



COVID-19 Recovery & Resilience

It will take big, bold ideas to pull our community through the pandemic and the period of recovery that will follow. We're talking about ideas that reshape what life looks like when it returns to "normal," and that move us towards a more equitable future for all.

Through the COVID-19 Recovery & Resilience Fund, The Denver Foundation is supporting ideas to drive systems change, in partnership with the community. Below are a few of the bold or new ideas we are funding that will shape Colorado's recovery and resilience.

LEGISLATION

Cigarette Tobacco and Nicotine Products Tax/HB20-1427

Healthier Colorado

Investment: \$60,000

HB 20-1427 received bipartisan support and was approved by voters in the 2020. The bill will raise taxes on tobacco and, for the first time, place a tax on nicotine vaping products that is equivalent to that placed on tobacco. The revenue from that measure will provide immediate relief to people across Colorado who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning with those struggling to afford housing. Specifically, the measure will provide \$11.17 million per year to the Housing Development Grant Fund (designated to invest in affordable housing) and \$500,000 per year to the Eviction Legal Defense Fund. In both cases, the funding will be distributed in three consecutive years, from FY 20-21 to FY 22-23, making the total investment \$33.51 million and \$1.5 million respectively. This ballot measure provides significant and needed support for schools as well. Over the next three years, it will provide over a quarter billion dollars (at least \$255.39 million) to the State Education Cash Fund. It will also drive a total investment of \$90 million in the Rural Schools Cash Fund over the next three years.

Further reading: <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/11/03/colorado-prop-ee-results-tobacco-nicotine-tax/>

Denver Ballot Measure 2B

Healthier Colorado

Investment: \$25,000

Measure 2B will create annual, sustainable funding estimated at \$37 million in year one, varying but averaging \$40 million a year over time. It will fund new housing, rental assistance, support services, and shelter for individuals and families who have experienced a loss of stable housing due to a range of factors, including gentrification, the widening economic gap, increasing homelessness, and the pandemic. This ballot measure will fund three primary strategies to reduce homelessness: the building of supportive housing and expand rental assistance in Denver; an increase the number

of available shelter beds in Denver; and funding for innovative programs. The measure was approved by Denver voters in November 2020.

Further reading: <https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/voter-approval-of-denver-ballot-measure-2b-called-monumental>

Fair Tax Colorado Bell Policy Center

Investment: \$80,000

A more equitable, adequate, and sustainable method for raising revenue to support public services that can build thriving communities across the state is a big idea that is needed now more than ever. Historically, those with higher incomes and higher wealth are best suited to handle the short-term economic hardship caused by recessions. Evidence shows they are also the first to recover earnings after a recession. While the current economic crisis is different than any we have previously experienced, the data shows that those who are most affected by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are the Coloradans who earn the lowest incomes. The Fair Tax Colorado proposal would have reduced state tax obligations for 95% of Coloradans while helping make education, higher education, transportation, and other vital services more accessible and more affordable. The Denver Foundation supported the efforts of the coalition working to get Fair Tax Colorado on the ballot through financial investment, convening stakeholders, and using communications tools. This initiative was not successful, and the measure did not appear on the November 2020 ballot.

Paid Medical and Family Leave Together Colorado

Investment: \$55,000

We face a moment in history when the narrative about our government, economy, and democracy are at a tipping point. It is both an opportunity and threat. The threat is that well-funded interests are very clear in their desire to “return to normal.” One example of “normal” not working for the average person is that 2.8 million Coloradans have no paid family or medical leave. The vast majority are women who earn low wages people from BIPOC communities who work in the service sectors, which offer no such benefits. The Paid Medical and Family Leave measure creates an insurance program so that workers can take time off without losing pay or their jobs to care for themselves, a new child, or a seriously ill family member. The Denver Foundation supported the efforts of the coalition working to get Paid Medical and Family Leave on the ballot through financial support and engagement in the campaign. The measure was approved by voters in the November 2020 election.

Further reading: <https://www.cpr.org/2020/11/03/colorado-voters-say-yes-to-a-paid-family-and-medical-leave-program/>

HEALTH ADVOCACY

Center for Health Progress

Investment: \$75,000

The purpose of this project is to bring more health care champions to advocacy efforts at the Capitol for 2021 and beyond. BIPOC and immigrant communities are more likely to contract Covid-19 and have less likely to have access to care. The Center for Health Progress will galvanize members of the health care workforce to make connection for legislators between the impact of immigration, wage, housing, and health care. Building on this organizing approach, alongside the strong grassroots and coalition-based work, the Center for Health Progress will fight against the status quo and advocate for reforms with Medicaid, while also pursuing legislation focused on health justice and equitable economic recovery.

IMMUNIZATION PLANNING

Metro Denver Immunization Action Plan

Metro Denver Partnership for Health

Investment: \$80,000

The COVID-19 pandemic has yielded a secondary public health crisis: falling immunization rates. Compared with rates in mid-March 2020, average weekly immunizations in Colorado have decreased by 40%. This puts the Metro Denver community at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis, and influenza. Colorado's public health leaders need a coordinated effort to prevent potential outbreaks of these diseases, especially among those lacking resources and the most physically vulnerable. The Colorado Health Institute (CHI) is supporting the Metro Denver Partnership for Health (MDPH) — a partnership of public health, health systems, Regional Accountable Entities, human services, and regional health alliances — to generate an immunization action plan. The plan will directly inform equitable distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

Further reading: <https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/metro-denver-partnership-health>

The Center for African American Health

Investment: \$50,000

Historic bias within the medical field has created distrust of the new COVID-19 vaccines within Black/African American communities. Consequently, there is a substantial risk that many people in these communities will not get vaccinated and will experience more infections and death. To address these issues, and to help build trust and understanding within the community, the Center for African American Health (CAA Health) is developing strategic partnerships with city and state agencies as well as with community organizations and faith communities to begin tackling the challenge of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among African Americans in Colorado. CAA Health will work with a communication consultant to plan, create, and strategically disseminate culturally relevant and demographically segmented COVID-19 prevention, education, and vaccination marketing materials. This effort will include a bi-monthly Facebook Live Lunch & Learn series, PSAs, and digital storytelling to help raise consciousness about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. Additionally, CAA Health will host two virtual COVID-19 Black Health Summits featuring Black/African American keynote speakers and panelists and covering a variety of salient topics related to COVID-19 response, recovery, and vaccination.

INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT BIPOC COMMUNITIES

Climate Strong Initiative

Co-Lead International

Investment: \$30,000

The Universal Basic Resources (UBR) Climate Strong Initiative empowers small teams of innovators, entrepreneurs, and visionary leaders to develop a climate resilience project or businesses in Metro Denver. The goal is to fuel a green recovery that advances opportunities for Black and brown communities.

Teams of two-to-three African American and Latino entrepreneurs are funded for a six-month period to create business plans and projects that will introduce new and transformative solutions to climate change along with tools that address systemic racism and income inequality. During the program, UBR consultants will help the teams write business plans, understand climate change and its impacts, prepare RFP submissions, identify resources for funding, and engage with other climate change entrepreneurs.

After the six months, the teams will present their projects to their own communities, potential investors, and the Denver Office of Climate Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency. Their projects will be considered for possible RFP bids, implementation of their project. or partnerships with larger contractors providing climate resilience services for the city.

Violence Interruption and Community Healing Collaborative

Latino Coalition for Community Leadership

Investment: \$50,000

People from BIPOC communities in Denver and Aurora are being confronted with multiple, simultaneous, and painful challenges related to deadly violence, both by police and in the community. There have also been unprecedented tensions and protests in the Denver/Aurora area related to the killing of Elijah McClain by the Aurora Police Department and the broader protests and demands calling for police accountability, racial justice, and equity. These stresses are compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the disproportionate loss of life and economic hardship in BIPOC communities, particularly among Black people.

Organizations, faith leaders, and individuals in communities most impacted by violence are desperately trying to effectively respond but their ability is hampered by a lack of resources and a gap in community infrastructure to support collaborative action. Many of the people who are trying to serve their communities are also coping with their own response to trauma, grief, and anger without the necessary resources and support.

This initiative will provide:

- Community-led strategic planning that will provide a framework for coordinated service delivery and identify other potential collaborators.
- Expansion of culturally competent clinical services to support trauma recovery in the community (either one-on-one, group, or via community-healing events).
- Grantmaking to community-based organizations to provide direct services targeting youth and families in order to reduce violence, foster healing, and reimagine new roles and relationships between BIPOC communities and law enforcement/criminal justice agencies in Denver/Aurora.

This Collaborative is designed from the recognition that community members have the most expertise about the challenges and opportunities facing their own community.

HOUSING STABILIZATION

The Covid-19 Eviction Defense Project

Investment: \$80,000

Colorado faces an eviction crisis. Tens of thousands of people across our state are at risk of displacement and homelessness due to job-loss and underemployment resulting from COVID-19. The COVID-19 Eviction Defense Project was founded in April of 2020 to stop mass evictions and homelessness in the wake of the virus.

LEADERSHIP

New Better: Ethical Leadership to Guide Our Pandemic Recovery

[Colorado Health Institute/Center of Bioethics and Humanities](#)

Investment: \$60,000

COVID-19 and our state's response have cast a bright light on entrenched social, political, and leadership issues. It also presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for positive change in our health and society. The Colorado Health Institute (CHI), in partnership with the Center of Bioethics and Humanities at CU Anschutz, have developed a framing document to provide a starting point for community discussion. The document will present conflicts that have been amplified during the pandemic. For example, how can we be creative in adapting social distancing practices so we don't trigger widespread mental health problems? How might we re-calibrate our economic and environmental practices to address climate change, equity, and protect our most vulnerable? Using this document as groundwork, The Denver Foundation will partner with CHI to convene a conversation on behavioral health, the impact of COVID-19 on our well-being, policy actions, and real-time implications.

Read the complete report: <https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/new-better>

[Recording of New Better webinar](#)