo Community College to provide information on trade programs and concurrent enrollment. Because having an internet connection is important to helping youth’s academic activities, ART also worked with its youth council to advocate for getting Wi-Fi in McHarg Park Community Center, to enable students to do their homework there. The team met with the county commissioners and successfully presented their case. ART considered this “a small win” for the community. ART has begun planning to expand Wi-Fi communitywide.

In northwest Colorado, the community team Craig Residents Advocating for Inclusion and Growth (CRAIG) built relationships with local community organizations leading youth-focused work. They collaborated to identify opportunities to support, supplement or contribute to their efforts. CRAIG hosted a “splash party event” to address mental health while providing recreational opportunities. CRAIG created a survey to collect data on youth mental health needs in the community, to inform their youth engagement efforts. In Lago Vista, community team Residentes Unidos bought a trailer for tutoring students and created a youth center.

RECLAIMING HISTORY AND HERITAGE: CULTURAL EVENTS

Due to the history of migration and settlement, many Colorado communities have experienced discrimination. Historically, some communities were even discouraged from practicing their cultural traditions or speaking their languages. Community teams across Colorado brought communities together and allowed people to learn more about their culture and heritage. In the San Luis Valley, the Alamosa, Antonito, Saguache and San Luis community teams helped communities reconnect to their Hispanic and Indigenous roots and language by providing events and opportunities to appreciate and celebrate their cultures. Even in large, urban communities, like Northwest Aurora, the community team's engagement activities included helping residents reconnect with their culture. During community events, the Northwest Aurora community team provided culturally appropriate food that was familiar to immigrant and refugee communities. Over 120 families participated in these events. Antonito Together hosted several field trips to historical and culturally relevant sites and offered various leadership classes and opportunities online. It also promoted and participated in the Fort Garland Museum's cultural events.

The Helping Others and Promoting Equity (HOPE) group in Alamosa increased the community's cultural awareness, partnering with the Cultural Awareness and Student Achievement Center at Adams State University to bring in speakers and host community events to tell the region's history and explain the historic discrimination faced by Indigenous and Hispanic families. According to HOPE, public schools do not teach this history. HOPE also created a series of videos and social media engagements to educate the community. The first video addressed Alamosa's history, conflicts and tensions, including immigration issues, racism and discrimination. The second video highlighted the inequalities faced by Guatemalans while celebrating their culture. Such information can help people make informed decisions and frame perspectives of how generational trauma impacts Alamosa. HOPE contracted with an external resource to produce, translate and create subtitles for the video.

In San Luis, Adelante San Luis worked with community partners to revitalize the Manito culture by reviving traditions and bringing families together. Several businesses participated in the Manito Christmas event highlighting the Mis Oremos and Mis Crismas traditions unique to the villages of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.⁹ In Durango and southwestern Colorado, the team celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day and participated in a retreat to plan a podcast about Ute women's experiences.

In the Hillside neighborhood, HAT worked to preserve and share the legacy of Colorado Springs' first Black mayor, Leon Young, a longtime resident and advocate of Hillside. HAT successfully leveraged a Community Development Block Grant from the city to renovate a park named after Young in the historically Black neighborhood, to create a green space where families could gather and feel pride in their community's history. The team also partnered with the city government on a memorial to this local civic leader, featuring Young's story and legacy throughout the park. It has begun designing the site.

HEART in Saguache increased cultural diversity and representation by working to shift the narrative in the community from "Hispanic people are powerless and will not be listened to" to a new narrative: "We are part of a community. My opinions and ideas matter, and

"I can impact change when I am involved." Members of the community team were the first in the county to attend the school board, board of county commissioners and local town trustee meetings, representing Saguache. They modeled this behavior for others in the community. Local organizations have come to HEART to ask how they can be more inclusive; for example, the local museum came to the team to discuss being more inclusive toward Hispanic farming and agricultural workers. The museum board of directors now has 50% Hispanic representation; these directors desire to enhance and expand the historical presentation of Saguache's Hispanic and Indigenous cultures before the arrival of white settlers.

ART worked to "uphold, honor, and preserve the history of Avondale by boosting the social environment and cultural fabric of [our] community." It created an Avondale oral history and memoir project in partnership with El Pueblo History Museum, Story Center and McHarg Park Community Center. ART enlisted the community to collect photos and oral histories, hoping the storytelling initiative would allow residents to find their voice while sharing with others to reinvigorate community pride. ART also conducted digital storytelling training to engage Avondale residents in producing their own videos detailing their history. ART worked with The Trust to produce Avondale's Community History Memoir video. ART also worked to secure a grant to sustain the memory project work.



Current and former residents of Avondale, Colo., came together to share photos and tell stories as part of a community memory project with El Pueblo History Museum on Jan. 26, 2019. Photo by Joe Mahoney / Special to The Colorado Trust

Like ART, the community team in Dog Patch conducted a memory project. It created the project to showcase the community's history and the experiences of residents from historically unrepresented groups. The community team partnered with El Pueblo History Museum and engaged the community to collect oral histories and photos about their neighborhood. Upon completion of the project, the team worked with a renowned local mural artist to create a mural and theater for the community. The Dog Patch community team held several community meetings, during which residents were encouraged to share their perspectives on the content and design of the mural. Once consensus was reached, the mural was painted on the south wall of the La Gente Youth Sports building.

In addition to cultural awareness activities, community teams contributed to events to help youth feel more connected to their communities. For example, Adelante San Luis worked with youth to record the significant and unique history of the San Luis area through a memory project. The community team in Fountain engaged in a similar project with their young people. Youth from the Fountain Youth Council participated in a youth photo voice project in which they took pictures of things they liked, did not like and would like to see change in their community. They then used those photos to advocate for change. The team started working to introduce the project to the more youth, and it planned to hold an event to share photos and findings with the community.

The community team in Fort Collins held its Summer Solstice Event, which included workshops to teach the history of the precolonial Lakota as a way of visualizing and understanding the Lakota of today and much of the dysfunction that “tourists” see when they visit a reservation. Community event planners stated, “Our prayer is that these stories will be told to ears with compassion and allow individuals to sit with the stories and recall their Ancestral histories of pain and diasporic traumas, allowing us to view one another as the true relatives we are. In another tipi, there will be stories of various Indigenous Spiritual thought and Philosophy Journeys.”

In Montbello, a diverse Denver neighborhood of over 30,000, the community team hosted several events to engage youth and improve young people’s understanding of history and culture. For example, the team’s Montbello Xicano Puppet Theater Camp allowed 20 youth in grades 5-8 to learn about, create and perform stories unique to the Xicano and Indigenous cultures of the Americas. These events also improved children’s access to books and other material to increase literacy.

CONCLUSION

Communities that participated in CPHE brought people together, filled gaps in programs and services, addressed housing affordability and availability, improved youth’s access to resources and opportunities, reduced barriers to obtaining fresh and healthy food, promoted language justice, built infrastructure, increased access to economic resources and connected people to their histories and cultural heritage. It was not easy work and was made even harder by the COVID-19 pandemic. This document is a tribute to the community teams’ hard work, tenacity, perseverance and courage.

ENDNOTES

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