

2024 IMPACT REPORT:

Working in the Present, Defining the Future



Since 2019, the **Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger** has been on a mission to improve food systems and support the organizations that provide connections to food so every Coloradan can access the food they choose, where they want it, and when they need it.

A Message From the Blueprint

To the community,

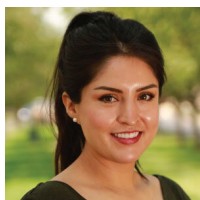
The overarching work of the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger in 2024 was transformation, in order to align our efforts with the expressed calls to action voiced by community and our collaborators. This included the ongoing, essential work of advancing a more just, equitable, and community-centered food system and arming community with the skills and support to advocate for the food system they envision, while also creating an evolved future for the Blueprint itself that even further centers equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

Through our work, like the Advocacy Leadership Academy, we supported the ongoing learning of dozens of community-based advocates, helping provide them with the tools they need to lift their own voices and advance their own solutions. Our local engagements and microgrants helped increase awareness of the importance of free school meals for every student as well as allowing appropriate time to eat as an essential part of the school day. We created an active project for more robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women Infants and Children (WIC) programs in our state by supporting the ability of more retailers to engage with the programs and ensuring more individuals can get connected with the programs in ways that make a meaningful difference in their quality of life. We educated and advocated with both state and federal policymakers, helping to ensure the continued elevation of connections between food, health, and equity.

Internally, we dedicated 2024 to the essential work of evolving the Blueprint toward its next phase of work. From its initial launch in 2018, the Blueprint was intended to be a living document representing the ongoing efforts to end hunger in our state. As the organization entered its fifth year of full operation, it was time to look critically at how the organization fulfilled its primary role as connector and convener as well as how it could continue its evolution toward more community-centered work. The result of that outreach and reflection are changes to the organization's mission, vision and values, a newly defined theory of change, core commitments, and objectives all supported by a new organizational structure.

We are deeply grateful to the work and support of our Governing Council, our network members, and the organizations who support our work through their generous funding. All of this work belongs to you – the community we serve – and we are indebted to your support.

In gratitude,



Dolores Ramirez
Executive Director of
Community



Joël McClurg
Executive Director of
Systems

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Where We've Been</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Expanding Reach</u>	<u>5 - 12</u>
<i>Learn about the projects and programs we're advancing to expand reach.</i>	
<u>Providing Resources</u>	<u>13 - 15</u>
<i>Learn about the ways we're ensuring resources reach community-based organizations in support of their work.</i>	
<u>Blueprint Projects</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Where We're Headed</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>A Year of Transformation</u>	<u>19</u>
<i>Learn about how the Blueprint is evolving.</i>	

WHAT HUNGER LOOKS LIKE IN COLORADO

FOOD INSECURITY

671,340 Coloradans (11.5%), enough to fill the Broncos stadium nearly 9 times, don't have reliable access to sufficient, affordable and nutritious foods to support their health and wellbeing. This is a 2% increase since the 2023 report.¹

DECREASE IN ACCESS

7.7%, about 1 in 11 older adults in Colorado, regularly experience the inability to have access to sufficient, affordable food. This is a slight decrease from the previous year (.5%).⁵

LIFE-SAVING SUPPORT

In the federal fiscal year 2024, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program supported food access for **584,500** residents or about 1 in 10 Coloradans. Of those, 64% were families with children and 25% were families with members living with disabilities or who are older adults.⁶

GROWING CONCERNS

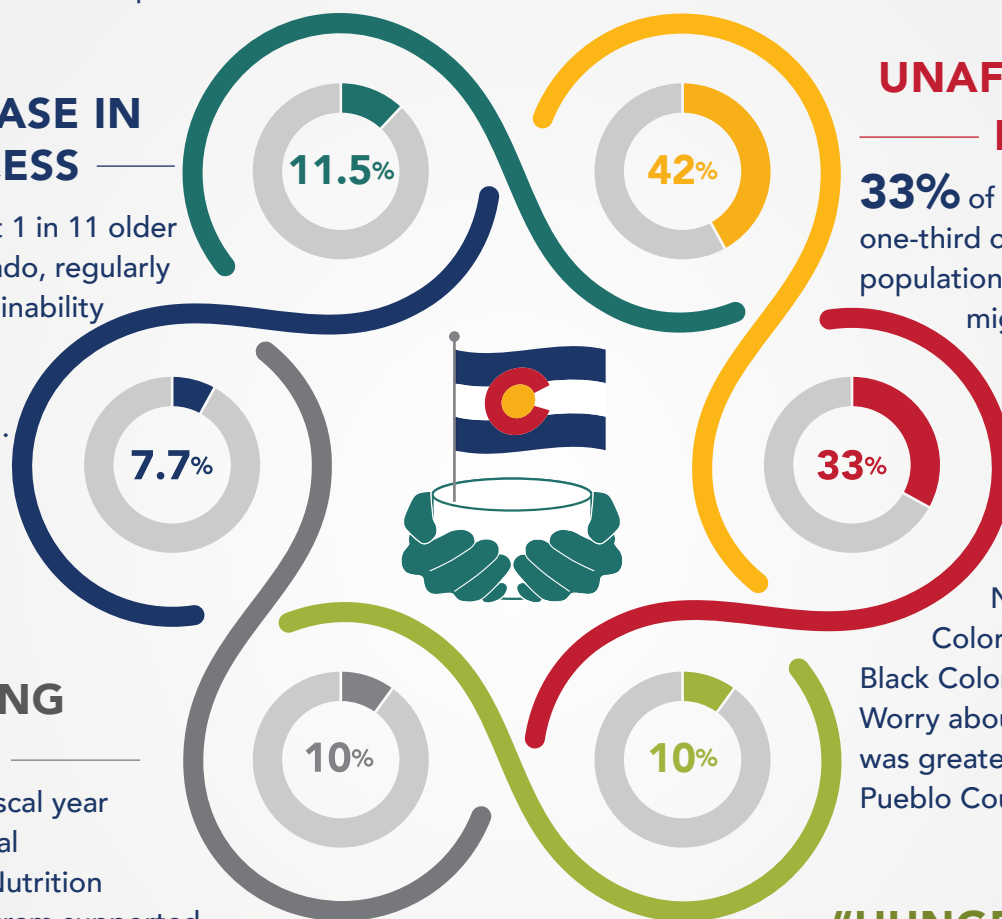
42% of Coloradans report that hunger is an extremely serious or very serious problem in our state. Those percentages climb significantly to 62% for Black, 52% for Latine, and 59% for Native American Coloradans.²

UNAFFORDABLE FOOD

33% of Coloradans, or one-third of the state's total population are worried they might not always be able to afford food over the next year. That concern is particularly pronounced for Native American Coloradans (52%) and Black Coloradans (45%). Worry about affording food was greatest for residents of Pueblo County.³

"HUNGER CLIFF"

The end of pandemic-era food programs, coupled with the fastest increase in food prices in more than four decades, is expected to create a "hunger cliff" for families in the coming year. From 2017 - 2019, 16% of children were living in households experiencing food insecurity. This percentage dropped to 10% in 2020 - 2022 largely due to pandemic programs that increased access to food.⁴



1 Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America, 2022 data in 2024 report

2 Pulse Poll, The Colorado Health Foundation, 2024

3 Pulse Poll, The Colorado Health Foundation, 2024

4 Kids Count! In Colorado, 2024 report

5 Map the Food Gap, Feeding America, 2022 data in 2024 report

6 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Colorado SNAP, 2025 report with 2024 data

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

60 community members affirmed they were engaged with the Blueprint regularly and compensated for their lived and/or living experience

In 2024, an average of **25** community members per month received compensation for participating in Blueprint spaces

Over **\$95,000** in stipends to community members were distributed

BLUEPRINT ENGAGEMENT



3,000 unique visitors to our website monthly, a 226% increase compared to 2023
Combined total snapshot from English- and Spanish-language websites

2,800 social media followers, an organically-grown 14% increase from 2023
Combined total snapshot from Facebook, LinkedIn, and X

1,560 newsletter subscribers, a 9.2% increase compared to 2023

The work of the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger is primarily to expand reach and make connections to resources for community all in service to a **more robust, equitable, and sustainable food system.**



EXPANDING REACH



ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Blueprint celebrated the [graduation of 12 community advocates](#) from its revamped interactive advocacy academy. The Advocacy Leadership Academy is designed for beginners in the policy space who are looking to gain the knowledge and skills to become advocacy leaders in their communities and are enthusiastic about community organizing and power-building. With a focus ranging from deep-diving legislative process to insights into policy testimony and personal storytelling, the academy seeks to provide the tools all advocates need to be comfortable and confident in the complex policy space and will continue to be a core focus of our advocacy efforts to transform our food landscape in the future.

EXPANDING REACH

LOCAL HEALTH SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL IMPLEMENTATION CAMPAIGN

With the launch of Colorado's inaugural effort to provide free breakfast and lunch for every K-12 student, the Blueprint oversaw a [public awareness campaign](#) to solidify ongoing support for local implementation of the program with the Colorado School Nutrition Association and other partners. Goals for the \$1.2 million digital and grassroots campaign included further elevating the importance of school meals for all students, deepening the understanding of and support for the value of free school meals, and engaging community more fully in the value of the program in their schools and neighborhoods. Overseen by a 16-member steering committee, the effort featured an online campaign that garnered 67 million impressions as well as a community microgranting initiative that supported outreach from 40 community-based organizations including schools, parent groups, teachers, and others to 59 of Colorado's 64 counties. These numbers translate to on the ground impact as more community members support and utilize the program.



EXPANDING REACH

INCREASING SNAP & WIC RETAILERS



Created by members of the SNAP/WIC Retailers project team, the Blueprint worked to increase the number of small grocery stores and corner stores that accept SNAP and WIC benefits while also increasing the affordability and availability of healthy and culturally-preferable food offered by Colorado small businesses. Among other elements, the project team released a [toolkit to demystify the SNAP application process](#) for interested retailers. The project team also supported direct retailer outreach by community-based organizations creating immediate and direct impact. For instance, the work of the Viva Resource Foundation helped A Fresh Move Grocery Store, which operates in a food desert, complete SNAP certification. This increased A Fresh Move Grocery Store's sales while also helping low-income community members use their SNAP benefits without having to travel long distances. Community-Based Services Consulting focused on immigrant-owned businesses in Afghan and Ethiopian communities, building trust with 18 retailers while laying the groundwork for future certifications.

EXPANDING REACH

TIME TO EAT



All Colorado students need good nutrition to learn. According to a 2021 joint report by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Center for Good Food Purchasing, the American government’s \$18.7 billion investment in free and reduced lunches gave a nearly \$40 billion return, “providing at least \$21 billion in net benefit to society even when we measure only their benefits to human health and economic equity.” This \$21 billion net gain comes primarily from improved public health — reducing healthcare costs and boosting long-term productivity — and greater economic equity through assisting low-income families by giving them access to nutritious meals, easing financial strain, and fostering economic stability.

And with the advent of Colorado’s Healthy School Meals for All providing free breakfast and lunch to every student, the reality of this daily nutrition took another step forward. That’s why the Blueprint and its partner Nourish Colorado also took up the policy mantle of exploring whether or not students had the corresponding time needed to actually eat the meals they received. To support this, multiple convenings and connections led to [legislation that would have created a task force focused on looking at best practices for time to eat in school](#) settings, in addition to supporting recess for younger students. The Blueprint will continue to advocate for time-to-eat policies across the state, including efforts to evaluate best practices and policies and working with school superintendents.

EXPANDING REACH

ACCESS TO EBT

With the Blueprint's advocacy across a particularly contentious legislative session in partnership with Hunger Free Colorado, the [Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer \(Summer EBT or S-EBT\) program](#) began providing eligible families with \$120 per eligible student through a one-time payment, equating to \$40 per month for each month of summer break. Benefits came in the form of pre-loaded cards that families could use to purchase groceries. Eligible students include those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals in school or those with families who receive assistance such as SNAP benefits, Medicaid, or Colorado Works (TANF). Qualifying children were enrolled automatically if they were already signed up for any of the assistance programs. Since the daily benefits only equate to about \$1.33 per child per meal during the summer months, the new program is in addition to summer meal sites that offer breakfasts, lunches, and snacks to any youth under 18 years old.



RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAMS WORK



The Blueprint's Restaurants in Community Pilot was launched in the summer of 2024 by the Food Access for the Unhoused project team. The project, generously supported by Beacon Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, set out to creatively help food-insecure individuals in our community by providing hot meals to individuals who would eventually qualify for a state-implemented [Restaurant Meals Program](#).

The project demonstrated the impacts such a program can have on 20 community members and restaurant owners as well as gathered important qualitative and quantitative data to support Colorado's future implementation of the USDA program. In Phase 2, the implementation was shifted to align with the authentic experience of using SNAP benefits to purchase meals. The program was expanded to 25+ participants, who were provided monthly gift cards of \$150 to be used with specified restaurants. This method more closely tested the practical and on-the-ground program implementation in Colorado.

EXPANDING REACH

COMMUNITY VOICE COMMITTEE

Approximately 10 community members regularly participate in the [Community Voice Committee](#), playing a vital role in advancing the Blueprint's priorities. Community members leverage their lived-expertise to shape policies from a space that was designed by and for them. The committee is focused on providing community members with the opportunity to gain in-depth understanding of policy issues that impact their communities, to provide input and shape policy direction from their lived-experience perspective, and to engage in advocacy efforts around these policies. The Community Voice Committee also provides educational and capacity-building opportunities to ensure that members are gaining the skills necessary to feel confident in their advocacy.



FARM EQUITY OFFICE

The Blueprint created a home for a coalition driven by local female farmers, farmers of color, and LGBTQIA2+ farmers to advocate for the creation of a [Farm Equity Office in Colorado](#) within the Colorado Department of Agriculture. The Farm Equity Office is tasked with leading all initiatives within the department, supporting workforce development for those populations who are historically under-represented and have been excluded from our state's agricultural system. Within its role, the coalition successfully supported the department in a state budget request for positions within their workforce development unit as well as providing technical assistance in support of hiring two positions with a focus on equity and workforce development.

EXPANDING REACH

CONNECTING FOOD AND HEALTH

A critical piece of improving access and equity within our food systems is ensuring that the connections between food and health are more widely understood, supported, and reflected in Colorado policies. In acknowledgment of this, the Blueprint built a cross-sector coalition – the [Connecting Food and Health](#) project – alongside partners and advocates across the state, to organize around policy and implementation opportunities that link food access to health outcomes in Colorado.

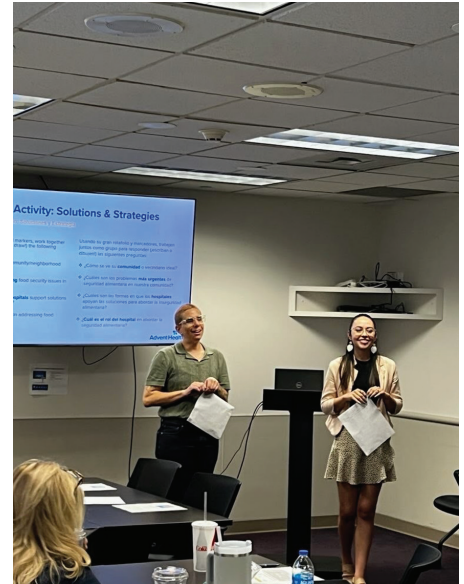
Early efforts included work to ensure that Colorado’s regional accountable entities (RAEs) responsible for the administration of supportive programs like Medicaid incorporate food as an essential element of the work they do as well as encouraging and supporting needed federal waivers that would allow Colorado’s Medicaid program to acknowledge and support food access as part of overarching health-related social needs. Creating a Medicaid program that allows individuals who use it as their health insurance to access the full range of health and wellness supports they need would help these individuals stay on track toward their most successful life and moves our state toward better health for all. The importance of this work was recognized by Common Spirit Health when they gave the effort an annual [Human Kindness and Health Justice Award](#).



EXPANDING REACH

TRAININGS, CONVENINGS, AND FACILITATIONS

The Blueprint joined AdventHealth for a series of “Community Health Improvement” townhall meetings as part of AdventHealth’s efforts to create happier, healthier communities, including access to healthy, culturally affirming foods. Meetings also included the opportunity for participants to learn about and give feedback on the health care organization’s Hospital Transformation Program. This work joined significant outreach by the Blueprint’s Policy and Community Justice team, which presented at four conferences and provided 10 introductory policy and legislative session primers for local food coalitions and healthcare providers outside of the existing projects and programs supported by the Blueprint.



FEDERAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY



A critical piece of advancing the evolution of food systems that work for people is ensuring that federal policymakers understand those systems and the challenges people face around food access. The Blueprint organized in-district meetings with key federal elected officials to connect community advocates with those policymakers on a variety of topics including child nutrition, protections

against SNAP EBT skimming, older adult food access, and the Restaurant Meals Program. The Blueprint will continue to expand this effort through use of a [new policy engagement tool](#), which makes it easy to identify community leaders in the Blueprint’s network who live in each congressional district.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

COMMUNITY FOOD GRANTS

The Governor's Office, Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), and the Blueprint came together to announce the distribution of \$2,611,500 in funding from the State of Colorado to 88 emergency food assistance providers. [Eighty-three food pantries received a combined total of \\$1 million](#), in addition to the five regional food banks.

The Blueprint administers the grant program, in partnership with CDHS. The Community Food Grants program provides funding to qualifying food pantries and food banks, specifically for the procurement and distribution of healthy, culturally relevant foods, while also championing local agriculture. With these funds, food pantries can acquire and distribute food directly to individuals and families as aligned with community needs and priorities. Similarly, food banks can buy food in bulk and distribute the entirety of their grant purchases to food pantries across the state. Grants are intended to purchase meat, dairy, and fresh produce from local farmers, ranchers, and producers. They also aim to expand access to foods that meet the diverse tastes and needs of community members based on their cultural identity and/or spirituality.

The importance of these grants are expressed through the real and immediate impact they are having on individual lives. One grant recipient, Manna, reported on their work with a single father who lives with a disability and is a survivor of domestic violence. When he enrolled in Manna's Homelessness Prevention program, he was at imminent risk of losing his housing. Manna was able to provide financial assistance so he could remain housed and feed his family. He managed to obtain employment, which allowed him to stay housed and become self-sufficient. Manna reports, "He didn't think he was going to be able to achieve the goals that he set for himself, but after participating in this program, he has achieved his original goals and more. He feels confident about his future and excited for his next steps."



PROVIDING RESOURCES

MICROGRANTS FOR FOOD ACCESS

The Blueprint's [Microfunding project](#), launched in 2023, awarded eight grassroots organizations with \$3,000 grants to bolster their efforts to increase access to nutritious, affordable food in their communities. Through support from the Colorado Community Health Alliance, this second round of microgrant funding prioritized initiatives spearheaded by community members residing in select counties, with a particular focus on efforts led by people of color in organizations with budgets under \$50,000. The counties represented include Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, El Paso, Gilpin, Jefferson, Park, and Teller.



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

Through support from the Colorado Trust, the Blueprint launched support for technical assistance and coaching to [Community Resilience Initiatives food grantees](#), training them to use the Blueprint's food sovereignty toolkit and helping grantees create their own blueprints to increase food access and build resilient food systems. The Initiative aims to ensure that grantees receive the necessary support to successfully implement their programs, fostering community resilience and enhancing food justice across Colorado.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

— CO-FARM, THE COMMUNITY FOOD SOVEREIGNTY MODEL —

To help achieve food sovereignty, the Blueprint launched work on [CO-FARM, the Community Food Assessment and Resiliency Model](#), which will draw upon contemporary best practices and collective wisdom already being implemented to support existing and future community-driven food systems that emphasize ecological soundness, community values, and sustainable methods.

CO-FARM will be a tool that helps communities create their own vision by providing real-world estimates on the capital investments needed to build it, where those investments should be made, and what diets and population sizes the system can support. The tool will be an open-source resource, consolidating knowledge from urban and rural farms, local food processing initiatives, and community nonprofit retailers across Colorado into a scalable model that's dynamic and adjustable based on the identity and strengths of different communities.

In partnership with the University of Colorado at Boulder's Masters of Environment program, we have completed a year-long project focused on creating a thorough and complete research plan identifying existing data sets and tools, while also validating the tool concept with over 50 collaborators. Next steps include exploring how this research can be developed into an interactive tool to assist development of local food systems by community partners.



PROVIDING RESOURCES

UPDATED DATA DASHBOARD

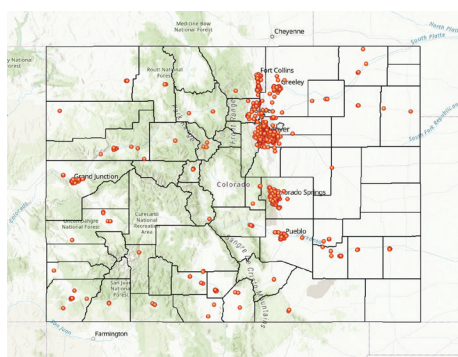
The Blueprint's [data dashboard](#) has been updated with 2022 - 2023 data (as of October 2024). The online, searchable, bilingual tool allows users to access local, state, and national data in one place on issues including poverty, food access, food insecurity, participation for SNAP and WIC, child nutrition, and public perceptions about hunger in our state. Developed to track key benchmarks in the effort to end hunger in Colorado, community-led organizations are also using the database to frame hunger-related issues in their community and applying for grants. State partners have found its utility in identifying trends, gaps, and opportunities.

Introduction	Poverty	Food Insecurity	Food Access	SNAP and WIC Participation	Child Nutrition	Public Will for Ending Hunger	Resources to Learn More
--------------	---------	-----------------	-------------	----------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------



Data Dashboard

UPDATED CHILD NUTRITION STORY MAP



The Blueprint, with support from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and the Colorado Department of Education, updated its [child nutrition story map](#). The online resource was made publicly available to help maximize federal child nutrition programs across Colorado. It maps out the current state of the Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) – looking at participation rates and sites – to better understand and identify gaps in access as well as areas of opportunity for expanded access. Organizations use the interactive map to boost awareness about programs, identify potential partnerships, new site locations and sponsors and tell stories about community's needs.



BLUEPRINT PROJECTS

- ✓ **Community Events**
Goal: Support a community-led event with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and local organizations in the Four Corners region of Colorado
Outcome: Ongoing as of December 2024
- ✓ **Connecting Food & Health**
Goal: Advance Colorado policies linking food access to health outcomes through a diverse, cross-sector coalition
Outcome: Successfully advanced the “food is medicine” movement and 1115 waivers in Medicaid; concluding in early 2025
- ✓ **Farm Equity Office Coalition**
Goal: Convene a coalition led by BIPOC, LGBTQIA2+, and female farmers to advocate for a state Farm Equity Office
Outcome: Successfully helped create two equity-focused positions within the Colorado Department of Agriculture; coalition work winding down
- ✓ **Food Access for the Unhoused**
Goal: Research and elevate ways that SNAP can be more accessible for Coloradans who are older adults, unhoused, transitioning into housing, or facing instability in their housing
Outcome: Hosted a pilot project providing meals to the unhoused through SAFER; aiming to codify in 2025 state legislation
- ✓ **Healthy School Meals for All Campaign & Microgrants**
Goal: Support Colorado’s implementation of Healthy School Meals for All by launching a statewide marketing campaign and a microgrant initiative for community-led outreach
Outcome: Successful campaign, with 40 local groups receiving microgrants
- ✓ **Liderazgo Comunitario (Community Leadership)**
Goal: Support local leaders and initiatives advancing food access and justice within their own communities
Outcome: Hosted a monthly leadership workshop series in 2024
- ✓ **Microfunding for Food Access**
Goal: Provide pass-through funding to support small, grassroots efforts in expanding local, healthy food access
Outcome: 8 community projects funded in 2024; work led to formation of the Blueprint’s Grant Review Committee
- ✓ **Project UP: Unlocking the Potential of WIC & Medicaid**
Goal: Advocate for stronger WIC access and share promising practices to improve the nutrition and health for Colorado families
Outcome: Ongoing as of December 2024
- ✓ **WIC & SNAP Retailers**
Goal: Provide technical assistance to small grocers and retailers seeking certification for SNAP, WIC, and Double Up Food Bucks; offer support in navigating and completing the application processes
Outcome: Connected with nearly 85 small businesses across Colorado through proactive outreach; supported several applications to boost sales and expand fresh food access locally

WHERE WE'RE HEADED

We've worked hard to create a shared and inclusive path forward for the Blueprint that holds as its guiding light the voice and vision of community.

In 2024, the Blueprint completed a yearlong process to help the organization evolve as a connector, convenor, and facilitator, and become even more community-centered in its collective work. Our vision remains the same, but we will adopt a more intentional focus on supporting our statewide network to collectively achieve food sovereignty for everyone living in Colorado.

As part of this work, the Blueprint has moved away from the original plan's five goals and instead center four new commitments, which are the new pillars for the organization's foundation that will drive the work forward. Finally, the Blueprint began to shift the way it works to better meet the needs expressed by its community – and better align with the organization's vision, mission, values, and commitments. This entailed sunsetting all workgroups and the Governing Council, [continuing existing committees and forming new ones](#), establishing a [Food Sovereignty Advisory Board](#), and [expanding our team](#) to better support those who lead our movement – the people who grow, produce, sell, and eat food.

"We've worked hard to create a shared and inclusive path forward for the Blueprint that holds as its guiding light the voice and vision of community."

VISION, MISSION & VALUES



Our Vision

A Colorado where everyone can access the food they choose, where they want it, and when they need it.



Our Mission

Building a movement for a more responsive, equitable, and sustainable food system by shifting power to our Colorado communities.



FOUR PILLARS OF COMMITMENT



COLORADO BLUEPRINT TO END HUNGER



Convene
collaborators
around shared
priorities



Support local
solutions
to local
problems



Strengthen
resources &
build capacity



Champion
bold policy
change



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE





COLORADO BLUEPRINT TO END HUNGER



CONNECT WITH US

EndHungerCO.org

