

2024

Culmination Phase Grants Storybook

Written By



Commissioned By



**THE
COLORADO
TRUST**

A Health Equity Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

About The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase Grants

The Colorado Trust is committed to advancing the health and well-being of all Coloradans. We believe in the power of community, and know that those most affected by systemic challenges should have a voice in determining how to address them. When empowered to advocate on behalf of their communities, and supported in influencing the systems that surround them, people who have previously been excluded from decision-making can create stronger, fairer and healthier communities throughout Colorado. To that end, in order to help communities influence the systems that impact their health, The Colorado Trust launched the first version of the Community Partnerships initiative in 2014.

Upon concluding this grant initiative in 2022, The Colorado Trust supported participating community teams in creating a lasting legacy of service to their neighbors and families. Through the 2022-2023 Culmination Phase grants, The Colorado Trust committed more than \$6 million in final, one-time funding to grantee organizations working to address health inequities in their communities. The Culmination Phase grants augmented work that had already been underway as well as boosted new initiatives that will have lasting impact on the health and well-being of individuals and communities across our state.



Play Culmination Grant Overview Video

Dear Grantees, Supporters and Friends,

These are examples of incredible accomplishments of communities, leaders and individuals statewide. They are stories of collaboration and partnership; of innovation and creativity in finding new and improving existing solutions to community needs. They are stories of organizations engaging diverse community voices in the assessment of needs and the design of solutions that drive inclusivity and build community connection. In some cases, they showcase novel ways to accelerate and strengthen work that was already underway. And in other cases, they model how innovation and partnership build new roots of promise and possibility that will grow long into the future.

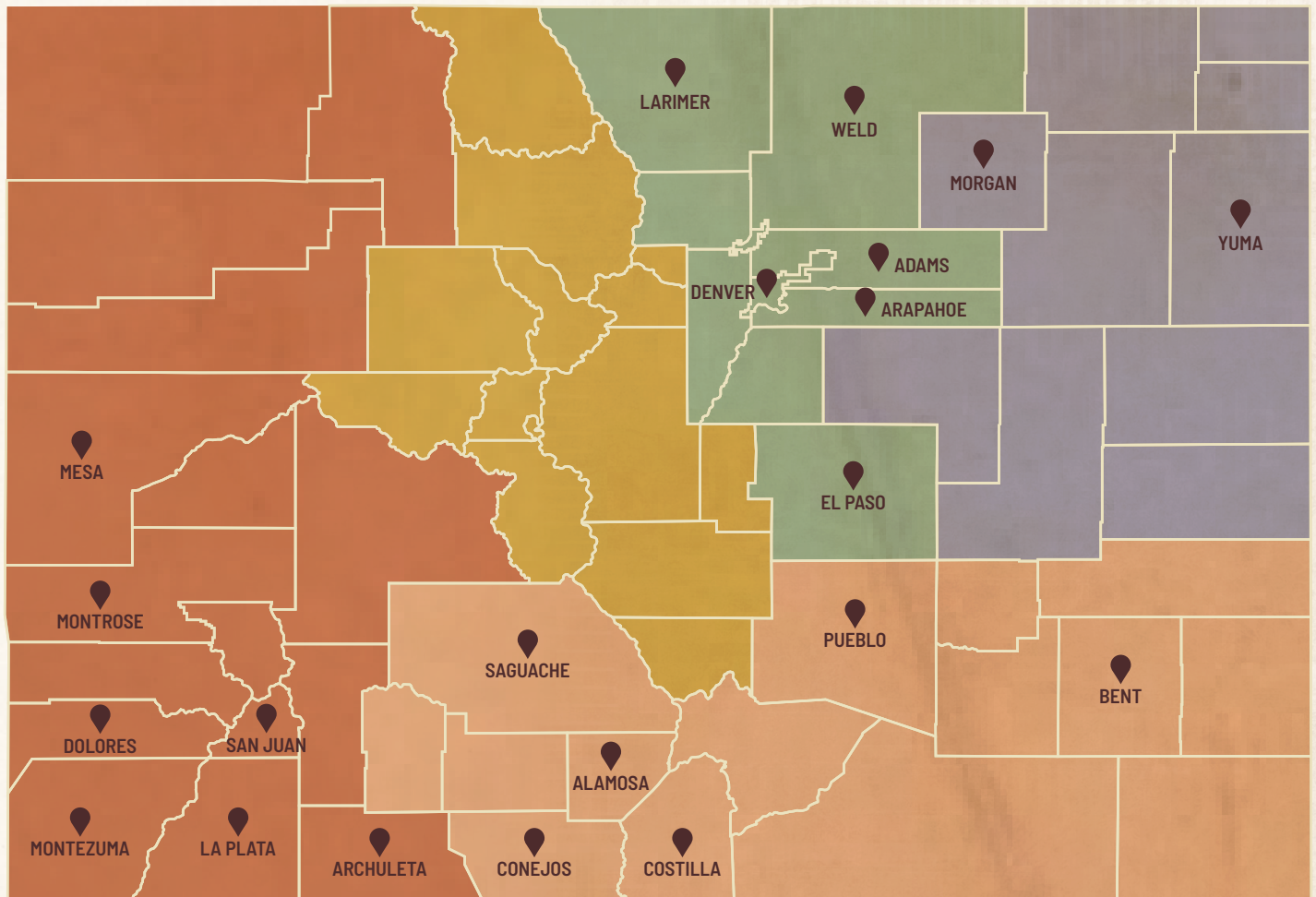
This Storybook is told using the voices, perspectives and insights of grantees. It is a reflection of those voices, rather than a direct report issued by The Colorado Trust. The storytelling approach has made this publication unique, authentic, and deeply meaningful to everyone involved in the Culmination Phase grants.

The Colorado Trust has been honored to play a role in supporting the work of these grantees. The Trust is grateful to the Grants & Impact Department staff who built deep relationships with each grantee to help them leverage the maximum value of their funding. The Colorado Trust cannot wait to see how these inspiring projects flourish into the future, addressing social determinants of health and advancing health equity with solutions built by communities coming together to transform unjust conditions for themselves and their neighbors. We're so excited to share these stories with you, and to shine a light on those who have worked so hard to affect such change for the people who live, work and thrive in their communities.

Morris W. Price, Jr.

Morris W. Price, Jr.
Vice President of Grants & Impact

Culmination Phase Grantees by County



WESTERN

Clifton Community Leaders
(Western Colorado Alliance)

Dove Creek After School Program

Colorado First Southwest
Community Fund

Hispanic Affairs Project

FRONT RANGE

Commún (In partnership with Sheridan Rising
Together For Equity)

East Colfax Community Collective

El Sueño Latino

Food to Power, Hillside Community Food Hub

Fountain Valley Communities that Care
(El Paso County Public Health Department)

Regents of the University of Colorado
BUENO CAMP

Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern
Colorado with Sunrise Community Health

The Confluence Media Center /
Montbello Power Advocates

United Way of Larimer County

SOUTHERN

Alpine Achievers Initiative

Antonito Together
Youth Leadership Program

Avondale Resident Team
(Pueblo County)

Las Animas School District

Pueblo Department of Public Health
and Environment

San Luis Valley Housing Coalition

Town of San Luis

EASTERN

Fort Morgan Cultures United
for Progress (Morgan County
Family Center, Inc.)

Rural Communities Resource Center



Clifton Community Leaders

(Western Colorado Alliance)

MESA
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$359,441

Clifton (Mesa County)

Social Determinants of Health: Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context

Clifton Community Leaders, in collaboration with the Western Colorado Alliance, used funds from their Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant to construct an accessible playground at Rocky Mountain Elementary Park. The playground fostered inclusivity within the community while also providing engaging and healthy recreational spaces for all residents, irrespective of their abilities. The space featured traditional playground equipment with accessible options, fitness stations, benches, walking pathways and open grass areas.

“

This project is increasing social and community connections and will serve to reduce health disparities in the Clifton community. A park like this can improve the health of traditionally underserved Clifton residents and the intergenerational playground will bridge the gaps in health equity in Mesa County by providing free access to an outdoor sanctuary for increased physical activity. The playground builds on the growing momentum to enhance this community's social fabric, provide a higher quality of life, and ensure safe, positive spaces for all.

— Jose Chavez, Project Director

- Community members were included in each stage of the process including assessing their needs, suggesting ideas and learning and testing proposed designs.
- Playground equipment was chosen to support the development of the community's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.
- This new area provided opportunities for community-building events.



Play Clifton Video



Dove Creek After School Program

DOLORES COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$128,318

Dove Creek (Dolores County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Social and Community Context

With funding help from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, Dove Creek offered an after-school program for students K-12 that provided tutoring, social/emotional support and mental health workshops throughout the school year. The grant funds were used for the foundational needs of the district to house the program and also provided new technology connecting teachers and students. The Dove Creek After School Program extended students' learning hours, helped boost academic achievement, connected kids to resources for emotional support and offered students a safe place beyond school hours. Although Dove Creek is a small school, 73 students signed up for the initial tutoring program.



- Tutors and mentors are teachers (active and retired), other school staff, community members, and students.
- The student mentors provided positive role models for the younger students.
- Social/emotional programming provided students with tools and knowledge to make good decisions that will have a positive influence on their lives.
- Speakers visited and worked with the students to motivate and inspire with real-life lessons.

“

This program provides much-needed support, especially for our younger students. And tutor mentoring for the secondary students fills a large gap that was needed within our community. It has not only helped kids raise their grades, it gives working parents the peace of mind that their kids are with trusted adults, will get a nutritious snack, and will have their homework done for the next day. This grant allowed us to get interactive TVs that allow tutors to work right along with students and have the problems and solutions presented to small groups. By implementing this technology, this program will be sustainable long past this school year.

— Ty Gray, Superintendent

First Southwest Community Fund

ARCHULETA COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$149,470

Durango and Southwestern Colorado (Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, and San Juan Counties)
Social Determinant of Health: Economic Stability

First Southwest Community Fund used The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant to empower under-represented entrepreneurs and business owners, especially those who have traditionally been left out of financial systems including women, business owners of color, veterans, and Native entrepreneurs from the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes. Funds from this grant helped to foster entrepreneurship in communities experiencing economic instability and made it possible to hold two Business Idea Labs and two Business Launch Boot Camps for entrepreneurs in the Southwest Region of Colorado, helping businesses start, scale, market and compete.

“

Business owners and entrepreneurs of color in rural Colorado have historically had little power and there has long been a significant disparity in terms of earnings and professional employment opportunities. With these grant funds, we were able to hold our Business Idea Lab and Launch Boot Camps that help historically underserved entrepreneurs create meaningful connections and networks for a long-lasting impact on the Southwestern entrepreneurial ecosystem.

— Azarel Madrigal, Former Executive Director,
First Southwest Community Fund

- Business Idea Lab participants received education, coaching and pitch practice, and engaged with local mentors who are also entrepreneurs.
- Upon completion, each participant received \$200 seed money.
- The 12-week Business Launch Boot Camp enrolled a cohort of rural entrepreneurs to take their ideas and launch them into fully functional businesses.
- Graduates were eligible to receive launch grants (\$2,000) to support business startup and operation.



Hispanic Affairs Project

**MONTROSE
COUNTY**

GRANT AMOUNT: \$128,250

Colorado's Western Slope (Montrose County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Social and Community Context

Empowering Immigrants to be Advocates, Leaders and Changemakers

Ricardo Perez and his wife, Karen, are a force for good, advocating at the local, state and national level for pro-immigrant policies that protect and increase access to resources for immigrants. Ricardo serves as the Executive Director of the Hispanic Affairs Project (HAP) and Karen is the HAP Community Relations and Development Director.

Founded in 2006 by Hispanic immigrant leaders from the communities of Grand Junction, Delta, Olathe, Montrose and Hotchkiss, HAP reaches a rapidly changing population and addresses the needs of the Hispanic immigrant community on the Western Slope.

"Our program takes a multifaceted approach to addressing challenges immigrants face, including overcoming language barriers that can hinder access to vital services and resources," Karen explained. "The Culmination Phase grant from The Colorado Trust helped us provide language support, build a local community center, support local entrepreneurship and increase our community outreach."

"Our mission is to help immigrant refugee families integrate socially and economically, and this grant gave us the opportunity to collaborate more closely with our community, empowering leadership development for the next generation of leaders," Ricardo said.

Key outcomes of The Colorado Trust grant included the purchase and refurbishment of a building in downtown Montrose to serve as a community center and a welcoming space for the immigrant and refugee communities, complete with new furniture and interpretation equipment. "We are a small organization led by immigrants, and now we have this building just one block from the city council," Ricardo said. "We are also organizing the Montrose Culture Fest and are in partnership with the City of Gunnison."

"None of this would have been possible in this part of Colorado 10 years ago. We are creating social change, political change and ultimately institutional change."



“

HAP has a team of ambassadors who connect with people across the Western Slope, and offer critical support including helping migrant workers apply for citizenship and connecting with women via a domestic violence prevention program. These ambassadors are helping build trust, and they are becoming leaders themselves.

—Ricardo Perez, Executive Director, Hispanic Affairs Project

Commún

(In partnership with Sheridan Rising Together For Equity)



GRANT AMOUNT: \$1,000,000

Southwest Denver (Denver and Arapahoe Counties)

Social Determinant of Health: Neighborhood and Built Environment

Preserving a Historic Past While Meeting a Community's Future Needs

Commún was founded in Southwest Denver when community leaders gathered to address gentrification, displacement and a lack of community gathering space in their neighborhoods. The meeting was fueled by the sale of the nearby Loretto Heights campus to an investment group, and fear that the community would continue to change at an accelerated rate.

Commún used funds from this grant to be more resilient in the face of change while also saving a historic treasure in its neighborhood. With help from The Colorado Trust grant, it was able to buy the 38,000 square-foot building on the Loretto Heights campus, saving it from transfer to an investment group, and preserving it as a community hub.

"The historic student union and cafeteria building will become a Southwest Denver and Sheridan community gathering space, and will provide a stable environment for the programs and people that help our community thrive," said Margaret Brugger, the Commún Executive Director.

The Culmination Phase grant also made it possible for Commún to partner with Sheridan Rising, which collected community data and input about desires for the space. "It made everyone feel involved and see that this would be a place that breaks down barriers for accessing goods and services," said Nelly Limon, Executive Director for Sheridan Rising Together for Equity. The renovated building will create a hub for nonprofits and local small businesses, including a coffee shop, dental practice, childcare, youth space, donation-based grocery store and more. It will also have showers and laundry to help serve unhoused families.

"What's really beautiful about this project is that we're setting precedence for what can happen in changing neighborhoods, showing others how to respond to developments, and finding the important intersection

between real estate and nonprofits," said Margaret. "We got the building put on the National Registry, saved an historical building from being sent to a landfill, and we're honoring the history of all who were on this campus. We are so grateful for The Trust supporting this grassroots effort and are excited for construction to begin early 2025."

“

There is so much emphasis on our differences right now, and that creates fear and anxiety. I believe that when we have safe places to come together and learn about one another and diverse cultures, we have a lot more in common than we think.

—Margaret Brugger, Executive Director, Commún



East Colfax Community Collective

DENVER
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$250,000

Aurora (Denver, Adams, and Arapahoe Counties)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Neighborhood and Built Environment

Fighting Displacement, Empowering Voices and Preserving a Neighborhood's Dignity

East Colfax is one of Denver's most diverse neighborhoods, with a sizable refugee and immigrant population. In recent years, a surge in cost of living, new housing developments, and gentrification have threatened long-time residents with displacement. That's why East Colfax Community Collective (EC3) is on a mission to fight displacement and empower the community to shape their own destiny. EC3 is a community-driven, socially and culturally diverse advocacy organization of residents, local businesses, nonprofits, and allies.



According to Brendan Greene, EC3's Executive Director and Co-Founder, the organization empowers its members to choose pathways and priorities for the neighborhood. "We're working against displacement through collective power building, community organizing and elevating the voices of the renter population who make up the majority of the East Colfax corridor," Brendan said. A previous Colorado Trust grant allowed the group to conduct research to identify different ways to address displacement. The community chose to build a Mixed Income Neighborhood Trust (MINT). They then used The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant to support the MINT's pre-development phase.

The goal of this model is to bring apartments under community control, directly addressing the crisis of rising rents while also protecting properties in the neighborhood from speculation and flipping. It also improves housing conditions by raising resources to renovate apartments.

"The MINT is a community ownership model geared towards renters," Brendan explained. "Many of our community members don't have the savings or credit to qualify for homeownership programs. But the MINT enables us to acquire apartments in our neighborhood and stabilize the rents for 60% of the units."

The Colorado Trust funding allowed EC3 to solidify their partnership with Trust Neighborhoods, the national founder of the MINT model. Together they held negotiations with development consultants and property management companies. Funding also allowed EC3 to hire an East Colfax MINT director to oversee the project, pay for financial consultants, and cover legal fees to help negotiate contracts. With a goal of purchasing up to 100 apartments in 2024, and to grow this model to have 1,000 apartments over the next 10 years, this passionate and collective neighborhood group looked to leverage their success into further acquisitions that protect the fabric of the community with affordable, attainable housing, while also preserving culture and diversity.

“

We want to be a force for good that will have a significant positive impact on the market. We now have a Trust Stewardship Committee made up of renters and core partners, and we're working closely with them as a member-led organization to create the founding documents that will guide the operations of the EC-MINT's acquisitions.

—Brendan Greene, Executive Director and Co-founder, EC3

El Sueño Latino

LARIMER
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$97,876

Loveland (Larimer County)

Social Determinants of Health: Neighborhood and Built Environment,
Social and Community Context

Building Bridges of Trust and Collaboration for the Well-being of All

Karina Ledezma, Founder and Executive Director of El Sueño Latino (The Latino Dream), is a testament to dreaming big and finding ways to give back to the places and people you love. Her organization provides assistance and resources to enhance the well-being, quality of life and inclusivity of immigrants in Loveland.

Karina uses her own life experiences to lead El Sueño Latino. She was undocumented as a child and can relate to what resources are most needed. "I knew I could respond to the needs of this community," Karina explained. "These are families I grew up with and I'm able to create a deep level of trust with them."

Together with a friend, she began El Sueño Latino by creating a community coat drive and a back-to-school event for kids. "Things really took off, people wanted to volunteer, and we started to make connections with other agencies," she said. "We grew quickly because while there are bigger agencies in Loveland, none are directed towards the BIPOC community."

Karina said that The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant meant they could really dream big. "Our goal isn't just about feeling welcome at events, but also teaching other agencies in town how they can help create bridges of trust," she said. With the grant, El Sueño Latino hosted resource fairs that included immigration lawyers and housing attorneys. They soon grew to partnering with more than 25 agencies including local firefighters and police. They've also hosted neighborhood events including bringing the superintendent of the school district to Lago Vista Mobile Home Park to meet with families and understand the neglect and racism kids had been facing. The superintendent committed to visiting again throughout the year.

Looking forward, El Sueño Latino is hoping to create additional programming specifically for women and youth. They are also focusing on resources for a men's mental health group. "Our goal is for our community to be seen and heard," Karina said. "We want to work together for a better future."

“

With this funding, we strengthened our community today, and for the future. We created awareness. And we created programs that are going to make us sustainable and create change for generations and generations.

— Karina Ledezma, Founder and Executive Director, El Sueño Latino



Food To Power. Hillside Community Food Hub

EL PASO
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$243,596

Colorado Springs (El Paso County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context

Uniting neighbors through sustainable food systems

Food to Power works in Colorado Springs to reduce food waste while improving access to healthy food for all. They have a vision to create and build a true community food hub. Thanks to The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, they have engaged community members, neighbors, and partners to give input and ideas for a space that could host a production farm, provide gardening education, have a no-cost grocery program, and offer a demonstration kitchen, events venue and areas for classes and workshops. Funds from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant helped support the second phase of building out the Hillside Community Food Hub, and it is now fulfilling Food to Power's vision and promise to strengthen the social and community impact in the Hillside neighborhood by cultivating mentorship for youth and growing opportunities for civic engagement.

- Focused on community wealth building and economic stability by creating new earned income streams for Hillside youth, adult residents and neighbors.
- Included space for urban farming, compost production and micro-enterprise development.



- PARTY (Participatory Action Research Team for Youth) employed local youth to engage in researching the lived experience and safety of accessing food in the Hillside neighborhood.



“

This grant helped our Food to Power truly blossom and grow. It gave us the funds to focus on three important pillars: youth employment and empowerment, community wealth building, and promoting health and connectivity through sharing food stories. The Hillside Hub serves as a space to grow, cook, learn about, access and advocate for fresh food, as well as gain employment. Moving forward we will continue making the Hub an even more integral part of the community and expand our program offerings.

— Erin Taylor, Director of Food Education & Advocacy, Food to Power

Fountain Valley Communities That Care (El Paso County Public Health)

EL PASO
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$222,219

Fountain (El Paso County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context



Fueling Youth-Driven Experiences That Help Combat Substance Misuse

“

Our hope is that we've created community connectedness and a realization that we are all working toward the same goal. We know that the more our youth are connected, the more likely they are to stay away from poor behavior and succeed in the long term.

— Karisa Dreyer, Prevention and Policy Specialist,
Fountain Valley Communities that Care

When local residents identify their community's needs and are empowered to mobilize around creative solutions, real change is enacted. That's what happened with the Fountain Valley Communities that Care Coalition; Communities that Care is an evidence-based program hosted by El Paso County Public Health.

Fountain Valley Communities that Care recognized that its town was an “entertainment desert” that was negatively affecting youth. It came up with innovative solutions, engaged local businesses, and empowered youth to help initiate six exciting mini-grants.

“We saw a need to create community spaces and activities for our youth,” explained Karisa Dreyer, Prevention and Policy Specialist for Fountain Valley Communities that Care. “We don't have a lot of entertainment options, there's a lack of transportation to go to nearby cities, and there is a high availability of drugs and alcohol.”

Using funds from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, the Connect Fountain Project was created to fuel community involvement and resources for Fountain Valley youth and encourage them to participate in the community and connect to existing resources. The initiative was driven by an 18-member teen action board that helped develop a passport where youth earn stamps and prizes for attending events and visiting businesses in town. They named the passport program “Connect me 2 FV”—and it has been a positive way to engage the entire community.

Additionally, the Culmination Phase grant was used to fund six mini-grants, powering a diverse slate of youth-centered partners including Colorado Springs' “Kids on Bikes,” providing bikes and partnering with Cross Creek BMX to make biking more accessible. Additionally, Widefield Parks and Recreation launched a monthly teen diversity night and Welte Education Center built a recording studio for youth. Fountain YMCA implemented a before-school cooking class, Fountain Library built a teen room for video gaming, and Fountain Up helped youth shop for Christmas gifts free of charge.

“The grants were our biggest success,” Karisa said. “They're still running in some capacity and we sparked an interest so these projects will continue to grow in the future.”

Regents of the University of Colorado - BUENO CAMP



GRANT AMOUNT: \$248,453

Fort Lupton (Weld County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Social and Community Context

Opening the Doors to Higher Education for Students from the Migrant Community

The BUENO Center (Bilinguals United for Education and New Opportunities) is an independently funded initiative of the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. Its BUENO CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) in Fort Lupton provides support and educational services to migrant and seasonal farm workers, helping improve their well-being while honoring their cultural and historical identities.

Jessely Chaparro is the Assistant Director of the Center and a graduate of BUENO CAMP herself. Jessely said that The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant bridged the gap in funding and helped ensure BUENO CAMP could offer financial, academic and social support through its cohort-based scholarship program.

Dr. Robert Garcia, Program Director at The BUENO Center, explained, "This grant meant we could offer vital support to 42 first-year college students from the migrant community. We worked in partnership with northern Colorado community colleges to provide scholarships and support for the first year of college including full tuition, fees and books." Additionally, funds from The Colorado Trust helped hire a culturally relevant content tutor who held in-person meetings and took students to visit other college campuses in Denver, Boulder and Fort Collins.

The success of the program is evident across multiple metrics. "Our retention rates are higher than others and our graduation rates are at about 70%, when the general population graduation rates here are below 40," said Dr. Garcia.

"If it wasn't for BUENO CAMP, I probably wouldn't have attended college," said Gisela Cardenas, the BUENO CAMP Recruiter and Retention Specialist, and also a graduate of BUENO CAMP. "I didn't know I was capable.

I barely had a 2.0 in high school, but my first year in college I had a 4.0. I didn't believe in myself, so it was amazing to have somebody to believe in me."

"It's not just the BUENO CAMP experience, but also the opportunity for students to engage in service learning," said Jessely. "Some of our students mentor at a middle school after-school program, where younger kids get to see someone who looks like them and speaks their language and is also a college student. The glass ceiling disappears, and they can see opportunities for themselves in higher education."

“

I truly believe that we are bettering the overall health and quality of life for these students as they learn to advocate for themselves, pursue an education, and support themselves into the future.

— Dr. Robert Garcia, Program Director, The BUENO CAMP



Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado (IRCNoCo) with Sunrise Community Health



GRANT AMOUNT: \$110,896

Greeley, Evans, Northern Colorado (Weld County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Economic Stability



Offering Navigation Services, Supports and Education for a Community to Thrive

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Today, our program offers 32 courses and routinely has well over 700 students. One of our students talked about the hopelessness she felt when she first came to Colorado. She told us the joy she now has in her life thanks to the camaraderie she's found through this community of learners.

— Abby Keeler

Sometimes the simplest changes can have the most dramatic impact on a community. The Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado (IRCNoCo) together with Sunrise Community Health is an inspiring example of how classroom upgrades and increased staffing can make a tremendous difference for adult refugee students.

These individuals are learning everything from how to pay the electric bill, to how to find work, navigate a bus system or fill out forms for government assistance or jobs.

Abby Keeler is the Education Lead at Sunrise Community Health and works for the IRCNoCo initiative, where it provides essential resources to help immigrants and refugees flourish. The center serves primarily adults from 18 to 84 years of age, not only helping to upskill the adult workforce but also helping parents communicate and learn about the education system for their children. Programs include general courses to learn reading, writing, speaking and listening; technology and citizenship courses; and navigation and advocacy courses. It also offers parents participating in the courses early childhood education and childcare for preschool-age children while they attend classes.

With funding from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, the organization expanded its educational support, built out new and existing classrooms with updated equipment, expanded navigation services, and enabled participants to receive the support and education they need to succeed. The program has doubled participation in recent years, and The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant helped fill the gaps in funding to provide staffing and classroom materials.

IRCNoCo teams serve Greeley and Evans, and also reach people across Northern Colorado through online classes. “Increasing staffing with this grant was especially crucial because our lower-level English speakers were not having their needs met in a one-size-fits-all citizenship course,” Abby explained. “But now we have the funds to offer two ESL classes around citizenship and really meet students where they are.”

Grant funding also allowed the IRCNoCo to improve classrooms and materials. “Physical spaces affect our mental spaces,” Abby said. “We want to make sure our students know that they deserve high-quality spaces, and high-quality education and care.”

The Confluence Media Center Montbello Power Advocates

DENVER
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$208,641

Montbello (Denver County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Social and Community Context



Amplifying Youth Voice and Dialogue

When Paul Clifton saw that his students at McGlone Academy in Denver's Montbello neighborhood were struggling academically and didn't feel a sense of pride in their community, he knew the group to help. In addition to being a teacher, Clifton is also a member of the Montbello Power Advocates, a group who has worked with The Colorado Trust for several years on neighborhood improvement strategies.

Montbello Power Advocates paired with McGlone Academy's Confluence Media Center to use The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant funding in a three-prong approach: regrant funds to neighborhood organizations; hold youth summits; and add programming to the Confluence Media Center that combines arts, culture and literacy in after-school programs and gives kids the opportunity to tell their own stories through podcasting.

"The regranting system supported organizations already doing great work in the community," Paul explained. That included Convivir Colorado, which is amplifying voices of immigrant and migrant youth through podcasts created in the Confluence Media Center. It also regranted funds to the Consumption Literacy Project to expand their youth programs; to Black Pearl Entertainment to encourage kids to develop their own fashion lines; and to the youth group at the Colorado Change Makers Collective. Additionally, it regranted funds to the Benin Healthcare Initiative that sends medical resources to Benin, Africa, which is a French-

speaking country.

Through this initiative, Montbello youth were taught French to help break down language barriers within French-speaking immigrant families.

The second use for the Culmination Phase grant was to host youth summits. "We invited local artists to perform and encourage youth to have conversations about issues that are happening in the community," Paul said. "We invited kids from all over Denver to create 15-minute live podcasts that can be shared with the community."

Finally, Culmination Phase grant funding enabled the purchase of new technology for use at the Confluence Media Center during school and at a new after-school podcasting club. It was also used for literacy tutoring to help migrant students who were trying to catch up after losing a year or two of schooling.

"It was really powerful for us to turn this grant into something that builds and empowers the community and amplifies the voices of our youth and those doing good work here," Paul said. "That's been the purpose of Montbello Power Advocates from the beginning."

“

We can build off of the momentum of this grant and apply for different types of funding now that we've shown that it truly makes a difference. We're helping kids know that school is a place where they are cared for and that they have a voice and a story to tell.

— Paul Clifton,
Teacher and member of Montbello Power Advocates

United Way of Larimer County

LARIMER
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$249,992

Fort Collins (Larimer County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Social and Community Context

Collaborating to Empower Nonprofits and Elevate Success Stories

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We are offering a way to grow professional connections that power collaboration, capacity, growth and skills training. We don't want to create new programming when it already exists. We want to invest in them, not duplicate their work. We are powering nonprofit excellence.

— Nizhoni Valdez, Community Engagement Manager,
United Way of Larimer County

While individual nonprofits are powerful in their own right, United Way of Larimer County realized that creating a center of support and collaboration for several organizations could make the entire community more successful. Nizhoni Valdez, Community Engagement Manager for United Way of Larimer County, explained that they wanted to create a broad-reaching nonprofit and incubation hub to provide more access to vital resources while also fostering a deep sense of belonging among its members.

Using funding from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, it created “Under One Roof,” leveraging United Way’s physical offices at their Community Impact Center (CIC) in Fort Collins. “Ultimately, we wanted to strengthen community support and engagement in Northern Colorado and bolster the overall well-being of the city’s residents,” Nizhoni said.

There is also a gross underrepresentation of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ or QTPOC-led nonprofit organizations and small businesses in Larimer County, despite the growing population of these communities. Nizhoni’s team heard from historically marginalized nonprofits that they often couldn’t find access to office space or cover operational costs.

So it brought 11 BIPOC and queer-led grassroots nonprofits into their CIC, giving them a chance to better conduct their work and increase the scope of their community outreach efforts.

“This center is a place for professional kinships,” Nizhoni said. “Because when we have strong relationships, the work we all do is stronger. This is a new workplace culture and this group of organizations provides all kinds of resources and services that directly meet Larimer County’s demographic needs.”

All of the organizations have their own trusted relationships with their communities as well as cultural familiarity and program relevance that allow them to make the most impact. “What we are offering is a way to grow professional connections that power collaboration, capacity, growth and skills training,” explained Nizhoni. “We don’t want to create new programming when it already exists. We want to invest in them, not duplicate their work. We are powering nonprofit excellence.”

Organizing with the CIC now include:

- **Memories of Us**, a men’s grief support nonprofit that works with immigrants, newcomers and refugees to find immigration, legal services and resources.
- **Queen’s Legacy Foundation**, which supports an array of resources, cultural awareness and DEI efforts.
- **Unified Workforce**, a nonprofit rooted in career readiness and mentorship.
- **The Aro Collective**, a group of queer and BIPOC individuals who provide peer support and youth services.
- **A Lakota-owned Indigenous nonprofit** specializing in culturally informed environmentalism.
- **The Alliance for Suicide Prevention**, offering counseling services.
- **Isaac Infrasto**, **Latina** and **NFC** are three additional members of the CIC, all interconnected in their advocacy work for refugees and undocumented families.



Alpine Achievers Initiative

SAGUACHE COUNTY

GRANT: \$249,921

Saguache (Saguache County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context

Creating Safe, Engaging Environments During School Hours and Beyond

Alpine Achievers Initiative (AAI) inspires, connects and nurtures youth, families and communities in rural Colorado. It was founded in 2012 by a math teacher in the Mountain Valley School District who recognized that many students were struggling academically, but were not receiving the support they could benefit from with organized youth programming. Today, AAI's work impacts over 4,500 students annually as it serves 20 schools, four early childhood education centers and 11 youth programs across nine counties. It also places 50 full-time AmeriCorps members in schools and youth organizations each year to further their reach and connections.



"With this funding, we were able to partner with The Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley to create a more sustainable structure for time outside of school," said Megan Strauss, Executive Director and Founder of AAI. This collaboration provided six weeks of full-time summer programming offered free of charge. The program was key to helping eliminate financial barriers and ensuring that all youth have opportunities for positive development, academic support, and engagement in safe recreational environments.

AAI also used this grant funding to increase services to queer youth in the community and launch Genders & Sexualities Alliances. It provided clothing for transgender youth, a mobile trailer to meet kids where they are, and a variety of events. "There is a gigantic lack of services and support for these youth in our community," Megan explained. "This helped us lift up many of the great partners who are doing important work in this area, including the San Luis Valley Pride and Partnership for Community Action."

Funds also supported allyship training for educators and AmeriCorps members in the school districts. AAI's LGBTQ+ Cultural Fluency Training and Active Allyship training has played a pivotal role in community dynamics and reached a remarkable 1,016 individuals, fostering cultural fluency and understanding.

"It's important for youth to have adults like them to look up to and we wanted to shift the landscape of the school cultures," Megan explained. "Our allyship training worked to create an authentically welcoming environment."

“

The outcomes of our programs far exceeded what we were initially planning. Until you create a space that is safe for youth, you don't always realize how large the demand is. Our grant funding went further than expected and allowed us to create significant momentum for our programs.

— Megan Strauss, Executive Director and Founder,
Alpine Achievers Initiative

Antonito Together Youth Leadership Program

CONEJOS
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$121,310

San Luis Valley (Conejos County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Economic Stability, Social and Community Context



Empowering Youth to Navigate their World and Reach their Full Potential

Antonito Together works to connect the community and celebrate and preserve their culture for future generations. It's led by a Community-Informed Board of local adults and a Youth Advisory Board. With funding from The Colorado Trust's Culmination Phase grant, it enhanced its Youth Advisory Board, bringing guest speakers to sponsored events, created a professional shadowing and mentoring program, and helped youth engage in and learn about local government processes.

"With this grant, we partnered with The Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley to offer an array of valuable youth resources," explained Rene Lobato, Project Director for Antonito Together. "We focused on empowering them to reach their full potential, both personally and professionally."

Rene and her team realized many Antonito youth were struggling trying to keep up with the picture-perfect images they see in social media, and how it affects their mental health. So, they named their program, "Helping Teens Survive in a Picture-Perfect World."

They focused on students ages 12-19, creating initiatives to support their mental health and well-being. During the 10-month program, 25 participants took part in monthly meetings and job shadowing. The monthly gatherings featured speakers on financial literacy, conflict resolution, drug awareness, navigating junior high and life after high school. Additionally, school counselors helped teach about applying to trade schools, colleges, internships, or the military, and applying for scholarships and student loans.

"We succeeded in getting kids to really open up. By the end of the program, we had a waiting list of kids who wanted to take part," Rene said.

"What they learned here won't end with the program," explained Theresa Malouff, Antonito Together board member. "We built relationships with the kids and with their families, creating a multi-generational and lasting impact."

"This program helped kids realize they have the resources to reach their potential right in their hometown of Antonito. Supporting them impacts our whole community."

“

These meetings showed me that I have a voice and I can speak out about what I think should happen in Antonito. I didn't even know who was running my community until joining this program.

— Youth Participant, Antonito Together

Avondale Resident Team (Pueblo County)

PUEBLO
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$245,514

Avondale (Pueblo County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Neighborhood and Built Environment

Addressing Food Security for Generations to Come

“

The impact this has had on our community is important. It shows our neighbors that we can and should get basic needs met right at home. Every person who lives here deserves that.

— Kassi Robinson,
Community Program and Communications Specialist,
Avondale Resident Team

With the nearest grocery store 16 miles away and only a convenience store in town, Avondale is a food desert. Community members recognized the critical need to combat food insecurity and their lack of access to healthy and fresh produce. So they formed the Avondale Resident Team in 2015, and then used The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant to renovate an unused concession stand at a local softball field and turn it into a food pantry.

“With a convenience store as our only source of food, many of our community members were eating unhealthy foods,” said Kassi Robinson, Community Program and Communications Specialist. “As a result, diabetes is incredibly high among our neighbors.”

“The new food pantry will give residents more opportunities to access a range of nutritious food options,” said Lynn Soto, Project Coordinator of the Avondale Resident Team. “Additionally, community residents will be trained in food handling and will staff and manage the food pantry.”

The pantry was poised to serve roughly 65 households biweekly, and be set up like a grocery store for stigma-free shopping. Provisions also came from partnerships with the Care and Share of Southern Colorado, as well as donations from local farmers.

Thanks to The Colorado Trust funding, the repurposing and renovation of this space means the community no longer has to put a band-aid on food access in the community, but can further address food security and fulfillment of community needs.

“We want to work with our community members to help them become more self-sufficient and to see that they can fight for their family and community,” said Kassi. “And we want to empower them to advocate for attracting investments for a permanent grocery store or co-op in Avondale. This is just the beginning of us working to move beyond relying on federal funding and grants to sustain addressing food security for generations to come.”

Looking forward, the community feels optimistic that the pantry will also help to facilitate relationships with farmers, a stronger partnership with Pueblo County, and create potential for systemic change.

“This will have an immediate and lasting impact on our community,” said Kassi. “We’re so grateful to carry this forward.”



Play Avondale Grantee Video

Las Animas School District

BENT
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$249,985

Las Animas (Bent County)

Social Determinant of Health: Health Care Access and Quality

Enhancing health education and prevention strategies

Las Animas School District partnered with The Schreiber Research Group and Communities that Care of Southeast Colorado for a substance abuse prevention program that targeted students in grades 5-12, their families, and young adults in the community. With help from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, the school district worked to combat depression, substance abuse and other challenges by integrating evidence-based prevention strategies into its existing health education curriculum.

“

The earlier we reach students with comprehensive education of risk factors that affect their health, the more likely they will be to practice preventive factors that will positively improve their health and wellness throughout their lives. With the funds from this grant, we worked to decrease the number of students and young adults in our community committing high-risk health behaviors associated with substance abuse and to improve their social, emotional, behavioral, and relationship health with the tools they learned through our program.

— Ronda Bucholz, Health and Wellness Coordinator

- Red Ribbon Week substance abuse prevention and intervention events involved law enforcement agencies, experts in content areas, local health-related agencies, local education supporters, and school health and physical education instructors.
- A drug prevention artwork contest culminated with a printed annual calendar, notecards, and a T-shirt featuring the winning artwork.
- Extension of interactive, discussion-oriented and skill-building HEALTHSmart curriculum.
- In partnership with Southern Colorado Youth Development's MOTOvate programming, provided members to a subset of students ages 12-18 who participated in the program.



Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment

PUEBLO
COUNTY

Communities That Care Coalition

GRANT AMOUNT: \$212,872

Pueblo (Pueblo County)

Social Determinant of Health: Health Care Access and Quality

Powering Mini-Grants that have Maximum Impact on Health and Wellness

Empowering youth advisors to learn grant writing and grant making skills was at the heart of the Communities That Care Coalition (CTC) grant. The Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment partnered with CTC to enhance youth-serving organizations in Pueblo by providing mini-grants, equipping youth with the skills and decision-making capacity to affect real change in their community.

Annie Carlson and Darena Herschler are health promotion specialists at the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment, as well as Environment and Community Mobilizers for Communities That Care. Annie explained that CTC is a coalition of over 30 agencies in Pueblo that are all striving to help youth become healthy, educated, responsible citizens.

“With The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, we implemented two different strategies,” Annie said. The first was to ensure families are able to access quality affordable childcare. The second was to connect local youth with activities that gave them quality time with friends and adults in a healthy, safe environment. “There are a lot of families living in poverty here and we have a lot of gang activity,” Annie said. “And we also know that these youth have so much potential, so giving them outlets for their leadership and creativity has been key to unlocking their potential.”

A group of youth advisors from CTC helped direct the funding. This Youth Action Board created a mini-grant program to fund six local youth-serving agencies. “The Youth Action Board determined the logistics of these grants and toured the six agencies that were chosen,” Darena explained. “It allowed them to learn about applications and grant opportunities, as well as learning to work together to review requests for proposals.”

One of the mini-grants went to a project working to make it possible for teens under 18 to use a ride-sharing service if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Other funding was directed toward mentoring programs, after-school programs, sexual health and rape crisis services, bilingual mental health services and a community art studio.

“The young leaders on our Youth Action Board learned communication, critical thinking, and conflict resolution skills,” Darena said. “And they recognized and built upon the work already being done in our community, and learned how to meaningfully contribute to it now and into the future.”

“

What's great about this Culmination Phase grant is that its impact doesn't end. The mini-grants we created with these funds will continue to work in the community. We are so happy we could help others along the way.

— Darena Herschler, Health Promotion Specialist,
Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment



San Luis Valley Housing Coalition

ALAMOSA COUNTY

Alamosa (Alamosa County)

GRANT AMOUNT: \$1,000,000

Center (Saguache and Rio Grande Counties)

GRANT AMOUNT: \$201,140

Social Determinant of Health: Neighborhood and Built Environment



Finding New Affordable Housing Solutions While Also Preserving the Past

“

The Boyd School Project has created a sense of excitement. It's brought this neighborhood back to life. This is going to be housing for people who work in our grocery stores and gas stations and our young people starting careers in law enforcement or as EMTs.

— Dawn Melgares,
Executive Director, San Luis Valley Housing Coalition

An old school building can still be a hub of learning and innovation, and can bring a community together. Thanks to local leadership and vision, San Luis Valley Housing Coalition (SLVHC) secured funding through The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant to help save a historic school building and convert it into affordable housing units. This not only created a sustainable solution, it generated community connection and pride.

“Our mission is to provide safe and affordable housing to low- and moderate-income community members,” explained Dawn Melgares, SLVHC Executive Director. “A recent housing study showed that the Valley was short more than 1,800 units just to keep up with the people currently living here. We realized that one of the ways to offset this was to create the Boyd School Adaptive Reuse Program.”

Funds from the Culmination Phase grant meant that SLVHC could cover the cost of getting the school ready for construction, complete design work, and do asbestos abatement so it will be ‘shovel ready’ and highly competitive when it applies for other funding sources to start construction.

Alamosa’s Hope Team was already working on housing for young professionals in the area and when Boyd School went into foreclosure, the two groups teamed up to save and transform it. “It was a great building and a historic location,” Dawn explained. “And it included a garden that supplies our local homeless shelter.”

Community input helped steer critical decisions including ensuring there were some four-bedroom units to house larger families. Community members also voted on amenities including bike lockers and keeping the school’s gym to be used for sports and events. Plans were made for a daycare in the building. Plus, as the Boyd School Project took off, the area was reinvigorated by other companies starting to also build there again.

“Without this project this school would have ended up with a developer and we wouldn’t have had control over what they did with it,” Dawn explained. “But now, we’ve been offered to stay with ownership for the next 50 years. We’ll have a say in how it will be completed and managed, and we have first right of refusal to buy it back at the end of the compliance period. That’s an incredibly exciting position to be in.”

Town of San Luis

**COSTILLA
COUNTY**

GRANT AMOUNT: \$100,380

San Luis (Costilla County)

Social Determinants of Health: Education Access and Quality, Economic Stability, Social and Community Context

Powering Financial Stability by Empowering Entrepreneurs

In the town of San Luis, there is no shortage of big ideas and entrepreneurial spirit. But there is a shortage of ways to learn how to turn those ideas into a business. Entrepreneurs need tools, resources and a community of support and encouragement. “We wanted to create a more vibrant economic landscape for these folks,” explained Susan Sanderford, San Luis Town Manager. “So we created Envision San Luis—an entrepreneurial bootcamp funded by The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant.”

Envision San Luis was an 11-week crash course on everything it takes to be a startup entrepreneur. Although San Luis is a town of less than 700 people, over 40 entrepreneurs took advantage of the classes and brought ideas ranging from selling wares to developing land. All aspects were designed to encourage a growing micro-business economy.

The bootcamp empowered community members to find ways to increase their income and financial stability. It included business development opportunities through educational training and workshops; aid for participants to start their own micro-business; internships; and hands-on support after the camp was completed. Courses included the basics of starting and running a small business and each person who completed the class received a \$500 startup award for their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Teddy Leinbach, the San Luis Assistant Town Manager, explained that they partnered with Action Lab 360 to host the cohorts and teach some of the classes. And since San Luis doesn't have many spaces available to start a retail business, the concept was all about learning to bring ideas to life without requiring a brick-and-mortar location. In addition to boosting business development and supporting entrepreneurs, the bootcamps also created a deeper sense of community and connection.

Many participants still meet regularly and several joined together to launch The San Luis Art Co-op to promote and sell their work.

“Looking forward, we're planning to build a town plaza where these entrepreneurs can set up a marketplace to take their businesses further,” Susan said. “This grant really jump-started ideas. It powered a positive energy around entrepreneurship and now we're going to keep that energy going.”

“

The people who attended Envision San Luis show our ingenuity and diversity. We had artists, a welder, a gallery owner and a dog trainer. We had a young man who sells local herbs and has created a cookbook. And we had a massage therapist, a yoga instructor, a pie company and a coffee shop owner. This inspired them to take their ideas to the next level and it created a deep community connection, too.

— Susan Sanderford, San Luis Town Manager



Fort Morgan Cultures United for Progress

(Morgan County Family Center, Inc.)

MORGAN
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT: \$189,724

Fort Morgan (Morgan County)

Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Neighborhood and Built Environment, Social and Community Context

Addressing Housing Instability and Building Homes that will Change Lives

“

We've seen the life-changing power that comes from taking somebody who never thought there was a chance they could own a home, to educating them, getting them a loan and into their first home. Now, they know they have the potential to build roots and wealth and be part of the American dream.

— Loren Boyett,
Housing Organizer, Morgan County Housing Action Team, and
Fort Morgan City Council member

Fort Morgan serves as a resettlement location for people who come to Colorado to work in agriculture and in the food processing industry. More than 28 languages are spoken there, creating a community with rich diversity and also critical needs. In 2017, residents created a plan for Fort Morgan to be a healthier and more equitable place including finding solutions for inequalities in housing. Today, they have become the Morgan County Housing Action Team (MCHAT), and they're working with funding from The Colorado Trust and others to establish a Housing Resource Center.

“The Center will address housing instability by offering educational programming and connecting people to programs and resources,” said Loren Boyett, MCHAT Housing Organizer and Fort Morgan City Council member.

“It will provide a place for people to meet with advocates working to meet permanent housing needs, and will help to build generational wealth that can accompany home ownership. They can also learn about getting loans and understand their rights and responsibilities as homeowners or renters.”

The Culmination Phase grant enabled the group to hire an urban planner and convince the City Council to help fund a housing needs assessment. “The city signing on, in addition to our partnership with The Colorado Trust, was key to being able to look for additional funding and do more,” Loren recalled. “We wanted to help people get into homes, but we still didn't have homes available to make this happen. So we went back to the city again, showed them our data, and they agreed to talk to developers.”

The local United Way agreed to add additional funding and Cargill, a major employer in the area, joined in the funding as well. Cargill recognized that their employees could not afford housing in Fort Morgan and were being bussed into work from nearby cities.

“All of this snowballed from an earlier smaller grant with The Colorado Trust and our Culmination Phase grant,” Loren explained. “These were jumping off points for us to attract help from the city, other foundations, corporations and even developers.”

With this momentum, it was recently able to apply for and receive a state grant for \$3,200,000. “Now we can actually get people in houses,” he said. “We have over 500 homes in the pipeline that are going to be developed in Fort Morgan.”



Play Culmination Fort Morgan Video

Rural Communities Resource Center

YUMA
COUNTY

GRANT AMOUNT \$104,644

Yuma (Yuma County)

Social Determinant of Health: Economic Stability

Providing vital support and resources

The Rural Communities Resource Center offers comprehensive services for residents, supporting families and individuals facing a lack of access to health care and mental health care, homelessness, immigration, domestic violence, legal issues, food insecurity, economic issues and other health inequities. With funds from The Colorado Trust Culmination Phase grant, the Center was able to build up its health program by providing a bilingual staff person in the organization's satellite office in Akron. In addition, grant funds were used to invest in staff training on health equity, engage in data analysis, and pursue more ways to seek additional funding sources to continue its essential work in promoting community well-being and health care access.

“

Our overarching goal is to help people access all of the things they need to live a healthy life from attaining health care coverage and healthy living conditions to making sure they have transportation to access these things. This grant is helping power our work to help more people, including immigrants and undocumented families, connect with services.

— Margo Ebersole,
Executive Director, Rural Communities Resource Center

“

The Resource Center helped us with food, essentials, and all kinds of things. You talked to me whenever I needed it, and you connected us to people with the recovery program and that really helped us. When you helped us with the rent you helped us to get totally caught up and now I think we can stay that way.

— Mom whose family uses the Resource Center

- Helped community members apply for Medicaid, CHP+ and medical care discount programs as well as food stamps, LEAP, and other assistance programs.
- Met urgent one-time needs for mental health visits and prescription assistance, leveraging funds to help meet basic needs including housing and utilities.



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TOWN OF SAN LUIS, PG 24

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FORT MORGAN CULTURES UNITED FOR PROGRESS

(MORGAN COUNTY FAMILY CENTER, INC.), PG 25

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RURAL COMMUNITIES RESOURCE CENTER, PG 26

By Saira Hamidi



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