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March 1, 2021

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Colorado Foundations Direct \$3 Million to Support Equitable Vaccine Access in Colorado Communities Disproportionately Affected by COVID

(Denver, CO) – Eight Colorado foundations have created a unique partnership focused on funding on-the-ground efforts to connect Coloradans who live daily without access to critical services and opportunities due to race and/or their socioeconomic status with access to COVID-19 vaccines and information.

Together We Protect, Colorado’s COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Fund, is focused specifically on supporting organizations working in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to ensure that people of color and those who face systemic barriers have the most appropriate and accessible information about the COVID-19 vaccine and can access the vaccine through opportunities that consider barriers such as technology, language, transportation and lack of health insurance.

Together We Protect will provide grants ranging from \$10,000 - \$100,000 to support Colorado community-based organizations, working in partnership with state-contracted vaccine providers, to provide culturally relevant and localized outreach, information and support to ensure communities who face systemic barriers have access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

“We know that our communities have been the hardest hit by the pandemic both in hospitalizations and deaths,” said Dr. Oswaldo Grenardo, a family physician and tri-chair of the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce. “But we also know that by deploying strategic resources to help our communities get the information and access they need, we can focus on equity, not just expediency, in the distribution of vaccines across our state.”

Together We Protect is a partnership of [Immunize Colorado](#) and the [Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce](#), which will provide on-the-ground technical assistance and support to community-based organization grantees, and these Colorado foundations:

- [Caring for Colorado Foundation](#)
- [Colorado Health Foundation](#)
- [Community First Foundation](#)
- [Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation](#)
- [Denver Foundation](#)
- [Latino Community Foundation of Colorado](#)

- [Next50 Initiative](#)
- [Rose Community Foundation](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every community in Colorado, but some populations have been impacted significantly more than others. Black, Latino, and Native Americans have all [experienced](#) rates of infection, hospitalization, and death that far exceed their proportion of the population. Access to COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination rates for both COVID-19 and other vaccines in these communities lag well behind those for White Coloradans.

“As people begin to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, we know that people and communities of color are being left behind. It is absolutely essential that we make equity a central part of our state’s vaccine response,” said Linda Reiner, President and CEO, Caring for Colorado Foundation, which is coordinating the fund. “Together We Protect makes it possible for foundations in our state to work in partnership with community organizations to address persistent barriers to immunization including people’s mistrust in the vaccine due to historic mistreatment of people of color in the health care system, and systemic barriers including language, transportation, and digital access.”

“It is clear that we need a more robust and strategic approach to ensuring that every Coloradan, no matter where they live or who they are, has the opportunity to get vaccinated,” said Stephanie Wasserman, executive director of Immunize Colorado. “This funding will help create those opportunities by connecting trusted, local community organizations with the resources needed to directly remove barriers and improve access to COVID-19 vaccine information and services for those they serve.”

Organizations interested in learning more about this effort and applicant eligibility requirements, can join an informational webinar on Tuesday, March 9th at 2:00 pm (MST – [registration required](#)). The first round of applications will be accepted until March 19th and a second round of applications will be accepted until April 28th. Visit <https://caringforcolorado.org/together-we-protect/> to learn more.

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