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# Colorado Immersion Training in Community Engagement:

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Ten Year Evaluation Summary



The Evaluation Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS



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## HIGHLIGHTS

The Community Engagement Core of the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CCTSI) provides a variety of programming *“to transform the way communities and researchers work together to design and conduct research by integrating the needs of the community into the research structure.”* As part of this mission, the Colorado Immersion Training in Community Engagement (CIT) Program, founded in 2010, provides immersive community experiential learning to biomedical researchers with interest in pursuing community-based participatory research.

This report summarizes evaluation results over the program’s ten years (2010- 2019) of service to examine the extent this innovative program has worked to achieve the goal of expanding the network of those engaged in community-based participatory research and the lessons learned that may inform future programming and the field of community research beyond the University of Colorado system.

FINDINGS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Community Research Liaisons are a crucial component of the CIT program. Their efforts to bridge academic researchers and communities is foundational to the program’s success.</li><li>❖ 25 CIT alumni went on to receive 33 CCTSI Community Engagement Pilot or CCTSI Translational Pilot Grants. Out of these 33 grants, an additional \$8,723,000 of external grant funding was awarded to continue projects.</li><li>❖ Community partners reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and shared stories about the impact they have seen CIT having with their community.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ CIT alumni consistently experience challenges in getting protected time to do community-focused work. They also report feeling that their CBPR work is not highly valued by academic institutions.</li><li>❖ CIT alumni report working in traditional grant structures to often be challenging or even ill-fitted to their CBPR work. This further illuminates the importance of the CCTSI Community Engagement Pilot Grant funding pipeline.</li><li>❖ The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a crisis experienced by both researchers and communities. Several alumni found ways to adapt and shift their work to still promote the value of CBPR in academic spaces as they continue their work post program.</li></ul>

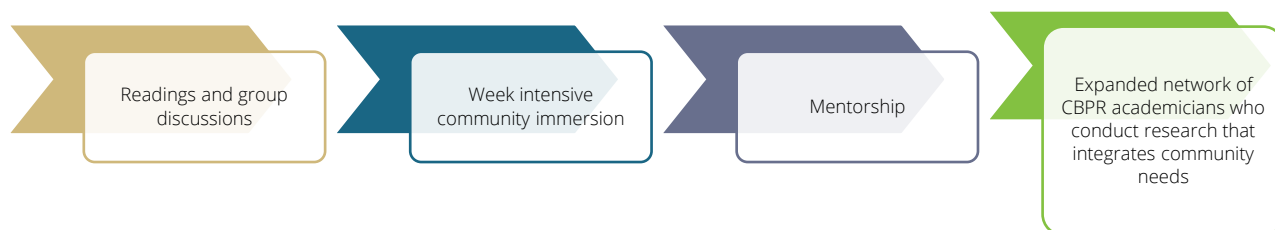
## BACKGROUND

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In 2008, the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CCTSI) at the University of Colorado was funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to accelerate and catalyze the translation of innovative science into improved health and patient care. Since then, the CCTSI has funded a variety of programming to support its mission and vision including the development of the Community Engagement Core. The Community Engagement Core provides funding, training, and programming with the mission *“to transform the way communities and researchers work together to design and conduct research by integrating the needs of the community into the research structure.”*

One specific aim of the Community Engagement Core is *“expanding the network of engaged academicians”* for community-based participatory research (CBPR). To achieve this aim, the Colorado Immersion Training in Community Engagement (CIT) program was initiated in 2010 to provide academic researchers with experiential learning opportunities. This program featured several sequential components including:

1. Directed readings and threaded online discussions to introduce and explore the implications of CBPR principles and practice
2. A week-long community immersion experience in the culture and everyday life of a specific community that concludes with a half-day of reflection and celebration
3. Ongoing mentorship to support the development of community and academic relationships and grant assistance



In each participating community, CIT prepares academic researchers by helping them to 1) explore the history, geography, and culture of a particular community; 2) connect with local residents; and 3) gain skills in engaging communities in research.

As of 2020, the CIT program has supported 122 academic researchers for CBPR through education imbedded directly within Colorado communities. Over its tenure, the program has provided a variety of geographic and demographic tracks designed to immerse researchers into the culture, value system, strengths, and historical challenges of those communities across Colorado. Exhibit 1 details the community tracks that occurred each year with the number of participants. This number has shifted over time to adjust to shifting program budgets.

*Exhibit 1: Community tracks and participants by year\**

Community Track									
Year	Rural Eastern Colorado	San Luis Valley	Urban African American	Urban American Indian	Urban Latino/a/X	Urban Asian Refugee	Rural Native American	LGBTQI+	Participants
2010	x	x	x	x	x				19
2011	x	x	x	x	x	x			24
2012	x	x	x	x	x	x			14
2013		x	x		x				12
2014		x		x		x			12
2015		x			x				9
2016					x	x			9
2017		x					x		8
2018							x	x	9
2019					x			x	8

\*2 researchers participated in the CIT program twice.

This report summarizes evaluation results collected over ten years to examine the extent this innovative program has worked to achieve the goal of expanding the network of those engaged in community-based participatory research and the lessons learned that may inform future programming and the field of community research beyond the University of Colorado system.

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*"That's what the goal of the immersion program is -- to encourage researchers to work in our communities, but you can't work in the communities if you don't know the communities." – Community Research Liaison*

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## METHODS

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The Evaluation Center (TEC) at the University of Colorado Denver provides external evaluation services to support the CCTSI. TEC began the formal evaluation of the CIT program in 2014. This evaluation is exempt from IRB review.

### DATA COLLECTION

Evaluators used three primary methods to collect data to evaluate the CIT program.

#### ***Document Review***

Initially, evaluation efforts focused on content analysis of participants' written reflections collected at the end of the program. The purpose of the analysis was two-fold: 1) to explore evidence of prioritized program outcomes and 2) to surface recommendations that might inform program refinements.

Evaluators also reviewed administrative records to track participation of the CIT researchers in the Community Engagement Translational Pilot Grants program or other CCTSI-funded grants.<sup>1</sup> Additional grant seeking was viewed as one measure of longer-term research engagement.

#### ***Interviews***

Beginning in 2016, evaluators began conducting interviews with past participants. A total of 30 interviews have been conducted (out of 55 participants since 2014) to better understand how they utilize the learnings from CIT and apply them to their research careers. Interviews were conducted six months to two years after program completion to allow time for researchers to solidify relationships and actualize plans for CBPR outcomes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, interviews were not conducted in 2020 and were instead conducted in 2021. Evaluators, however, interviewed four current Community Research Liaisons (CRLs) who had previously led CIT tracks to collect their historical perspectives and stories in 2020. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically coded in NVivo to look for specific programmatic outcomes and any emergent themes.

#### ***Surveys***

Additionally, evaluators worked with CRLs and other program staff to develop a survey designed to collect feedback from community partners who have supported CIT. The survey was sent to 39 selected community partners who contributed to CIT instead of an exhaustive list, as many community partners were under stress related to pandemic response efforts. Responses were received from 13 individuals between June – July 2021.

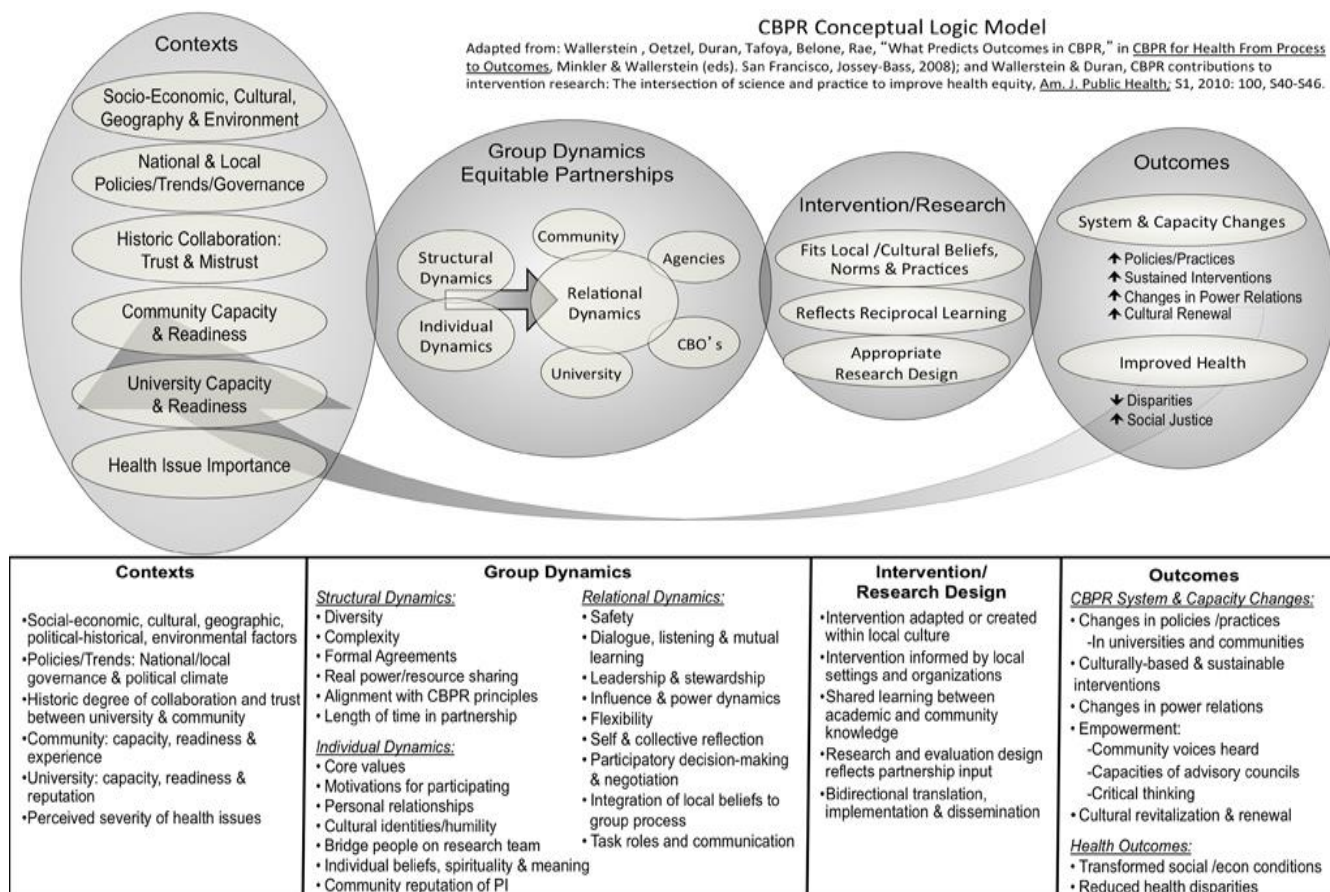
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<sup>1</sup> CCTSI funds several different grant programs within the Translational Pilot program, each with separate research focuses. A current list of CCTSI pilot grant programs can be found at <https://cctsi.cuanschutz.edu/funding#ft-cctsi-pilot-grants-1>

## ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

All evaluation data were analyzed using the framework of CBPR Principles and the CBPR conceptual logic model<sup>2</sup> to understand potential shifts in researchers' thinking and actions, as well as to identify the potential for longer-term impact. Additionally, evaluators applied social cognitive career theory<sup>3</sup> which correlates increases in knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy combined with meaningful experiences with stronger intentions and abilities to pursue a career path.

**Exhibit 2:** Community-based Participatory Research Conceptual Logic Model



<sup>2</sup> Wallerstein N, Oetzel J, Duran B, Tafoya G, Belone L, Rae R. What predicts outcomes in CBPR? : Minkler M, Wallerstein N, *Community Based Participatory Research for Health: Process to Outcomes*. 2nd ed San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 2008:371-392

<sup>3</sup> Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance [Monograph]. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45, 79-122.



## FINDINGS

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### IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMUNITY RESEARCH LIAISON ROLE

A key evaluation finding was the importance of the role of the Community Research Liaisons (CRLs.) CRLs represent a critical link between the biomedical research institution and communities/populations who are potential beneficiaries of the research. They support the work of the CCTSI by facilitating stakeholder engagement in research across the translational spectrum. In addition, they support the implementation of programs, including CIT, that allow the Community Engagement component to realize its strategic vision – specifically, of expanding the network of engaged academicians and communities for translation research. In their many roles, CRLs facilitate bi-directional communication and partnership development.

They also work to foster an environment of mutual respect and trust, all with the goal of promoting high-quality research endeavors and lasting partnerships that will ultimately improve the health and well-being of underserved and underrepresented populations. One CRL described their role,

“There was a lot of mistrust towards the University of Colorado in the beginning, but it was the liaisons who helped earn that trust back. The community that we've been working with over the years, gets it. That's why they've been able to and feel comfortable applying for grants or being supportive of the work that we're doing. ... That's taken some years to develop and to earn that trust, but it's there now.”

To support the CIT, CRLs work to design and lead researchers' experiences through a community track. By leveraging the relationships they have fostered for years, researchers are able to get an immersive experience looking at a community's culture, history, strengths, and challenges from a vantage point not often seen by many biomedical researchers. Additionally, CRLs are able to guide learnings of researchers to shift their mindsets and instead orient themselves to the values and world-views present in the community. This is accomplished through the immeasurable efforts by CRLs to develop and nurture deep relationships with individuals, organizations, and community groups in their respective communities.

CRLs work meticulously with the program staff and their respective communities to develop and execute track-specific activities and curriculum including designing which people, sites, and events to include in the track itineraries. The coordinators and liaisons for each track work with local residents and organizations from the community to serve as guides for the week-long intensive portion of the program. These efforts culminate in rich and contextual experiences within the respective cultural tracks. One CRL described the responsibility of this position as that of a facilitator, sometimes even facilitating researchers' painful unlearning of problematic ways of conducting research.



“This is not a show for people to just come and learn about the communities. These have to be serious researchers. They have to prove that really do want to work with community, and they’re not just ‘drive by’. I don’t use that term loosely. We’re not on display. The people that we call to show up, we need to be respectful for them. That’s the foundation.... By the time people show up and are part of our track, we expect them to be serious and open to learning.

I see people having cultural conflict honestly with the training, with their education that they’ve had. There are training components that I see them struggle [with], and that maybe they have had some education around maybe certain populations ... or no experience with working with a community. I watch them be vulnerable. I watch them be challenged. I’ve heard comments that have been enlightening. I’ve witnessed people crying and checking themselves.

Sometimes it’s beautiful. My role is [to] move them forward and facilitate their learning. It’s not to judge them. It is hard though to see some of that. My role is also to make sure that they don’t do harm to communities, so making sure that, if something is said or done, we address it immediately.”

-Community Research Liaison



These carefully guided experiences often give researchers a glimpse into the lives of many populations that may be largely invisible to biomedical researchers. One CRL track lead described their efforts to ensure that researchers understand the nuanced generational differences seen in Colorado's Asian refugee populations:

"People don't realize that those refugees had to go through so much. This is an eye opener for the researchers. I just want to present the Asian culture to more researchers because ... they know about the Asian culture, ... about how these refugees live, how they need to adjust in order to survive, and how they suffer. Sometimes they suffer without telling us. Especially the older generation, ... they probably have four, five, six, seven people at one time in one room, in one apartment that is so small. That's how they live. ... I tried to get as many appointments [for the researchers] with the refugee themselves so that they have the chance to interact closely with them. Even though we couldn't communicate except for sign language or just ... smiling-that's good enough. ... They were happy, and we were happy. Those are the moments that the researchers remember. Otherwise they wouldn't have a chance to go out and see this daily activities [of the refugees]. Of course, the researchers have to put themselves in the refugee's shoes. They don't come with suit and tie and say, 'Hey, I'm the researcher. I'm going to analyze your situation.' No, no, no."

-Community Research Liaison





## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

### RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

CIT alumni are encouraged to apply for funding through the CCTSI Community Engagement Pilot Grant program to support any CBPR related projects that emerge from their participation in the CIT program. While not required, this funding serves as a crucial resource in supporting community-based research in Colorado. It provides a pipeline to support researchers making the important leap from education to partnered research while they have continued mentoring from the CRLs and other Community Engagement staff.

This pilot grant program funds two different levels of projects. First, the **Partnership Development** grant (PD) provides a small investment to support academic and community partners to further develop their relationship and explore potential a collaborative research project. The **Joint Pilot** grant (JP) provides a larger amount to established partnerships to produce preliminary data related to clinical or community interventions so that they may then apply for additional competitive, external grants. The funding amounts of these two grant programs have varied considerably over its lifespan; however its impact has shown exceptionally high research productivity<sup>4</sup> within the CCTSI funding infrastructure.

In total, 23 CIT alumni received a subsequent Community Engagement Pilot grant; 11 of these researchers received only Partnership Development grants, 5 received only Joint Pilot grants, and 7 additional researchers received both Partnership Development and Joint Pilot funding. These 23 CIT alumni were awarded approximately **\$4,242,000** in follow-on funding from external grant sources beyond CCTSI to support their community-based research.

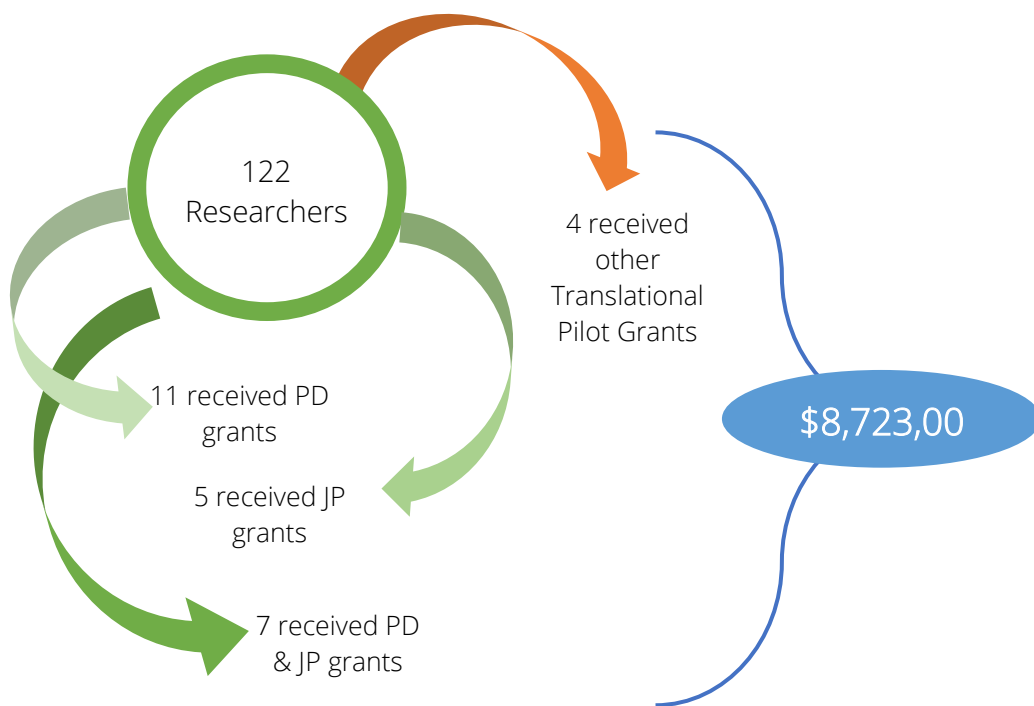
Four CIT alumni participated in other CCTSI Translational Pilot Grant programs (2 of which also received Community Engagement funding). They received approximately **\$4,481,000** in follow-on funding from external grant sources at the end of their CCTSI funded grant. While these other Translational Pilot grant programs do not have a focus on CBPR, having CIT alumni enter into other areas of translational sciences can help to ensure that CBPR principles and values are further disseminated across other research areas.

In summary, a total of 25 individuals who completed the CIT program received 33 CCTSI Pilot grants (both Community Engagement Pilot and Translational Pilot grants) and were awarded just over **\$8,723,000** in follow-on funding.

This summary of researcher productivity includes only awards reported through the CCTSI tracking systems. It is likely other CIT alumni have received additional funding through sources not currently tracked within the CCTSI evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> Return on Investment (ROI) is calculated for all CCTSI grant programs. At the time of this report, the ROI for the Community Engagement Pilot grant program was 20.16, or, for every \$1 in CCTSI grant investment, just over \$20 in additional research grant funding was received. Approximately 48% of Community Engagement Pilot grantees receive follow-on funding.



## CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Social cognitive career theory predicts that increased knowledge and self-efficacy, reinforced through positive, meaningful experiences, can support stronger intentions to pursue a particular career path, namely CBPR in this instance. Participants reported their CIT experiences supported their achievement of new knowledge, provided them with supports and key contacts, and reinforced their interest in pursuing CBPR-related work. One participant wrote:

*"The CIT program on the whole introduced me to CBPR principles and concepts, while the immersion week helped me identify my public health research interest and people that I can potentially work with in the community. ... The CIT experience definitely spurred my interest to work further with the refugee population. ... I hope that, in the future, CBPR and working with the refugee population can be a platform where I can contribute to ... society while applying my technical skills. I would not have realized this possibility if I had not participated in this program."*

Additionally, several researchers expressed a new appreciation for qualitative methods and particularly storytelling traditions and their value in the research process. *"I've never been a real qualitative methods person. I think that part of the research methods world is really now something I'm very interested in and really hope to pursue in a much greater and more significant way."*



*"I found the program opened the door for discussions about each aspect of the mentor-mentee relationship, and, importantly, has shown me specific things to be aware of as I transition from mentee into mentor."*



## NEW PERSPECTIVES

While each CIT alumni has had their own unique growth through participating in the program, two consistent themes emerged about new perspectives they attribute to their participation including a sense of cultural humility and a deepened commitment to community.

### ***Cultural Humility***

CIT alumni widely expressed having profound deepening of their cultural humility<sup>5</sup> when conducting research with community involvement. This was evident even researchers who previously had experience with CBPR or community engaged initiatives. As part of this increased cultural humility, researchers displayed an appreciation for different perspectives and shifting in their own view of the role of a Primary Investigator in CBPR research.

One researcher said, “It’s just that knowledge of being really, really careful not to come in with my own values to say, ‘This is what I want to do here,’ but more, ‘This is my area of expertise. What do you all need? Is there anything that I can help?’ I think that was a real appreciation that [I gained].”

Researchers who participated in CIT reported they believed community engaged research is fundamentally higher quality research despite the challenges. One explained, “You realize that your perspective isn’t enough -- that you need other people’s perspective, that we all are shaded by our own perceptions. The more people that we can engage, the better our research is going to be.”



<sup>5</sup> Tervalon, M., Murray-García, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9(2), 117–125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2010.0233>

Some participants shared the perspective that the more informal aspects of the training were just as important as the structured components. For example, sharing meals and driving to appointments provided time for conversations that were opportunities to learn and build relationships. Reflecting specifically on the value of sharing meals together with community members, one participant wrote, “A lot of good conversation happened during these times, more so than during the formal discussions.” Another participant similarly discussed the impact of informal stories they were able to hear during shared meals. “I gained insight that there’s no way I could have gained just from reading a book. I gained exposure to people, circumstances, and stories that were moving and engaging. Having the opportunity to get out of our everyday environment and really listen and learn from others who are so passionate about their involvement was a huge encouragement and wonderful opportunity that I’m very grateful to have been a part of.”





### ***Commitment to the Community***

Many CIT researchers expressed a profound commitment to serving communities and ensuring that any future research efforts were consistent with CBPR principles. Whether this commitment was described as new or seen as a reinvestment in long held beliefs, researchers typically discussed these realizations as “aha” moments or moments of thoughtful clarity. One researcher wrote in their reflection, “I now understand that doing community-engaged research is doing research from the heart. To do this type of research, one needs to truly believe in what this can accomplish and to be authentically committed to it for what it is and not for the professional benefits it might bring.”

Additionally, one CRL shared how they have seen some CIT graduates invest their own time and take on dedicated roles within community organizations, completely separate of any research related grant funding.

“Another beautiful story is that even some of our graduates that went through CIT, we told them, ‘Even if you don’t go for a grant, if you’re not ready right now, there are other things in community where you can use your expertise.’ Some of them got on boards of directors. Several got on the board of Servicios de La Raza. That commitment from past participants and other partners helping these community based organizations was a win-win. It’s great for them to be seen in community, and it’s great for the organization to have their expertise and have that comfort level built on one another. I think that in itself is a huge positive—and it really adds to the perception that change in a lot of the participants, a comfort level is established during that week where they’re in and out of community.”



## COMMON CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

Over time, the challenges encountered by the researchers pursuing CBPR remained consistent. These challenges are also consistent with much of the CBPR literature. Researchers have, however, been able to adapt and develop strategies to continue incorporating CBPR and community engaged values and principles into their work. These adaptive strategies are viewed as positive outcomes that demonstrate the resiliency and commitment of the program alumni in ensuring that community-focused research engagement improves in quality.

### PROTECTED TIME AND INSTITUTIONAL VALUE



The most common challenge cited by CIT participants was navigating university research and teaching productivity requirements with the time commitment of CBPR. Researchers frequently noted that their university employment did not typically allot for the intense time commitment required to develop quality community driven research. Additionally, many outcomes of CBPR were not well weighted in tenured faculty considerations. For example, many academic researchers must demonstrate certain levels of publications and bring in external grant dollars to justify continued advancement in their career. CBPR tends to operate on much longer timelines and values tangible community outcomes over journal metrics such as H-index.

Some researchers also felt that their colleagues or departments did not fully understand CBPR or value bi-directional research relationships. One researcher said, “The challenge that I’ve run into is a lack of understanding of what community-based research looks like among colleagues, [I get] comments or questions about, ‘You don’t seem to be around very much.’ That’s because I’m out in the community. ... There’s not a clear understanding of what we’re working on in that sense. We’ve spent a lot of time at our partner organizations, rather than in my office. At the university ... it’s a challenge in the sense of feeling like my work is valued, and that it’s okay to not be at my desk on a day-to-day basis. That’s a really hard challenge to address. You can’t give everybody CIT training to make sure that everybody understands the work that we’re doing.” Researchers expressed the frustration of being perceived as absent from research duties when they were not in their office, when in fact much of community engaged research happens while embedded in community settings.

Protected time was a challenge particularly for early career researchers who often are balancing clinical duties, teaching requirements, as well as trying to establish their research productivity to maintain their university employment. Two researchers described their challenges related to protected time as, “You have to put in your time initially and then work towards getting bigger grants, but none of my time is actually covered for any of this work, so it’s a balance as a clinician researcher trying to balance all my clinical and teaching responsibilities along with doing these projects at the same time.”

“Just lack of protected time to do it. Unless it’s on your ‘grid’ you have to fit it in in between the seams. I could do that a lot more before I had a kid. This work takes time, and in order to make sure that this work gets done you have to cover that time somehow, and right now there really isn’t any funding for that. We’ve had to create it ourselves through leftovers from different projects. That’s the tact that we’ve taken.”





## FUNDING AND GRANT OUTCOMES

A related challenge commonly encountered by CIT participants was finding appropriate funding streams that align with community-based research. Researchers must frequently contend with grant requirements and funding streams that may not truly value outcomes of CBPR, or who may insist on measuring CBPR against standard grant productivity measures that are ill-fitted to describe community outcomes. Community-based research may identify outcomes such as changes in community policies, repaired relationships, and community-oriented dissemination over academic outcomes, such as journal publications that may not be accessible to community partners.

This frequently leads to researchers feeling like their CBPR work is not valued, or that it is more challenging to advance their career status when engaging in CBPR. One researcher said, “I think the challenges there are mostly on the funding agency side. My experience is ... they want to have community and patient stakeholders at heart, but they got so caught up on their comparative effectiveness that sometimes they'll throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

One CRL discussed how grant outcomes typically do not connect with the goals of the community. They also noted that many valuable yet harder to measure outcomes from community-based research such as crucial discussions can lead to shifting academic perspectives. “Folks have then gone back to their respective

places, had conversations, and changed internal policies about what research looks like. I'm hoping that people being on these teams and having these experiences have these softer outcomes of better patient treatment, or other partnerships, or policy. There's a ripple effect that this is bigger than just a research project. ... Those aren't measurable at this point. There are lots of outcomes that you can't measure -- stories of what equity looks like or what relationships look like- These are bigger, and that is a test of how community wins."

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

The restrictions required by the COVID-19 pandemic, while a challenge experienced globally by all sectors, proved to be a significant challenge for CBPR focused researchers and their partnered communities. While this report covers CIT cohorts that participated in the program prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019 cohort experienced challenges in developing relationships and research projects once the pandemic started shortly after their program experience. During evaluation interviews, the 2019 Cohort of CIT researchers unanimously described how the timing of the pandemic with their research endeavors caused delays or total stops to their research project. One researcher described, "We had IRB approval and funding for [the research], but [we] had built focus groups into the research plan, and so were just unable to safely move forward with that in a way that made sense not putting community members at risk. So we ended up just putting [our research] on a pause." While this pause in research activities poses challenges for maintaining funding schedules, the care for community safety demonstrated by this researcher and their team indicates an internal value for the lives of their community partners.

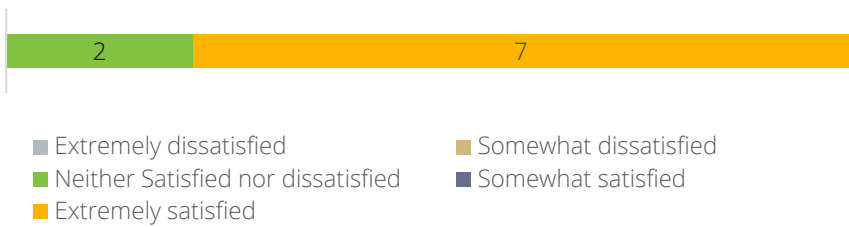
Another CIT alumni described how many research interests, such as a focus of LGBTQI+ sexual health, "take a back seat" when partnered communities are in crisis and worn thin from the ongoing trauma of the pandemic. Additionally, one CRL described how many of their refugee-serving partner agencies were in continued crisis management supporting their community members that were disproportionately falling ill and dying from their work environments.

While initial partnered research plans have been curtailed for many CBPR researchers (both alumni of the CIT but also generally in the CBPR field) due to the pandemic restrictions, several described being able to incorporate values instilled by the program in other innovative ways. Several CIT alumni who are also teaching faculty have begun incorporating CIT elements into their college and graduate curricula. While this was not initially described as a program outcome, these efforts help to further disseminate the value of a program such as CIT to a wider audience beyond the University of Colorado system and contribute to the research readiness of the next generation. One CIT alumni that was incorporating CBPR principles into their curriculum described the value of the effort as, "Being able to translate CBPR into curriculum, have up-to-date resources, and the language to be able to make sure that master students have the gist of what that is, and why it's so important in every step of the process to involve community members."

# COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

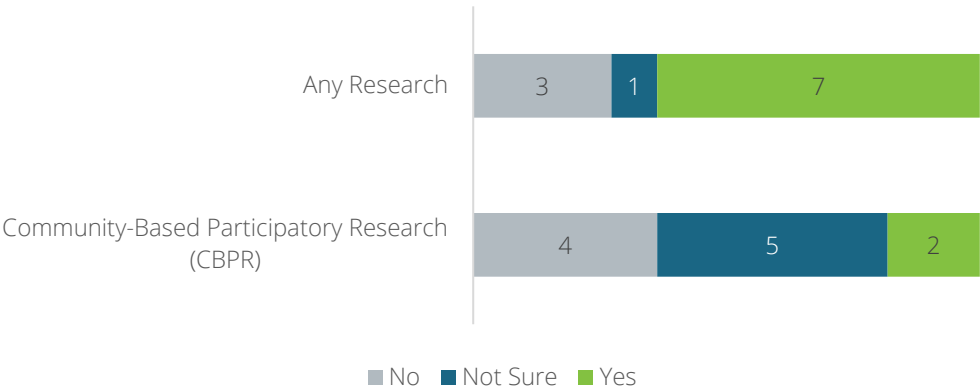
Community feedback about CIT has been positive. Overall, 78% of community partners reported being “extremely satisfied” with their CIT experience.

**Exhibit 3:** As a partner, how satisfied are you with your experience with the CIT program? (n=9)



Prior to partnering with the CIT program, 27% of community partners that responded to their survey reported that their organization had never previously participated in research in any capacity. Furthermore, 36% reported they had never previously participated in any form of CBPR prior to working with CIT.

**Exhibit 4:** Prior to collaborating with the CIT program, had you or your organization ever participated in the following? (n=11)



Forty-five percent of community partners were aware of research occurring that was a result of relationships built between CIT students and community members, and 64% were aware of collaborations or projects that had developed as a result of the CIT. Additionally, 55% of community partners were aware of ongoing

## AS A PARTNER, WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE RESEARCHERS OR UNIVERSITIES KNEW ABOUT WORKING WITH YOUR

“Not all Latinos/as/x are the same. US-born Latinos/as/x, and Chicanos may require different approaches. We are often sought out for our expertise and input but are rarely compensated for it and/or our representation.”

“The LGBTQIA+ community is diverse and has various needs within and among various genders and sexualities. Researchers cannot dichotomize outcomes as straight or gay, cis or trans, and definitely cannot compare straight to LGBTQ.”

-Community Partners

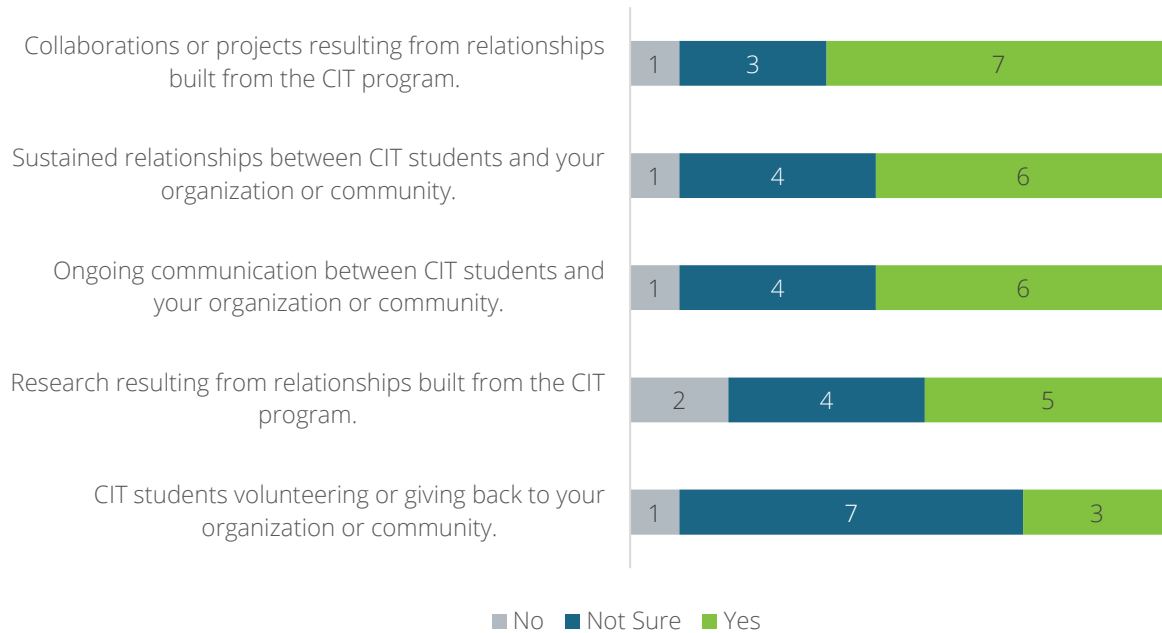
communication between CIT alumni and their community or organization. One community partner described project relationships developed between their school -- Escuela Tlatelolco and the CIT program.

"It was through this relationship that the students, families, and Chicano community became actively engaged with CIT students to experience the actualization of our Freirean Liberatory education model. Understanding that people can be passive recipients of knowledge — whatever the content — or they can engage in a 'problem-posing' approach in which they become active participants. As part of this approach, it is essential that people link knowledge to action so that they actively work to change their societies at a local level and beyond."

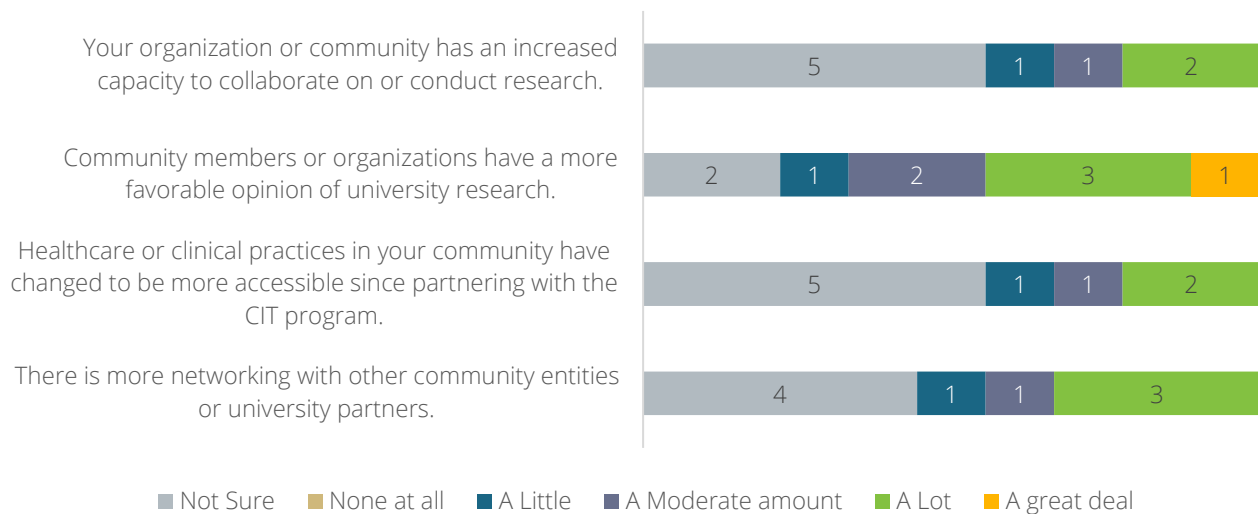
Within the community itself, 27% of community partners reported that healthcare or clinical practices in their community have changed "a moderate amount" or "a lot" to be more accessible since partnering with the CIT. One community partner described their efforts to educate researchers on the particular historical healthcare challenges of their community, "I worked with CRL to create a tour of LGBTQ history in Denver for their cultural competency. The tour, which focused on the history of LGBTQ healthcare, intersected with stories of non-profits in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Denver. ... Our tour looked at the history of the Colorado AIDS Project (CAP) from 1984 - 1987, and yet how CAP lived in the very neighborhood where people were doing survival sex work, how they faced police violence and societal rejection, and how the sexual transmitted infection (STI) clinic at Denver Health was one of the few places they could get free/equal access to healthcare. I pulled examples of case studies from how health providers went into gay bath houses and did STI testing, and in Denver's case how the local group Colorado ACT UP, helped to get attention and funding for HIV/AIDS from 1987 – 1990. ... They learned how the space and story were intimate to the healthcare."

Additionally, 64% of surveyed partners reported that they have noticed community members or organizations within their community having a more favorable opinion of university research as a result of CIT. Full community partner responses related to these outcomes are detailed in Exhibits 5 and 6.

**Exhibit 5:** Since partnering with the Colorado Immersion Training program, have you noticed any of the following between CIT students (researchers from the University of Colorado) and your organization or community? (n=11)



**Exhibit 6:** Please answer to what extent you have noticed the following since the CIT program partnered with your community? (n=9)



*“Trust level, confidentiality, intentions, and resourcefulness are all important factors to maintaining continued relationships.”*

*-Community Partner*



Community partners shared their experiences with the program and described the overall benefits or successes they have seen in working with the program. One partner described, “Not only can the CIT programs bring community leaders and researchers together, it can also help keep communities together moving towards more positive and healthy outcomes. That’s because programs like CIT increase collaboration, problem solving, and validate community concerns. The collaboration is that people bring their own knowledge and experience into the process. Training is typically undertaken in small groups with lively interaction and can embrace not only the written word but art, music and other forms of expression in realizing solutions to critical issues.”

Another partner described their biggest successes as, “Good relationships with the Community Research Liaison and an exceptional opportunity to bring queer history to healthcare.”

## COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

On the following pages, two case studies are presented as examples of the successful outcomes seen in communities as a direct result of the CIT program. These case studies were provided by the Community Research Liaisons who were engaged with CIT and the subsequent research projects in their communities.



## Escuela Tlatelolco

"A lot of things we do in community, we always incorporate our culture. ... They've been very successful with embracing this concept that's called *la cultura cura*. It's called cultural healing, and it's really through our indigenous identity and our indigenous teachings.

We've exposed some of our participants over the years to that tradition. A lot of us that are working in healthcare in the Chicano community, we are starting to acknowledge the healing of our ancestors. Even one of the projects that we're doing—it was an alternative school that I was coaching, and they did a partnership development project. One of our CIT graduates partnered with them, and they decided what they wanted to do is address the lack of exercise and obesity in the community.

The way they wanted to do that was through cultural dance and going back to an indigenous diet. This was wonderful. This came from community, from the students, from the staff, and from the parents. That was a good idea. They got funded, which was amazing. The participants were like, "Oh, my God. This thing really works. Thank you so much for your help." I said, "*That's what CIT is all about.*"

It was a wonderful experience for the community. ... I stayed with them for the whole year because they were brand new. Their heart was in the right place, but we had to start from square one. This is community-based participatory research. You're here at the table. We're not here to tell you. *You're here to tell us.*

To have that mindset switch, because that's not the way research has been done in our community for forever. We're making the change. Once they got that concept, once they understood what their role was, we just sat back and let them take over, and that's what's supposed to happen. They really have the lead, and then the campus or university will bring in the technical assistance as far as the research, but it's really led by community.

I think that was a wonderful lesson because this school is very well known. It's been over 40 years they existed. A lot of them are activists in the community. They had also been a part of our immersion as one of the guest organizations because they knew a lot of the history of art and culture in the metro Denver area. To have that as a success story." – Community Research Liaison

## CBPR in The San Luis Valley

"The San Luis Valley has this complexity of the people who lived in this relatively small, well-defined geographic region of 80 by 100 square miles, and you've got all these people living together, trying to make a living together, and trying to also keep their own identities. I think it's truly one of the best examples of multiculturalism, strengths and dynamics and challenges, all in this well-defined region. Researchers found that particularly inviting because it was very clearly defined by the mountains. We knew where it started and where it ended. It made the grant applications well-defined and the demographics as well.

Before CIT, before CBPR, the term that was really familiar to a lot of people was "helicopter research" where researchers just dropped in, got research subjects, did their research, and left. The community was not really a partner in research, they were just subjects of research. Some of the criticism that there was rarely any follow up, any commitment, or any relevance that was brought back to the community. That's what we as CRLs walked into. There was a willingness on the part of our community to make contributions to ideas and projects that would contribute to its larger well-being and future betterment. There was that pride in, "Look at where we live. Look at who's here, and look at what they have to offer. Here are some of the problems that we have. Yeah, we'd like your help, but we'd like it to genuinely help us and not just you for your careers and your grant applications." The week immersion experience, had a profound effect on most trainees who came to the valley.

I remember this kid from Engineering. I don't know how we ended up with him, but we did. Then it became evident to me what a good fit it was for CIT, and he went on to develop a study and teamed up with some of our leaders of water resources and utilization in the San Luis Valley. I attended some of his community partner meetings. They were really, really impressive, but he left with one of those "A-ha" experiences about what an opportunity he had discovered to do as a CBPR study. These guys, these community partners, you can't get them out of the field. You can't get them to take time out of their work schedules in agriculture and leadership in agriculture to come to a meeting like that, especially in the daytime, but they were there. I think that's stellar.

I just remember expressions on people's faces that we tried to capture on, and the enthusiasm that they left with, the height of enthusiasm and ideas. I met with them afterwards to keep that motivation going and to address problems that came up. Those CIT experiences helped to make it not so far away, not so impossibly different or frighteningly different. There was true relationship that got built in a very short period of time." – Community Research Liaison



## CONCLUSION

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The Colorado Immersion Training program has supported 122 researchers and several Colorado communities over the past decade. Throughout this time, these researchers have gone on to receive both CBPR focused and generalized biomedical grants, implement CBPR into their collegiate curriculums, implement community programming that has impacted real lives, and developed relationships with Colorado organizations. The program has also served to repair mistrust between communities and the University of Colorado.

Universities or organizations interested in offering programs similar to CIT should consider both the successes and challenges experienced by CIT. These include establishing an institutional value for CBPR initiatives including protected time for developing and maintaining community relationships, as well as providing funding where possible. These issues remain a challenge for The University of Colorado Anschutz and for the general field of CBPR research. Research institutions that want to promote community-driven research need to fundamentally shift traditional ideals of how power and decision making happen within research. Programs like CIT offer a foundational step to contribute to these shifts and stand to offer a crucial connection between academic institutions and the communities around them.

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*"It has to come down to a fundamental shift in the way that not just our campus, but a lot of campuses and universities think about research, which is bi-directionally. This means accepting that a community partner or a community in general, is a Co-PI. The way that you approach your research as being bi-directional, lateral, and mutually beneficial. It is about sharing the resources in order for everyone to be happy, healthy, and successful."*

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## MISSION

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