



## HEALTH EQUITY ADVOCACY STRATEGY: **WHAT IS HEAS?**

The Colorado Trust believes advocacy for policy change is a cornerstone to [achieving health equity](#). The Health Equity Advocacy Strategy (HEAS) is a multi-year funding strategy with the goal to build a strong and diverse field of health equity advocates in the state. We believe that building a strong field of advocates—rather than merely strong, individual advocacy organizations operating in isolation—leads to greater sustainability and to advocates’ ability to successfully respond to a changing political climate.

The HEAS is made up of a partnership of 18 direct-service, community organizing and policy advocacy grantees; [Social Policy Research Associates](#) (SPR), an evaluation firm; and The Colorado Trust. This partnership is working to build and nurture a strong field of organizations that can advocate together to impact policy decisions to improve health equity in Colorado for years to come.

The 18 organizations (see list below) collaborate on decisions related to which policy topics to address, capacities to build and strengthen the partnership, communications activities to undertake, how to assure engagement of affected populations in their advocacy effort and how strategy funds should be used.

This collaboration is further strengthened by SPR, the evaluation and learning partner responsible for documenting and assessing progress toward the creation of a robust, strong and viable health equity advocacy field, as well as sharing learnings and findings to help guide the work. Learning what works, what doesn’t and making adjustments accordingly is critical to a diverse and sustained advocacy field.

The Colorado Trust has a unique role as a partner with grantees and SPR, as well as being the funder. Encouraging and supporting grantees to

### HEALTH EQUITY ADVOCACY STRATEGY GRANTEEES

- [Asian Pacific Development Center](#)
- [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials](#)
- [Colorado Center on Law & Policy](#)
- [Colorado Children’s Campaign](#)
- [Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved](#)
- [Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition](#)
- [Colorado Fiscal Institute](#)
- [FRESC: Good Jobs Strong Communities](#)
- [Full Circle of Lake County, Inc.](#)
- [Grand County Rural Health Network, Inc.](#)
- [Growing Healthy Communities Coalition](#)
- [Lake County Build a Generation](#)
- [Northwest Colorado Health](#)
- [Padres y Jóvenes Unidos](#)
- [Re:Vision](#)
- [Stapleton Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities](#)
- [Together Colorado](#)
- [Tri-County Health Network](#)

take the lead and make critical decisions as to how funds are allocated is a different role for the foundation. Trusting relationships between all team members are critical for success, and something the HEAS partners continually strive for.

The HEAS cohort works together through regular meetings, statewide convenings, sharing of resources and jointly participating in capacity-building activities. These group efforts have created an openness and willingness to learn from and teach each other.

Building a strong field of advocates takes time. This funding strategy began in 2013, and is expected to continue at least through 2019 and possibly beyond. Several years in to the work, more resources and opportunities are being provided to strengthen the partnership and expand the reach of effective advocates in Colorado.

The first few years of the HEAS have served as a critical time for building relationships across the partner organizations, and for building a strong foundation and infrastructure to support the advocacy work ahead. The cohort has

crafted a shared vision for the work, developed an infrastructure for deploying resources to build advocacy capacity within the cohort and the field, and shared their work and expertise with one another in an effort to create shared strategies to address Coloradans' most pressing health equity needs. They have also been working thoughtfully with one another to develop a shared health equity lens that keeps racial equity at the fore.

The foundation built recently will continue to strengthen the HEAS grantees' infrastructure, expand their networks, and apply their knowledge and expertise to collective advocacy efforts to achieve the vision developed by the cohort: Diverse Colorado leaders, united by common values and empowered communities, dismantle structural and racial inequities and build equitable systems so that all Coloradans can achieve their highest possible level of health.

For more information, please contact Noelle Melchizedek, advocacy and policy partner, at [noelle@coloradotrust.org](mailto:noelle@coloradotrust.org).



The Trust's Health Equity Advocacy grantees gather on a regular basis to determine shared policy objectives, discover new areas of common interest and strengthen partnerships and working relationships. ~ Photo by Rachel Mondragon