

CSHF Vision

Colorado Springs Health Foundation (CSHF) is a health grantmaker with a vision that El Paso and Teller Counties are the healthiest in Colorado. It seeks to accomplish this through its mission to provide grants that target immediate health care needs and encourage healthy living. CSHF partnered with Point b(e) Strategies in 2021 to help assess its grantmaking process to ensure the process aligns with the Foundation's equity commitment. CSHF's ambitious vision can only be accomplished through the collaboration of the philanthropic sector, the public sector, the private sector, and the community. Together, these sectors provide a wide array of services and interventions, with the primary outcome of increasing health and equity. As such, Point b(e) Strategies relied on an approach that assesses the Foundation's *contribution* to the change it seeks, versus an *attribution* approach. Through a contribution approach, CSHF recognizes that there are many other factors that are working in tandem to drive the change in health it is seeking. The contribution model asks the question, "To what extent does our intervention *contribute* to the change" compared with the attribution model, which asks, "To what extent does our intervention *cause* this change."

Spheres of Impact

Additionally, as CSHF embraces the contribution model to understanding its impact in the community, Point b(e) Strategies encouraged the Foundation to take an intentional look at its Spheres of Impact. Based on this model, Sphere One is the Sphere of Control, which looks at the inputs, activities and outputs that an organization has direct control over. For CSHF, this is its grantmaking process. CSHF has direct control over how the funding process is structured, who receives the funding, and how much funding partners receive. Sphere Two is the Sphere of Influence, which looks at the outcomes and change of behavior that organizations are seeking to achieve. For CSHF, this looks at its Funded Partners. The funding from CSHF has an influence on the Funded Partners, particularly at the organizational level. Funding can help strengthen the organization and its programs. However, it is at the discretion of the Funded Partner how the funds are spent and how its programs are implemented in the community.

Methodology

Point b(e) Strategies and CSHF developed a scope of work that gathered information and feedback to understand CSHF's grantmaking process (Sphere of Control) and its impact on Funded Partners (Sphere of Influence). CSHF and Point b(e) Strategies utilized a mixed-methods approach to accomplish the goals of the evaluation and engaged in the following activities: (1) convening an Advisory Committee, (2) conducting a document review and scan of best practices research, (3) observing the grant review decision process, administering a Funded Partner Survey, and (4) facilitating sense-making sessions with CSHF staff, Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees.



1. Advisory Committee

2. Document Review & Best Practice Research



3. Grant Review Meeting Observations

4. Funded Partner Survey



5. Sense-Making Session With CSHF Staff, Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees

Feedback from Funded Partners

Point b(e) Strategies surveyed CSHF's Funded Partners to gather their perspectives on the grantmaking process to understand key elements that fall within CSHF's Sphere of Control and Sphere of Influence. The evaluation results revealed that CSHF has a very strong grantmaking program. The current grantmaking process includes elements built around the principles of accessibility, transparency, accountability, and flexibility.

- CSHF has a clear pre-application process, and staff are easy to schedule a call with, are welcoming and provide clear feedback to prospective applicants.
- The application process is clear, easy to use, and CSHF staff are responsive to questions. However, not all applicants agree the amount of information is reasonable.
- Funded partners believe their applications are treated fairly in the grant decision process, grant decisions are clearly communicated, and staff provide helpful feedback about the grant decision. Alternatively, more than a third of respondents don't understand how CSHF approaches funding amounts.
- The majority of funded partners are satisfied with the timing of the grant application, although some would prefer it did not coincide with the end of the year.
- The grants management and reporting processes are reasonable, and expectations are clear.
- When it comes to reporting, Funded Partners would like to share the impact of the grant through formats such as in-person visits, photos, or phone/video calls in addition to a written report.
- Funded Partners agree funding from CSHF has a positive impact on their organization.

"I wish all funders were as collaborative as the CSHF."

"CSHF is by far one of the most compassionate, knowledgeable, approachable foundations I have ever worked with."

Recommendations

The evaluation revealed a number of strengths of CSHF's grantmaking process, as well as opportunities to continue to improve it; for example: (1) increase the accessibility of the funding process, (2) assess the transparency of the decision-making process, (3) increase accountability, and (4) increase flexibility.

1	2	3	4
Accessibility	Transparency	Accountability	Flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to market the Main Funding Opportunity to a wide range of nonprofits working in El Paso and Teller Counties. • Shift the grant application deadline. • Eliminate character/word count limits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish criteria for evaluating applications. • Train all Committee Members on Criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Grants Review Committee. • Revisit funding priorities regularly. • Ask applicants to articulate alignment with CSHF funding priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the number of general operating grants. • Ask Funded Partners about the impact of funds on their organization. • Broaden the methods for gathering report feedback to include interviews, site visits, photographs, etc.