



Colorado Clinical and Translational
Sciences Institute (CCTSI)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Photo taken at RISE Colorado, by Denver-based Community Research Liaison

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

cctsi.cuanschutz.edu/community

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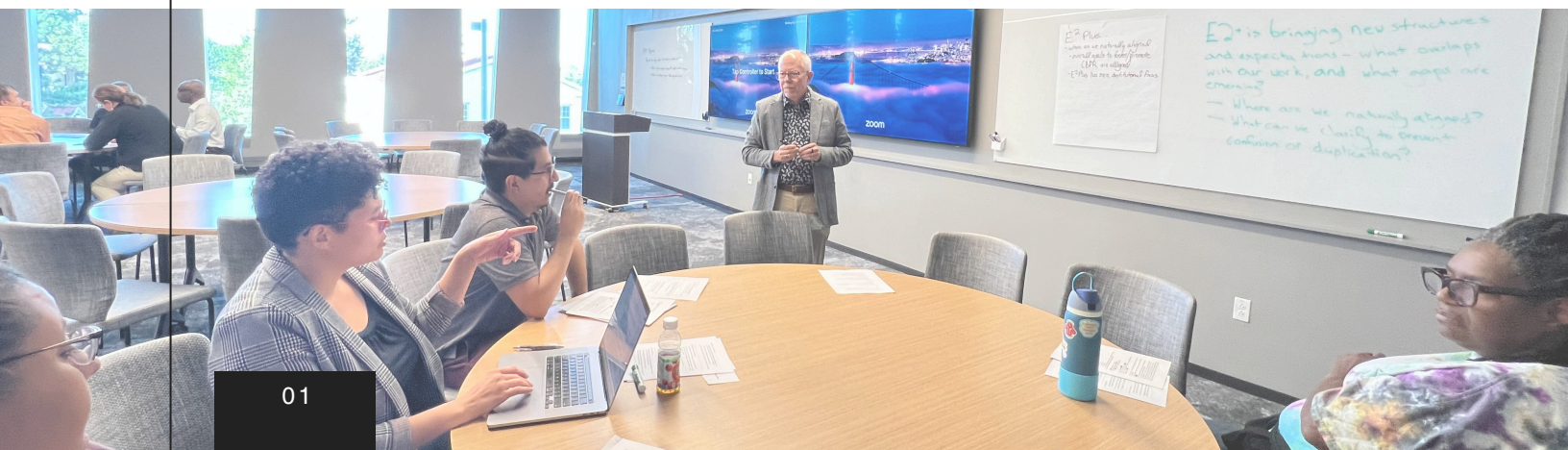
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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CCTSI) was established in 2008 with NIH funding and is a collaboration among the University of Colorado campuses, Colorado State University, six affiliated hospitals, and numerous community organizations.

Community Engagement (CE) is key to expanding the impact of clinical and translational research. The CCTSI-CE core ensures communities have a voice in research through the Partnership of Academicians and Communities for Translation (PACT). PACT is supported by staff from the University and Trailhead Institute, as well as a **14-person governance body** and **9-person Community Research Liaison team**.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear CCTSI CE friends, partners and colleagues,

It's our pleasure to present this report on our activities during the calendar year of 2025. The year challenged us in ways that we'd never experienced before, but I feel proud to say that in many ways, the strength of our relationships and work were affirmed by our community partners and those on our campus.



While the words we use to describe our work may have changed, the nature of it has not and the importance of it has only increased. We are privileged to work with partners who continue to walk side by side with us as we strive to do the same with them. We continue to work to train our campus peers in our work, build capacity among our community partners and support community engaged research through consults, pilot grants and advocacy.

I hope you will take some time to read through this record of our work, and I hope it will prompt you to ask us questions or get engaged with us in other ways. We are here to strengthen the research done in all Colorado communities through trusted relationships and skilled, responsible engagement.

If you're not already working with us, we welcome your interest. If you are already working with us, please know that you have our deepest appreciation!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Nease". The signature is fluid and cursive.

DON NEASE
CCTSI CE Director

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

31

counties served by Community Research Liaison connections
p. 4

16

research projects supported by Community Research Liaisons
p. 4

7

researchers participated in Colorado Immersion Training in
Community Engagement
p. 5

34

organizations or partners engaged in Colorado Immersion Training
in Community Engagement
p. 5

15

active Community Engagement Pilot Grants, totaling **\$223,823**
p. 6

22

Pilot Grant reviewers, of which 11 were community members
p. 7

7

Community Engagement Consultations with investigators
p. 8

191

Community Engagement Forum attendees across four sessions
p. 8

Dissemination

7 Local and National Conferences
Attended by CE Staff
5 Conference Presentations
2 Educational Sessions
1 Peer Reviewed Article

Community Clinical Trials Advisory Board
Distributed **250 English and 250 Spanish**
Brochures throughout communities to
educate about the importance of engaging
in clinical trials.

PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES: MEASURING OUR IMPACT

COMMUNITY RESEARCH LIAISONS:

Community Research Liaisons (CRLs) work across Colorado’s urban and rural communities to connect health research, community initiatives, and clinical practice while promoting and training on equitable and participatory research partnerships.

2 new CRLs onboarded, in the San Luis Valley and Denver Metro, totaling **9 CRLs state-wide.**

“I connected with [another CRL] to get a bit of situational awareness of the CRL position and activities in [their] region.”

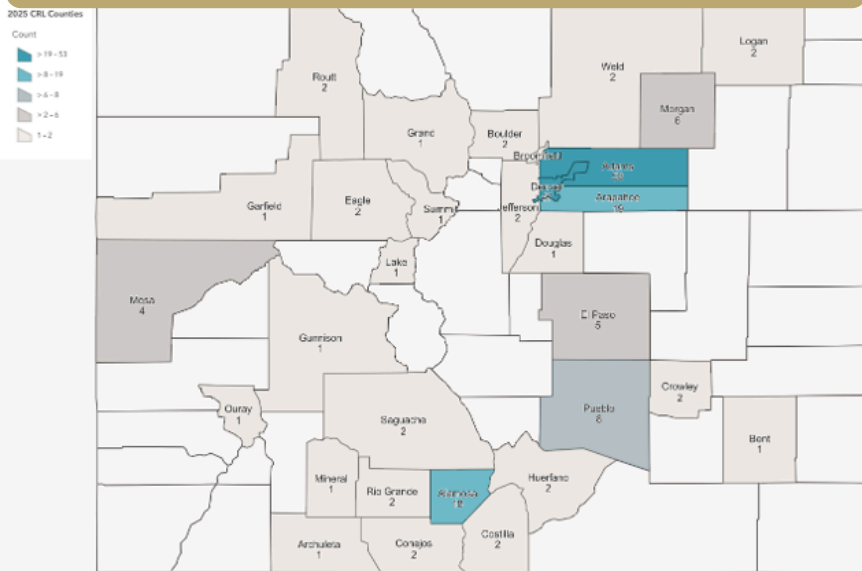
16 research projects supported by CRLs

“I’ve had several opportunities to present and participate in... discussions around...research...I’ve made a lot of progress and I can’t wait to share what the group developed once everything gets finalized.”

87 community organizations and leaders served

Next steps include: connection-building, attending meetings and events, supporting research, inclusion in future CCTSI-CE programming.

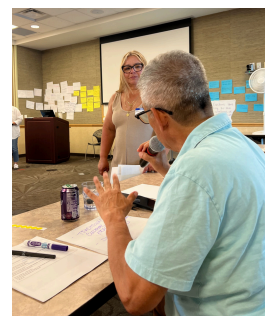
CRLs supported activities in 31 counties across Colorado



“[This] has been a month full of learning and growth... [to] engage in a variety of activities...from legislative advocacy to grant reviews and community-building efforts. Each experience has deepened my understanding of the complex work involved in advancing health.”



“I participated in a community walk organized with the Department of Family Medicine. The walk provided insight into how neighborhood programming is creating capacity and opportunities for local residents.”



COLORADO IMMERSION TRAINING IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CIT)

In 2025, **7 CIT participants** (academic researchers) engaged in didactic learning about community engaged research methods and practices as well as cultural humility, community history, and cultural values. Participants met with a total of **34 organizations or partners** to learn more throughout the week-intensive activities.

2025 TRACKS:

Rural San Luis Valley - Track Leads: Lisa Lucero and Charlene Barrientos-Ortiz

Urban African American Track Lead - Gordon Duvall

CBPR KNOWLEDGE

Academic partnerships assessed their knowledge of CBPR as low before the program. The increase for all statements was by two or more points.

Exhibit 1. Mean ratings of Community-Based Participatory Research knowledge **before** and **after** the immersion week (n=7)

The scale ranged from 1 - "not at all" to 5 - "a great deal."



We implemented a new knowledge and skills assessment based on our logic model and course objectives. Participants showed increases in their understanding and attitudes towards CBPR at the conclusion of the program.

"CIT has reshaped my perspective on my longer-term career. I used to view my path as primarily academic, focusing on building protocols, coordinating clinical research, and publishing. Now, I envision a future where community relationships and impact could be central to my research identity. I want to co-create knowledge that is responsive to the needs and priorities of the community I aim to serve."



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PILOT GRANT PROGRAM: IMPROVING RESEARCH THROUGH COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Pilot Grants support community-academic partnerships to perform pilot studies strengthen relationships and produce preliminary data for future competitive grant applications. Funded projects encompass partnership development, project planning, capacity building, and implementation of research projects. The CE pilot grant program offers two mechanisms for funding; Partnership Development awards or Joint Pilot pilots.

2018–2024 CE pilot grants generated a

19.43



Return on Investment (ROI), leveraging nearly \$800K in funding into \$15M+ in follow-on awards

Partnership Development (PD) awards are intended for **new or potential community-academic partnerships**. These grants are funded at \$8,000 for 9-months.



Joint Pilot (JP) projects are for **established community-academic partnerships for a well-defined translational research project**. These grants are funded at \$30,000 for 12-months.

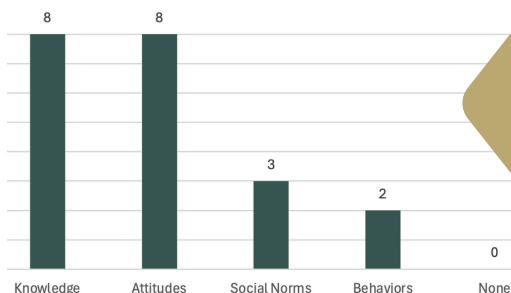
Cycle 16 (August 1, 2024–July 31, 2025)

8 Pilot Grants Funded

- 4 Partnership Development Awards
- 4 Joint Pilot Projects

Total of
\$131,823
awarded

Exhibit 2. Reported Individual and Social Network Impacts (n=8)



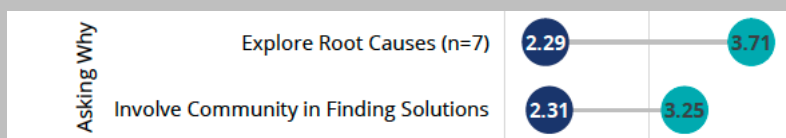
Grantees were asked to consider three areas where their projects had an impact related to the people and communities involved in the research, which align with the Research Impact Framework, a conceptual framework to structure impacts of health research. The areas are social, resources (or service), and policy. In some instances, impacts might be realized after the grant ends.

“One example of...impact can be seen in how participants began to reframe their understanding of sensory health. Through focus groups and interviews, individuals gained new knowledge about the links between sensory loss, HIV, and aging, which increased awareness of the benefits of seeking care. This shift in knowledge also influenced attitudes, with participants weighing the costs of assistive devices against the benefits of maintaining independence and quality of life. Some participants reported making small behavioral changes, such as scheduling hearing or vision appointments or experimenting with adaptive strategies, as a result of these discussions.” – JP Grantee

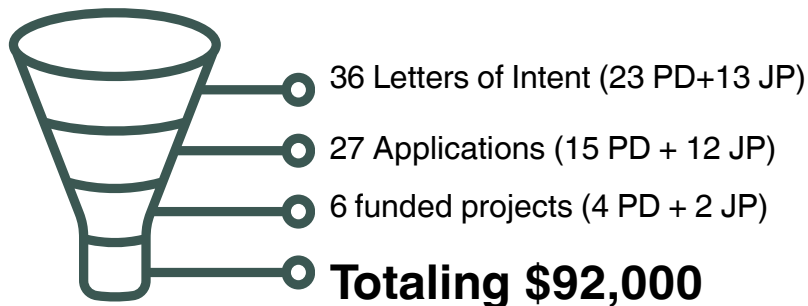
Each partnership completes the **Collective Capacity Building Tool (CCBT)** at the beginning and end of the grant period to assess their progress on principles of community-engaged health research.

Teams characterized their project by selecting a progress indicator from an anchored, sequential 4-point rating scale (**1-Just Started, 2-On the Road, 3-Nearly There, and 4-We're There**) of the partnership's journey.

Exhibit 3. CCBT domain item means, **before** and **after** (n=8)



Cycle 17* (August 1, 2025–July 31, 2026)



*Cycle 17 overcame challenges in the federal funding landscape through providing technical assistance to ensure proposals aligned with federal policies. 7 applications originally approved to be funded, however, one declined altogether, resulting in 6 funded partnerships.

Pilot Grant Topics:

- Youth Co-Creation in Mental Health Engagement
- Food Bank–Based Mental Health Training in Rural Colorado
- Emergency Department–Community Care Linkages for Homelessness
- Youth Suicide Prevention Care Improvement
- Health Access for African-Immigrant Children
- Spanish-Language Developmental Disability Assessment & Care



CE Pilot Grant Reviewers are paired: 1 academic and 1 community reviewer. Each application has a primary and secondary teams review. Teams score applications using NIH-style criteria, and assign an NIH-style impact score (1–9) reflecting overall evaluation. Review teams participate in large group deliberation and rescoring.

CCTSI-CE COMMITTEES

PILOT GRANTS COMMITTEE

The pilot grants committee focuses their efforts on the pre-award and technical side of the program. In 2025, the committee concentrated on a robust revision to the request for applications and review process to be more simplified and consistent with new NIH standards.

PILOT GRANT EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Pilot Grant awardees are provided training in community-engaged research and community-based participatory research principles. Additionally, a coach, with experience in community-engagement and research, is assigned to each partnership to support throughout the project period. The pilot grant education and training committee develops and delivers trainings for coaches and pilot grant awardees.

6 Pilot Grant Coaches Trained
in coaching best practices

6

Community-Academic Partnerships
trained in Community-Engaged Research Methods.

When asked how trainees anticipate using the information provided, one respondent said it
“...will serve as a guide to our partnership and community engagement work”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

SEVEN consults spanning pediatrics, gynecology, food science, neurology, and psychiatry.

6 of 7 consultant groups completed evaluations of their 2025 consults.

100% of those surveyed rated their overall experience as good or excellent

100% also agreed or strongly agreed that the consult:

- Shifted their thinking about aspects of their study
- Provided valuable insight on engaging those who might benefit from the research
- Offered realistic recommendations
- Was a positive & worthwhile experience

“We are in our initial planning stages, and I think it was really helpful to have the CE consult this early in our planning to help refine and guide our program structure.”

EVENTS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORUM

A forum for investigators and study teams conducting community-engaged research. Includes brief seminars from leading engagement scholars and community research partners.

Across the four forums in 2025, we had a total of **191 attendees**, with total per-forum attendance numbers ranging from 36-76 attendees. We completed our series of *“From Principles to Practice: Engaging Underserved Communities for Multilevel Impact”* and began a new series titled *“Ethical Practices in Community-Engaged Research.”*

Additionally in 2025, we hosted our second annual hybrid virtual/in-person Community Engagement Showcase, to discuss ‘Navigating research partnerships through good times and challenges.’ This showcase provided time for collaboration and give in-person participants the opportunity to engage with various community groups.

The showcase brought in **76 attendees, 49 of whom joined in-person. Fifteen community organizations shared their work** with partners from a variety of departments across the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.



To date, we have hosted
26 forums with 1501 attendees
(unable to count unique attendees)

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The CE Core participates in a number of grant-funded projects throughout the year. Special projects may occur in partnership with other academic or community organizations and must be aligned with the mission of the PACT.



CURRENT SPECIAL PROJECTS INCLUDE:

COLORADO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ALLIANCE (CO-CEAL)

The National Institutes of Health Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) works to promote health, improve health outcomes, and strengthen partnerships through community-engaged research. The Colorado Community Engagement Alliance (CO-CEAL) is a partnership between the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, several community-based organizations, and dozens of trusted local community members.

CO-CEAL Project Activities:

- New four-year project cycle began April 2024.
- Building upon its work with **5 urban and rural Colorado communities** to address chronic conditions and related social determinants of health.
- **Group Model Building and Boot Camp/Community Translation** to inform and develop community-driven interventions, and **Ecological Momentary Assessment and pre/post surveys to evaluate outcomes.**



CASCHEW STATE-WIDE CONFERENCE

CASCHEW 2025 was hosted by three programs based at the University of Colorado Anschutz: CO-CEAL, CAMPHIRE, and ECHO Colorado. **106 people attended.** With the goal of increasing and supporting attendees' capacity to create change in their personal and professional lives with actionable strategies, CASCHEW featured a **poster and networking session**; a **keynote** by Al Richmond, Executive Director of Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH); a **closing** by Kyle Leggott and Alisha Brown titled "Where to Go from Here?" highlighting major takeaways from CASCHEW, insight into emerging policy opportunities, and strategies for sustaining momentum beyond the conference; and **15 concurrent sessions** on a variety of topics.

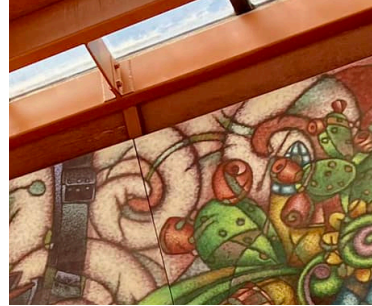
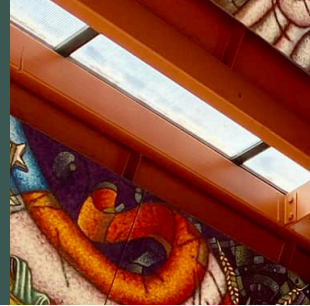
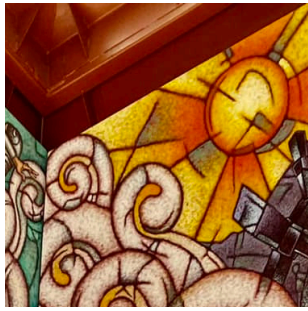
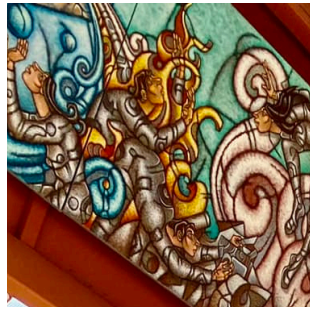


ENGAGE FOR EQUITY PLUS

Engage for Equity Plus is a PCORI Science of Engagement Award led by Nina Wallerstein from the University of New Mexico. **We are participating along with 7 other academic centers.** The goal is to bring community and academic researchers together to influence the culture and structural settings of academic centers to better support community engaged research.

We have convened a Champion Team and a Patient-Community Action Group to reflect on and provide insights for how we can advance our work. Additionally interviews and surveys are being collected both from community members and campus leaders. These will additionally inform the work. **We are in year two of the project, which is funded for four years.**

Note: special projects have funding sources of their own but rely on CE core for staffing and other structures.



THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL AND DEDICATED PARTNERS IN THIS WORK



ACCORDS
ADULT AND CHILD CENTER FOR OUTCOMES
RESEARCH AND DELIVERY SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLORADO



**Rocky Mountain
Prevention Research Center**
COLORADO SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS



THANK YOU

PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH:

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🌐 <https://cctsi.cuanschutz.edu/community>

The PACT Mission:

The Partnership of Academicians and Communities for Translation (PACT) transforms health research to balance power and responsibility between community, clinicians and researchers to improve the health of the people of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Region.

Funding Acknowledgement:

The CCTSI is supported in part by NIH/NCATS Colorado CTSI Grant Number UM1TR004399.