

VACCINE EQUITY FUND REPORT

Together We Protect



**TOGETHER
WE PROTECT**



Vaccine Equity Fund

**JUNTOS
PROTEGEMOS**



Fondo de Equidad
de Vacunas

SEPTEMBER 2021

Partners

Caring *for* Colorado
Promoting Health FOUNDATION

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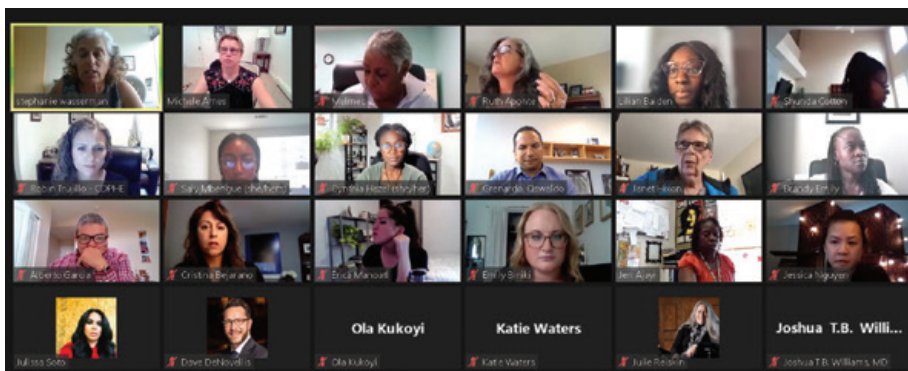
Together We Protect

IN EARLY 2021, THE HOPE OF ENDING the pandemic became a reality with new vaccines available to protect people from COVID-19. The challenge then became how to vaccinate the entire world knowing that many barriers existed in achieving this goal.

In response, thirteen funding partners, Immunize Colorado and the Colorado Vaccine Equity Task Force formed a unique partnership to provide rapid funding into communities highly impacted by COVID-19 to ensure communities of color and those who face systemic barriers have the best possible information about the COVID-19 vaccine and can access the vaccine through low-barrier opportunities.

Together We Protect – Colorado’s COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Fund (TWP) was launched in March 2021, with Caring for Colorado Foundation serving as the coordinating entity.

To ensure equity in vaccine access, Together We Protect is working with trusted and culturally responsive community-based organizations to remove barriers, address vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccine acceptance and access. Ensuring all individuals have access to the vaccine and achieving a high vaccination rate across all Colorado communities was the goal to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic and prevent widening disparities going forward.



Planning meeting of the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce, a TWP strategic partner.

To date, the fund has supported three rounds of grants to Colorado community-based organizations, working in partnership with state-contracted vaccine providers, to provide culturally relevant outreach, education, and support to ensure communities who face systemic barriers have access to the COVID-19 vaccine. In total, 115 awards totaling more than \$5.2 million has been granted to organizations across the state. 62 organizations are focused on immigrant and refugee communities, 57 are BIPOC-led, and 17 are focused on reaching older adults.

MORE THAN \$5.2 MILLION
was awarded through
115 GRANTS
to organizations across the state.

TOGETHER WE PROTECT ADVISORY GROUP

- **Marlo Alston**, *City Councilwoman, City of Centennial*
- **Cristina Bejarano**, *Director of Engagement, Colorado Association of School Based Health Centers*
- **Ozzie Grenardo**, *SVP and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Centura Health*
- **Michael Rouse**, *Participant, Phase 3 Moderna Vaccine Trial*
- **Angela Sauaia**, *Professor, University of Colorado Denver*
- **Veronica Figoli**, *CEO, Denver Public Schools Foundation*

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS (Aurora Public Schools)

- **Yeabsera Fitsum**, *student*
- **Daniel Torres Diaz**, *student*
- **Jayline Moreno Fernandez**, *student*
- **Joshua Alvarez**, *student*

IMMUNIZE COLORADO

- **Salymata Mbengue**, *Vaccine Equity and Outreach Coordinator*
- **Lilian Yayah-Baiden**, *Vaccine Equity Program and Outreach Manager*
- **Stephanie Wasserman**, *Executive Director*

CARING FOR COLORADO

- **Colleen Church**, *Chief Strategy Officer*
- **Monica Abrahams**, *Consultant*
- **Jennifer Lobb**, *Grants Manager*
- **Roop Wazir**, *Philanthropy Associate*
- **Emma Carpenter**, *Philanthropy Assistant*



Members of the Together We Protect Advisory Group

Immunize Colorado, the Colorado Vaccine Equity Task Force, and 13 funding partners came together to form Together We Protect – Colorado’s COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Project.

Together We Protect benefited from the participation of Immunize Colorado and the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce (CVET), which provided expertise and community-informed perspectives on vaccine equity needs and opportunities. A subgroup of the CVET served as advisors, providing input on the funding opportunity criteria, application process, and approving grants. Immunize Colorado, which facilitates a Community of Practice, offered interested TWP grantees the opportunity to connect with each other to share information, coordinate communications and outreach strategies, and learn from each other as the work rapidly progressed. As a transportation partner, Uber provided free and reduced-price rides for TWP grantees to offer to vaccine clinic participants. Caring for Colorado Foundation served as the coordinating partner for Together We Protect.

Stories from Together We Protect Partners

Village Exchange Center (Aurora)

As a hub for immigrants and refugees living in Aurora and the Denver-metro area, the Together We Protect grant made it possible for the Village Exchange Center (VEC) to provide vaccine clinics, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. With the help of VEC’s volunteers, called Natural Helpers, 1,680 people were vaccinated through July 2021.

The Village Exchange Center regularly recruits and trains Natural Helpers – who are immigrants and refugees – to serve as liaisons to their communities, bringing information and resources. Natural Helpers are effective in their work because they speak the language, share the same cultural values, and understand the needs of their peers.

In between the bi-monthly VEC-organized vaccine clinics, Natural Helpers were out in the community spreading the word and hosting mini-town halls to encourage friends, neighbors, and others to learn about the vaccine and sign up for a clinic. “A lot of folks have a lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown. We provided information which gave them a sense of empowerment around making the decision,” said Jose Gomez, Natural Helpers manager and vaccine clinic coordinator. Sharing reliable information, hearing from experts, and sharing personal experiences has helped to dispel myths and fears. During clinic days, Natural Helpers were also on hand to provide translation, registration, and post-vaccine observation support.

“We are next to a Walmart and a Walgreens; people have access to those places, but they choose to come to the Village Exchange Center [for vaccines] because they feel safer here. Some were already participating in other programs like our food pantry, they are familiar with the people, the Natural Helpers and myself,” shared Jose proudly.



Volunteers at a Village Exchange Center vaccine clinic

Servicios De La Raza (statewide)

“Community makes it happen,” says Ricardo Gonzalez-Fischer MD, who spearheads vaccine clinics for Servicios De La Raza. In sweltering heat or pouring rain, Dr. Gonzalez-Fischer and his team are hard at work supporting efforts to get vaccines to Latinx communities. Servicios held its first vaccine event in January 2021. Since then, they have held 47 events and have vaccinated approximately 9,000

We’ve learned about different community viewpoints around vaccines and how to navigate them in a friendly way that doesn’t seem intimidating.

—Amanda Blaurock, Executive Director,
Village Exchange Center



Motorist receives COVID-19 vaccine at a drive thru vaccination event led by Servicios de la Raza.

When the community is involved, we know the event will be successful.

—Dr. Ricardo Gonzalez-Fischer,
Servicios De La Raza

people. They have covered nearly half the state with their mobile health clinic, including every county on the Eastern plains. In addition to organizing vaccine clinics, Servicios has been providing education, mental health care, food, and financial support to families that need it. “We never stopped. The Servicios team has been amazing,” Dr. Gonzalez-Fischer said.

With concern that misinformation spread across social media has increased vaccine hesitancy among some community members, the Servicios team has devoted much of their time to providing education and answering questions through small events organized by and for the Latinx community. Local Hispanic restaurants also pitched in, providing food during the events to draw more interest.

Dr. Gonzalez-Fischer recalled seeing a man standing in the sun on a particularly hot day, waiting around the periphery of their vaccine clinic. As people arrived, the man greeted them and helped them to fill out paperwork. When a good number of people had turned up, he jumped in line himself to receive the vaccine. It soon dawned on clinic organizers that this man was a pastor and had been greeting families from his own congregation in both Spanish and another dialect spoken by Guatemalan immigrants. He had strategically waited until members of his parish arrived so that they could observe him getting the vaccine. “They will trust their community leaders more than the government or anyone else,” explained Dr. Gonzalez-Fischer. He has deeply appreciated co-community-organized events, “When the community is involved, we know the event will be successful.”

Homeward Pikes Peak (Colorado Springs)

During the pandemic, people experiencing homelessness have had their own unique set of challenges. Jansen Howard, the Street Outreach Coordinator at Homeward Pikes Peak explains that many of her clients have habitual routines created out of survival – schedules that bring them some amount of comfort. Routines may include visiting various organizations during the day to access food and clothes or to sleep, shower, or make social connections. When a number of these organizations closed due to COVID-19, daily routines were upended, and people worried about staying in open shelters and being exposed to the virus. “We made it a point to be the one consistent thing for our clients,” Jansen said about the street outreach program.



Homeward Pikes Peak Street Outreach Staff conducting vaccine outreach.

Homeward Pikes Peak received a Together We Protect grant in May 2021. The funding supported the Street Outreach Team in providing unhoused individuals with vaccine information, helping them to schedule vaccine appointments, and offering bus passes, gas cards, or rides to vaccine clinics. Jansen says there is a good bit of vaccine hesitancy among people experiencing homelessness primarily due to underlying mental health issues, fear, and a general lack of trust.

The Street Outreach Team has worked to build rapport with those they serve which has helped to encourage people to get vaccinated. “We’ve learned when it’s the best time to bring it up, to tread lightly, share our personal experiences, and meet them where they are. Being vaccinated might not be their primary concern at that moment and we respect that,” Jansen says. While sometimes a slow process, the team feels that each person they get vaccinated is a win, “It’s exciting when we spend time talking to someone about it and the next week they show us their vaccine card,” she said.

“It’s exciting when we spend time talking to someone about it and the next week they show us their vaccine card.”

**—Jansen Howard,
Street Outreach Coordinator,
Homeward Pikes Peak**



Woman receiving vaccine at Voces Unidas Vaccine Outreach Event.

Genuinely, it was the community modeling how this work should be done. It proved that community must be part of the solution, they just need the opportunity to lead.

—Alex Sanchez, Executive Director,
Voces Unidas De Las Montañas

Voces Unidas De Las Montañas (Glenwood Springs)

While advocating for state and local counties to prioritize vaccine access for Latino communities, Voces Unidas kept hearing the same thing: “Latinos don’t want to be vaccinated.” Alex Sanchez, executive director of Voces Unidas wholeheartedly disagreed with this assessment. “Latinos do want to get vaccinated. Of course there will always be some hesitancy, but we can’t use hesitancy as an excuse to not do the work,” he said.

Voces Unidas has done the work. From addressing information gaps with targeted Spanish radio ads and using a promotora program to provide one-on-one support to help individuals schedule appointments, they have modeled how vaccine outreach can and should be conducted for the Latinx community. Their promotora program alone helped nearly 1,000 people receive their vaccines from partner clinics.

When it became difficult to get people scheduled due to long waitlists at local hospitals and clinics, the organization decided to host its own vaccine clinics and has since organized 12 clinics, administering 2,382 vaccines. By bringing vaccine clinics to the Latinx community and ensuring that organizers are reflective of the Latinx community and can communicate in Spanish, Voces Unidas has shown that people will step up to be vaccinated. County officials observed Voces Unidas’ clinics and soon began to use the same techniques. “Genuinely, it was the community modeling how this work should be done. It proved that community must be part of the solution, they just need the opportunity to lead,” Alex said.



Community members gather at Voces Unidas Vaccine Outreach Event.



Youth Advisors at one of 11 youth-led vaccine equity projects.

Together We Protect – Youth Vaccine Equity (statewide)

Building on the momentum of the Together We Protect vaccine equity efforts, the fund launched a similar vaccine equity grant funding opportunity for children and youth. The aim was to ensure that young people of color and those experiencing barriers to opportunity have access to accurate and culturally responsive information and low-hurdle opportunities to become vaccinated.

Awards were announced in July 2021 with a total of \$958,000 being granted to 27 organizations. Youth Advisors participated in the selection of youth-focused vaccine equity grants and 11 youth-led projects were selected to drive youth voice and youth design in efforts across Colorado. As one of the Youth Advisors noted, “making it fun, in a comfortable place, having really good food (like Chipotle) and getting vaccinated with your friends” drives success.

Youth Vaccine Equity Funding
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 was granted to
27 ORGANIZATIONS



**Making it fun, in a
 comfortable place,
 having really good food
 and getting vaccinated
 with your friends
 [drives success].**

—Youth Advisor,
 Together We Protect,
 Youth Vaccine Equity

TOGETHER WE PROTECT GRANTEES 2021

Together We Protect – Vaccine Equity Support: \$4,355,787

- **A Little Help**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, Eagle, Garfield, Jefferson, Larimer, Pitkin, Weld, \$15,000
- **Adelante Community Development**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Weld, \$100,000
- **African Chamber**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Weld, \$100,000
- **Archway Housing and Services**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Morgan, \$50,000
- **Aurora Community Connection Family Resource Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, \$42,240
- **Atlas Preparatory School**, El Paso, \$10,000
- **Bayaud Enterprises**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$52,000
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley**, Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande, \$15,000
- **Broomfield FISH Food Bank and Family Resource Center**, Broomfield, \$28,500
- **Brother Jeff's Cultural Center**, Arapahoe, Denver, \$51,000
- **Center for African American Health**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, El Paso, \$75,000
- **Center for Health Progress**, Morgan, Pueblo, \$80,000
- **Chaffee County Public Health**, Chaffee, \$50,000
- **Colectiva Creando Cambios en Colorado**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$50,000
- **COLOR**, statewide, \$80,000
- **Colorado Alliance for Health Equity and Practice**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, El Paso, Larimer, \$25,000
- **Colorado Black Health Collaborative**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$60,800
- **Colorado Cross Disability Coalition**, statewide, \$50,000
- **Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition**, statewide, \$75,000
- **Compañeros: Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center**, Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan, \$25,000
- **Denver Indian Center**, statewide, \$65,000
- **Denver Indian Family Resource Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, \$55,000
- **Eagle Valley Community Foundation**, Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, \$94,430
- **El Centro AMISTAD**, Boulder, \$75,000
- **El Comité de Longmont**, Boulder, Broomfield, Larimer, Weld, \$20,193
- **Family Resource Center**, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, Yuma, \$33,850
- **Filipino American Community of Colorado**, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$25,000
- **Grand County Rural Health Network**, Grand, \$30,000
- **Gunnison County Health and Human Services**, Gunnison, \$35,164
- **Health District of Northern Larimer County**, Larimer, \$19,850
- **Homeward Pikes Peak**, El Paso, \$25,000
- **Hope Communities**, Arapahoe, Denver, \$83,275
- **Hopelight Medical Clinic**, Boulder, Jefferson, Larimer, Weld, \$25,000
- **Inner City Health**, Denver metro, \$75,000
- **Immunize Colorado**, statewide, \$150,000
- **Integrated Community**, Moffat, Routt, \$40,000
- **Kids At Their Best**, Morgan, \$30,000
- **KSUT Public Radio**, Archuleta, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan, \$12,800
- **La Cocina**, Larimer, Weld, \$75,000
- **Lake County Build a Generation**, Lake, \$85,000
- **Land Rights Council**, Conejos, Costilla, \$31,200
- **La Plata Family Centers Coalition**, Archuleta, La Plata, \$10,000
- **Las Animas, Huerfano Counties District Health Dept**, Huerfano, Las Animas, \$60,000
- **Living Water Christian Center**, Adams, \$45,000
- **Mango House**, Adams, Arapahoe, \$25,000
- **Mi Familia Vota Education Fund**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$75,000
- **Mile High Connects**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$50,000
- **Mongolian School of Colorado**, Arapahoe, Denver, \$14,000
- **Montbello Organizing Committee**, Denver, \$39,020
- **Mosaic Unlimited**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$50,000
- **Mountain Family Health Centers**, Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, \$50,000
- **Mountain Resource Center**, Jefferson, Park, \$15,000
- **Muslim Youth for Positive Impact**, statewide, \$74,980
- **New Life Christian Center**, Denver, \$24,000
- **The Gyedi Project**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$75,000
- **One Colorado Education Fund**, statewide, \$50,000
- **Otero County Health Department**, Crowley, Otero, \$62,500
- **Out Boulder County**, Boulder, Douglas, El Paso, Pueblo, \$90,000

- **Padres & Jóvenes Unidos**, Denver, \$75,000
- **Pikes Peak Library District Foundation**, El Paso, \$34,800
- **RISE Colorado**, Adams, Arapahoe, \$50,000
- **River Valley Family Health Center**, Delta, Montrose, \$40,000
- **Rocky Mountain Public Media**, statewide, \$10,000
- **Rocky Mountain Welcome Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Morgan, \$79,174
- **San Miguel County**, San Miguel, \$68,370
- **Second Chance Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$38,760
- **Servicios de la Raza**, Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Archuleta, Broomfield, Cheyenne, Costilla, Denver, Douglas, Eagle, Larimer, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, San Miguel, Summit, Weld, \$99,500
- **Shorter Community AME Church**, Denver, \$50,000
- **Soul 2 Soul Sisters**, statewide, \$75,000
- **Southern Colorado Harm Reduction Association**, Pueblo, \$24,400
- **Springs Rescue Mission**, El Paso, \$35,000
- **St. Benedict Health and Healing Ministry**, Boulder, Weld, \$15,000
- **Summit Community Care Clinic**, Lake, Park, Summit, \$52,500
- **The Family Center/La Familia**, Larimer, \$25,500
- **The Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities**, Adams, Denver, \$25,000
- **The Road Called STRATE**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$25,000
- **The Senior Hub**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$80,000

- **Thriving Families**, Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, \$18,500
- **Tri-County Health Network**, Delta, \$36,661
- **Una Mano Una Esperanza**, Denver, Eagle, Garfield, Jefferson, \$40,000
- **University of Colorado Foundation**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$69,000
- **Village Exchange Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$50,000
- **ViVe Wellness**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, \$54,520
- **Voces Unidas de las Montañas**, Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, \$85,5000
- **Voces Unidas for Justice**, El Paso, \$30,000
- **Vuela for Health**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Weld, \$91,250
- **Westwood Unidos**, Denver, \$22,300
- **Zion Senior Center**, Arapahoe, Denver, Pueblo, \$25,250

Together We Protect – Youth Vaccine Equity Support: \$928,327

- **9Health:365**, statewide, \$44,500
- **African Youth Advocate**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, \$35,000
- **Aurora Public Schools Metro Migrant Education Program**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, \$14,600
- **COLOR**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Lake, Las Animas, Pitkin, Prowers, San Miguel, Summit, \$22,000
- **Cultivando**, Adams, \$15,000
- **Denver Health Foundation**, Denver, \$50,000
- **Every Child Pediatrics**, Adams, Denver, Jefferson, \$49,990

- **Family Resource Center**, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, Yuma, \$22,800
- **Focus Points Family Resource Center**, Adams, Denver, \$26,600
- **Garfield County Public Health**, Garfield, \$28,000
- **Grand County Rural Health Network**, Grand, \$25,000
- **Gunnison County Department of Health and Human Services**, Gunnison, \$32,650
- **Jefferson Center**, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson, \$19,950
- **Kids At Their Best**, Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma, \$47,800
- **Kids First**, Adams, \$42,744
- **Larimer County Department of Health and Environment**, Larimer, \$18,500
- **MarillacHealth**, Mesa, \$7,500
- **Moffat Consolidated School District**, Saguache, \$42,500
- **North Colorado Health Alliance**, Larimer, Weld, \$50,000
- **Out Boulder County**, Boulder, Broomfield, Weld, \$50,000
- **Rocky Mountain Welcome Center**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$48,224
- **San Juan Basin Public Health**, Archuleta, La Plata, \$45,969
- **Scholars Unlimited**, Denver, \$11,000
- **Southern Colorado Harm Reduction Association**, Pueblo, \$43,000
- **The Gyedi Project**, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, \$50,000
- **Venezia Innovative Services**, Arapahoe, Denver, \$35,000
- **ViVe Wellness**, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, \$50,000

Our Vision

Colorado's children and families are happy, healthy, and thriving.

Our Purpose

Creating equity in health, well-being and opportunity for Colorado's children and families.

- We believe that Colorado prospers when all our children, youth and families thrive.
- We intentionally direct our resources to those denied opportunity in our society.
- We stand together with communities to create policies, environments and systems that support the goal that every child in Colorado has love, stability, support and opportunity.

Caring *for* Colorado
Promoting Health FOUNDATION

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