



## Community Reinvestment in Colorado (July 2020)

CCJRC was founded in 1999 as a community-based organization with the mission of ending mass incarceration and the use of private prisons in Colorado. In 2015, CCJRC began a re-visioning process because we felt that this mission wasn't expansive enough. Our current mission is *to end the overuse of the criminal justice system and advance community health and safety*.

First, we believed that it was the overuse of the entire criminal justice system, not just incarceration, which needed to be downsized. Essential to our vision was the understanding that communities most impacted by crime, addiction, over-policing and mass incarceration have the most expertise about the challenges, opportunities and solutions for their own community. However, people serving these communities, whether through nonprofits or not rarely, if ever, received any funding, let alone adequate funding.

So, CCJRC started to engage in budget advocacy at the state in order to redirect funding deeply into impacted communities for community-led health and safety strategies and services. We call that strategy Community Reinvestment and there are currently four Community Reinvestment Initiatives in effect in Colorado that are providing funding for community-based reentry, crime prevention, underserved victim services, and harm reduction. All of these bills had bi-partisan sponsorship and no opposition.

Three of these initiatives use a community-facing intermediary to manage the grant program and ensure that the money reaches deeply into communities most impacted and that community programs get the ongoing capacity building to help them be successful. The importance of the community-facing intermediary cannot be understated and is a defining component of our approach in Colorado.

CCJRC wrote all of the enabling (and reauthorizing) legislation, secured sponsors, lobbied for successful passage of the bills, and conducted extensive community outreach, particularly with direct service providers, both before, during and after the bills passed. CCJRC also ensures that funding is annually appropriated and has also gone back to the legislature for changes to the bills, as needed, to address difficulties created by the statute. CCJRC does not receive any funding from any of these Community Reinvestment Initiatives. From their enactment date to their next legislative sunset review in 2023, these four Community Reinvestment Initiatives will invest over \$80 million in state funding, cumulatively.

### **Reentry Grant Program-known as WAGEES - 2014**

The first Community Reinvestment initiative was [HB14-1355](#) that created the first community-based grant program to support people leaving prison through comprehensive reentry services. This grant program is administered by the Department of Corrections but the legislation allowed the DOC to contract with an intermediary. The nonprofit [Latino Coalition for Community Leadership](#) (LCCL) was selected to manage the grant program. HB14-1355 initially provided \$500,000 for the grant program that grew to \$1.7m annually through other legislative efforts by CCJRC that funded seven nonprofit organizations that provide reentry services in nine communities. In the fall of 2017, the Department of Regulatory Agencies conducted an [independent evaluation](#) as part of its sunset review and strongly recommended reauthorization of the grant program. During the 2018 legislative session, not only did the reauthorization bill pass ([HB18-1176](#)) but funding was more than tripled to an annual

appropriation of \$5.7 million with another sunset review in 5 years. The number of community reentry organizations that received grants expanded to 19 across the state. Funding was increased to just over \$7m in 2019 and was increased to \$9m in 2020 so that community partners could expand their housing assistance, including entering into master-leases with landlords. Several of the Executive Directors and approximately 60% of the WAGEES case managers were formerly incarcerated and their leadership has dramatically changed the field of reentry in Colorado. The WAGEES grant program was also the subject of an [analysis](#) by the Urban Institute.

### **Crime Prevention in N. Aurora & SE Colorado Springs-aka Transforming Safety – 2017**

In 2017, [HB17-1326](#) was signed into law which enacted substantial parole reforms that reduced the amount of time someone could go back to prison on a technical parole violation. The second half of the bill created the statutory framework for a crime prevention initiative in North Aurora and Southeast Colorado Springs, two communities that had been impacted by both over-policing and mass incarceration. \$4m a year in savings from the parole reforms was redirected from the DOC to fund the crime prevention initiative, which included both a grant program to provide direct services and capital for small business lending. The state Department of Local Affairs provides overall oversight. Two community foundations, [The Denver Foundation](#) and the [Pikes Peak Community Foundation](#), were selected as the intermediary and manage the grant program and the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership provides technical assistance to grantees and manages data collection/evaluation. Several [Community Development Financial Institutions](#), the [Colorado Enterprise Fund](#) and [Community Enterprise Development Services](#) were selected as the intermediaries to manage the small business lending program. Additionally, the legislation required that a Local Planning Team in each community determine the crime prevention priorities that became the grant guidelines. By early 2018, each Local Planning Team had completed it's work and established the following priorities.

#### *N. Aurora Crime Prevention Priorities*

1. Support adults and youth who are or have been involved in the criminal justice system in order to reduce recidivism or incidence of reoffending.
2. Help youth (up to age 25) develop the skills and resilience to avoid, reduce, or stop high risk behaviors that can lead to involvement with the criminal justice system.
3. Reduce/prevent crime affecting the most vulnerable people in the North Aurora community, with a particular focus on people experiencing homelessness, immigrants, victims of sexual assault, and victims of sex trafficking.
4. Increase academic achievement by reducing rates of school suspension, expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement, with a particular emphasis on students of color.

#### *SE Colorado Springs Crime Prevention Priorities*

1. Support adults and youth who are or have been involved in the criminal justice system in order to reduce recidivism or incidence of reoffending.
2. Help youth (up to age 25) develop the skills and resilience to avoid, reduce, or stop high risk behaviors that can lead to involvement with the criminal justice system.

3. Address systemic causes of economic, racial, and academic disparities.
4. Improve community-based supports to reduce violence and neglect in families.

In early June 2018, the first round of grants were awarded. A list of grantees and a lot more information is available at the Transforming Safety [website](#) and [video](#).

### **Crime Survivor Grant Program - 2018**

In April 2018, CCJRC released its report entitled, [Victims Speak](#), that published the results of a survey of 500 crime survivors in the Denver metro area, with an oversampling of victims of color. One of the key findings was the lack of community-based support services, particularly for men, people of color, and young adults. Based on these findings, CCJRC worked with bi-partisan legislators to pass [HB18-1409](#) that created a community grant program for victim services that is housed in the state Department of Public Health & Environment-not a criminal justice agency. The Latino Coalition for Community Leadership was selected as the intermediary to manage the grant program which explicitly focuses on serving survivors who are men, people of color, and young adults. The legislation also specifies that grantees may not deny services to anyone for not reporting the crime, not participating in any prosecution, or other variables like length of time since victimization, or the location of the victimization. This grant program was initially funded at \$850,000 annually and will have a sunset review in 5 years.

Because we knew that therapeutic and trauma recovery services would be essential, it was written into the enacting legislation that clinical professionals regulated by the Department of Regulatory Affairs were also eligible to apply for grant funding. Consequently, in addition to nonprofit organizations receiving grants, [Element of Discovery](#) was formed which is a collaborative of 25+ therapists of color in private practice who can now offer up to 20 free sessions to crime survivors and be paid through the grant. Grant funding has also been used to pay for professional training in other modalities, like EMDR. Within the first ninety days, the grantees had exceeded their enrollment goals for the whole year.

### **Harm Reduction Grant Program - 2019**

Colorado has pre-and-post arrest diversion programs but they are controlled by the District Attorney's offices. Colorado has also continued to see high rates of overdoses, a behavioral health workforce shortage and limited access to addiction treatment services, leaving many people who use drugs with little to no options to engage in any sort of supportive services.

The Harm Reduction Grant Program was created through [SB19-008](#) to promote pre-arrest diversion and collaboration between public health agencies, community service providers and law enforcement so long as those collaborations are pre-arrest and based on harm reduction principles and strategies. The grant program is administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and will receive approximately \$1.8 million a year with a sunset review expected to take place in 2023.