



**caring  
for Denver**  
FOUNDATION

**Our Strategic  
Funding Areas**

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*The work of Caring for Denver Foundation will be transformational for tens of thousands of Denverites, their families, friends and youth who struggle every single day with untreated and undertreated mental health and substance misuse challenges. I am proud to have championed the issue and continue the work. We have the #PowerTo help, and now we can take bold action.*

Leslie

Leslie Herod  
State Representative, Board Chair

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Director .....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
<b>Section 1   Building Momentum</b>	
Mission & Vision.....	9
Values.....	10
Staff & Board.....	11
Our Charge.....	12
<b>Section 2   Getting to Outcomes</b>	
Introduction to Priority Areas .....	15
Priority Area: Alternatives to Jail.....	16
Priority Area: Youth .....	17
Priority Area: Care Provision .....	18
Priority Area: Community-Centered Solutions.....	19
<b>Section 3   Evaluating the Work</b>	
How We'll Measure Success .....	21





# Thank you, Denver.

Caring for Denver Foundation was founded and funded because we know Denver must do more to address mental health and substance misuse needs in our city. With this enduring investment, together we will turn our desire to help into action and outcomes.

We listen to you so we can learn from you. Your stories inspire and connect us. They reveal our similarities, honor our uniqueness, and challenge our flaws. Your stories are revealed in art, music, and spoken word, and help us find commonality in a way that has the power to normalize our shared struggles and move our community forward.

To be successful, we will be flexible and innovative. We will support community-authored work. We will focus on impact. We will invest in potential. And, we will partner with those on the front lines to address the right challenges with the best solutions. This is our approach in grantmaking, technical assistance, and convening opportunities that will lead to bold and actionable solutions.

I'm honored to accept the charge of leading Caring for Denver Foundation in service of our communities. I've called Denver home for nearly 30 years. In that time, I have dedicated my personal and professional life to working with community to be an agent of change toward expanding health access and equity, creating opportunities for better integration of mental and physical health, and putting people's needs ahead of systems.

We're eager to get to work to ensure Denver's communities have the resources and support they need—to heal, be heard, be acknowledged, have hope, and be connected. Together, we showed we have the #PowerTo help. Now we have the #PowerTo act.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping tail.

Lorez Meinhold | Executive Director

# At a glance

On November 6, 2018 seventy percent of Denver said yes to doing more to support mental health and substance misuse needs in our city. Together, we will turn that desire to help into bold action and meaningful outcomes.

We believe Denver's people are our greatest resource. So we relied on their knowledge, experience, and collaboration to inform the following funding areas:

## Youth

Better address and support mental health and substance misuse, and create more connections for our youth.

## Care Provision

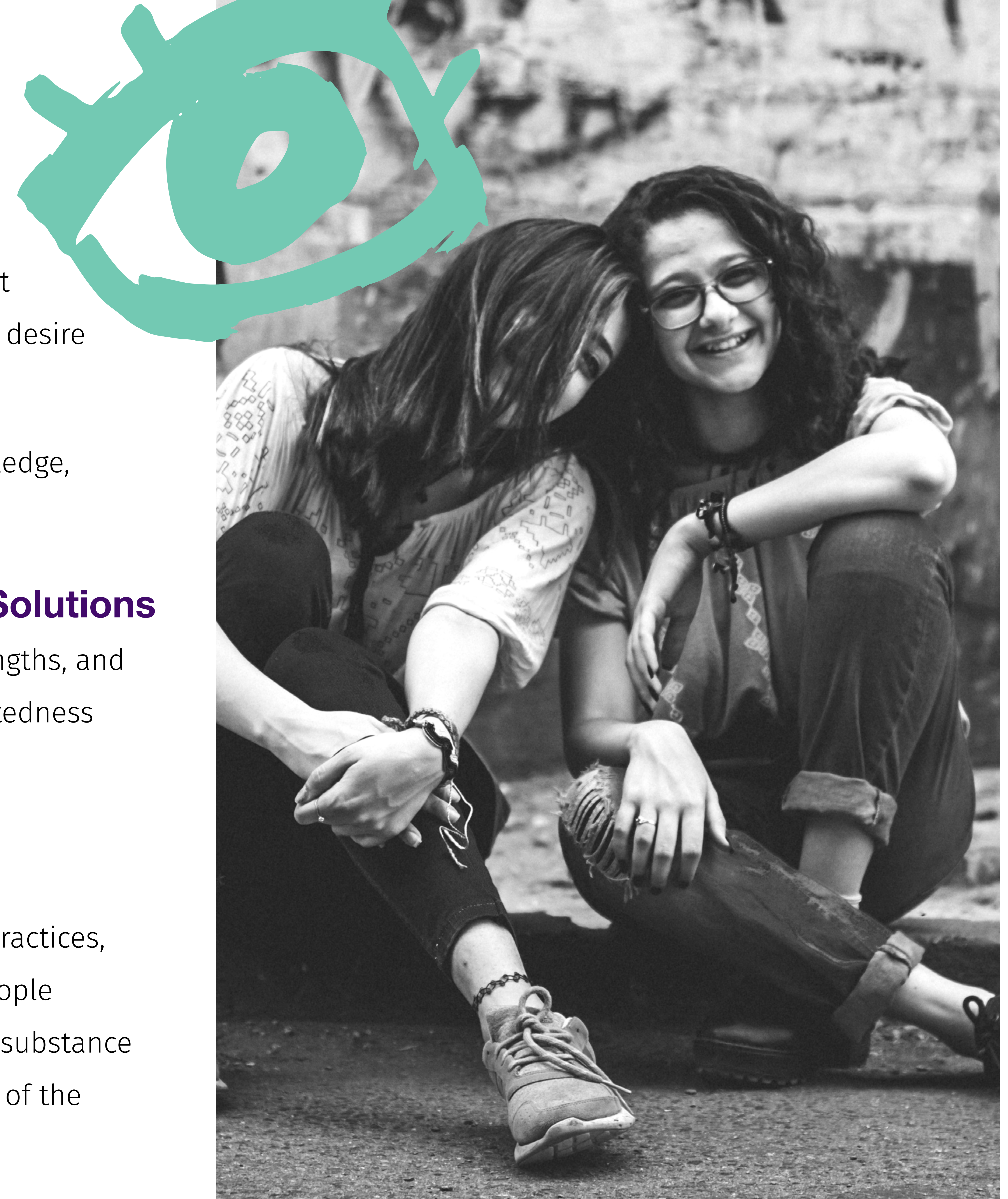
More people in Denver have access to the mental health and substance misuse care at the right time, and the supports to navigate care.

## Community-Centered Solutions

Use community knowledge, strengths, and resources to foster local connectedness and support.

## Alternatives to Jail

Greater supports, connections, practices, and opportunities to redirect people experiencing mental health and substance misuse crisis away from and out of the criminal justice system.





# 1 | Building Momentum

## Denver's stories drive us to act

“We cannot afford to lose so many of our kids, parents, neighbors, and friends to mental health and substance abuse challenges. We can and we should address this in our community.”

-Eric B

SO MANY



# Fierce support from voters

Our ballot initiative was simple, yet powerful. For every \$100 spent in Denver, \$0.25 would go toward addressing our community's mental health and substance misuse needs.

*Denver turned that idea into a reality.*

The result? Over 35 million dollars. Per. Year.





# Our heart and soul

## **We're on a mission**

To address Denver's mental health and substance misuse needs by growing community-informed solutions, dismantling stigma, and turning the community's desire to help into action.

## **And we've got a vision**

A vibrant Denver where all communities are strengthened by the mental health and substance misuse support they need.





# Our values

## *Respect. Always.*

We fiercely embrace inclusion and diversity, and strive to be representative, culturally responsive, and linguistically appropriate in all that we do.

## *Meet people where they are.*

We see and support all people and communities for their strengths and inherent value.

## *Advocate out loud.*

We courageously share our stories, engage our communities, and demonstrate how mental health and substance misuse affects us all.

## *Be courageous in action.*

We champion candid, open-minded reflection and are thoughtful and bold in the action we take.

## *Focus on impact for communities.*

We center all of our work on outcomes that always put Denverites, and their potential, first.

## *Invite partnership.*

We are partners with the grantees, communities, and individuals with whom we collaborate and serve, recognizing all are essential to identifying, defining, and deciding what they need.

# Our team



**Lorez Meinhold**  
Executive Director



**Atila Copeland**  
Program Officer



**Gary Sanford**  
Director of Community Engagement



**Jacquie Esquibel**  
Program Officer



**Juan Escobedo**  
Program Officer



**Kyle Ramirez**  
Staff + Board Liaison



**Leah Spielberg**  
Director of Grants



**Marci Hladik**  
Director of Operations



**Patrice Hairston Peetz**  
Community Engagement Advisor



**Rebecca Ochtera**  
Director of Evaluation and Learning



**Taylor Roddy**  
Director of Marketing and Communications



**Tim Cortez**  
Program Officer

## Our Board

**Leslie Herod**  
State Representative, Board Chair

**Christina Carlson**  
Urban Peak, Board Vice Chair

**Carl Clark**  
Mental Health Center of Denver,  
Board Treasurer

**Kristin Bronson**  
City Attorney, Board Secretary

**Beth McCann**  
Denver District Attorney

**Dellena Aguilar**  
Mental Health Therapist

**Don Mares**  
Department of Human Services

**Frank Locantore**  
Colfax Ave Business Improvement  
District

**Gabrielle Rodriguez**  
Colorado Peer & Family Specialist

**Jeff Holliday**  
Department of Public Health &  
Environment

**Kate Stigberg**  
Healthier Colorado

**Regina Huerter**  
Policy Research Associates

**Robin Wittenstein**  
Denver Health

**In Denver we can address mental health and  
substance misuse.**

**Together we have the [#PowerTo](#) turn Denver's desire  
to help into action and outcomes.**



# 2 | Getting to Outcomes

# We engaged with the community



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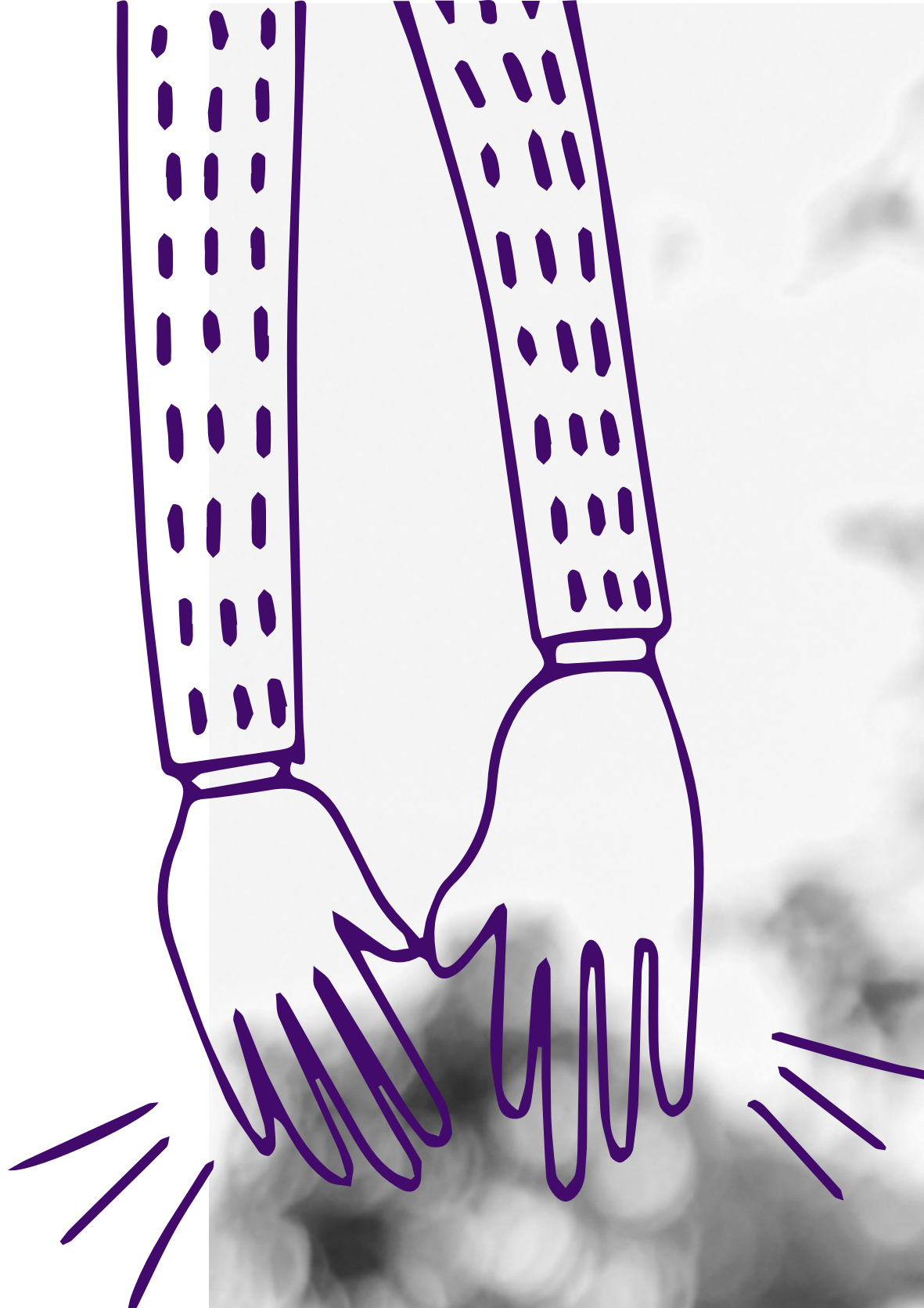
Denver residents were engaged in person, over the phone, and online (in English and Spanish).

88%

of residents were concerned about the issues of mental health and substance misuse in Denver.

67%

believe people with mental health and/or substance misuse needs are not currently receiving the care they need.



# We listened to Denver and will continue to listen

From creatives and people with lived experience to first responders and youth and so many others. We engaged with more than 1,600 people from 120 community meetings, including:

- 4 forums
- 3 virtual meetings
- 62 organizational meetings
- 500-person poll

Their input and insights were critical in identifying and prioritizing these funding areas:

- > **Youth**
- > **Community-Centered Solutions**
- > **Care Provision**
- > **Alternatives to Jail**

# Youth

*Denver spoke. We listened.*

The earlier and more resources we can provide Denver's youth, the less crisis and need for costly services later in life.

## **Address mental health and substance misuse issues early.**

Right now, prevention resources are limited. By creating more opportunities that tackle problems at the source, youth are more likely to avoid downstream problems later in life, like justice involvement.

## **Improve resilience to life stresses and pressures.**

Unsurprisingly, today's youth face a lot of life pressures and stresses. For many, that leads to anxiety and depression, and for some, more severe mental health concerns. This can impact success and school, or lead to negative coping strategies like substance misuse, self-harm, and involvement in criminal behaviors.

## **Increase awareness of and participation in well-being and help-seeking, particularly for youth allies.**

Parents, caregivers, schools, and others are critical allies for Denver's youth. We must help these allies better recognize, address, and talk about mental health and stress—just like we do with physical health.





# Community-Centered Solutions

*Denver spoke. We listened.*

We must use community knowledge, strengths, and resources to foster local connectedness and support.

## **Increase access to local care support.**

Transportation, wait times, and traditional work hours keep people from getting the support they need when they need it. Supports need to show up in places and spaces that communities already know, visit, and trust.

## **Promote and utilize community assets.**

There aren't enough responses to mental health and substance misuse designed by and for the community. To meet people where they are, we must partner with communities and support efforts that are already working as well as new, innovative, and non-traditional solutions.

## **Increase trusted community.**

There's a strong link between isolation and mental health and substance misuse. We need to understand and address what communities are going through by giving them space, language, mentoring, and peer opportunities to support each other.



Chris Molina

# Care Provision

*Denver spoke. We listened.*

We must better support access to quality mental health and substance misuse care at the right time.

## **Provide more people access to care. And care that “fits.”**

From first responders to libraries, we need more care providers. And we need more care providers that understand the unique needs of different cultures and communities.

## **Ensure care providers have what they need to provide high quality care.**

Providers and care givers need supports and training to be more effective in their role and to better connect with and meet the needs of people seeking care. More resources are also needed to support self-care and care for others when the system doesn't.

## **Improve entry and transition connections.**

Quality care starts at the first point of connection. But since service information is often outdated or changes rapidly, people get frustrated and tend to give up on seeking care. Better support through transitions and coordination across providers is needed so people can easily get continuous care.



# Alternatives to Jail

*Denver spoke. We listened.*

We need greater supports, connections, practices, and opportunities to redirect people with mental health and substance misuse crisis away from the criminal justice system.

## **Increased diversion opportunities.**

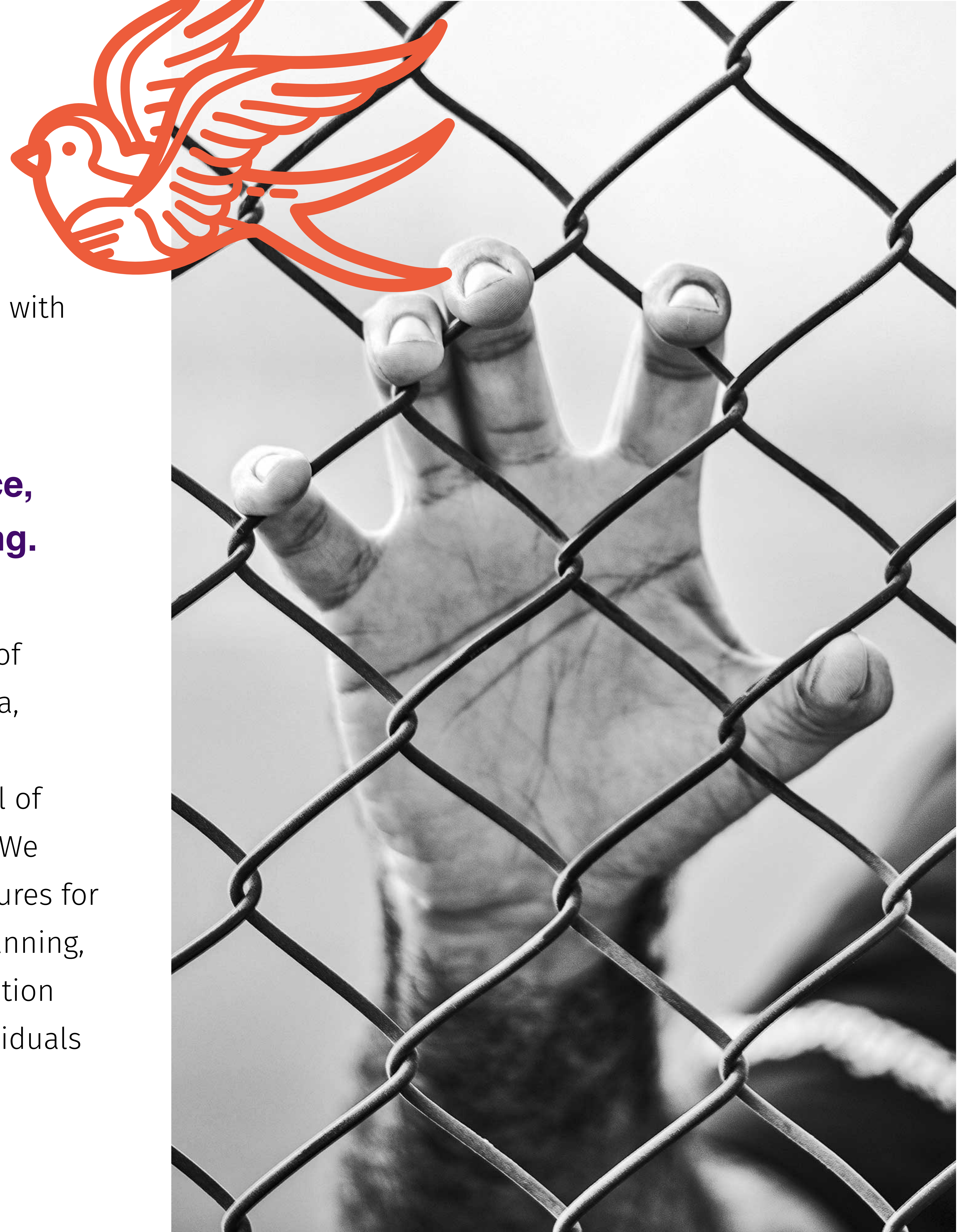
Far too many people with mental illnesses are in jails and prisons. We need improved crisis response options and diverse ways to respond to crisis to reduce the need for arrest. We need more opportunities at different points in the justice system where jail time is reduced or avoided, and the individual is linked to comprehensive community-based services and treatment.

## **More emphasis and access to services.**

More emphasis and access to mental health and substance misuse services and supports that follow someone across programs, and institutions while in, and after they leave, the justice system. Access to peer support services to assist individuals in making decisions that promote their recovery.

## **Better connected systems for justice, health and housing.**

Even though the same individual touches all of these systems, the data, policies, funding, and decision-making for all of these are fragmented. We need universal procedures for referrals, transition planning, and release of information to better support individuals as they transition into community.





# 3 | Evaluating the Work



# How we'll measure success

Understanding the progress and outcomes of investment is critical. We want to identify what's working and where opportunities exist to help us better achieve our goals. Our approach is rooted in three objectives:

## *Evaluate*

### **Are we doing things right?**

We will work with grantees and community partners to define success, track progress toward milestones, and stay accountable to outcomes.

## *Learn*

### **Are we doing the right things?**

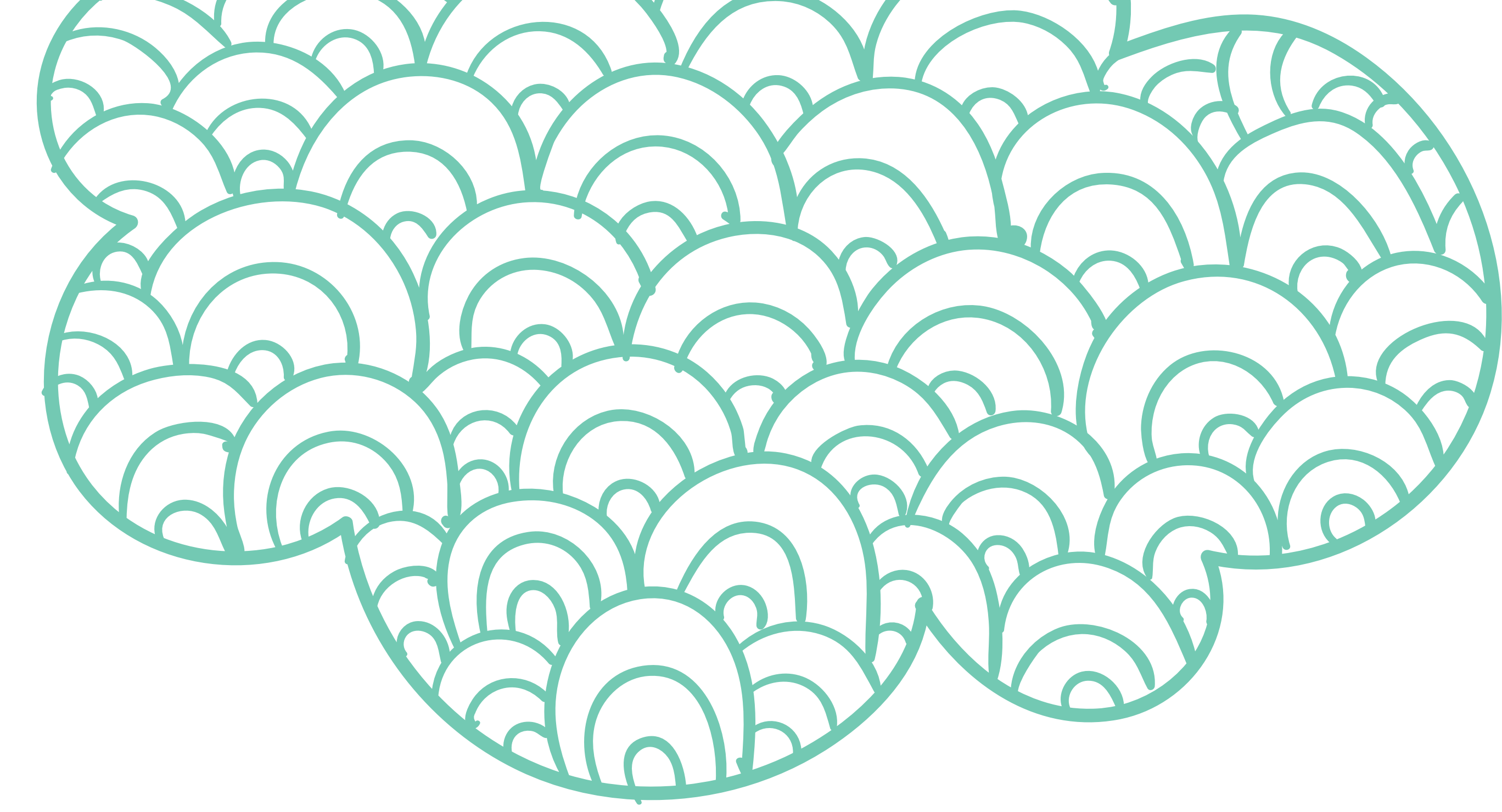
We will implement learning practices to identify what is helping and what is getting in the way of success, as well as test ideas around how to be more successful.

## *Adapt*

### **How can we have the biggest impact?**

We will clearly articulate what success looks like, identify how we're tracking against milestones, and assess our ability to reach outcomes. Based on evaluation and learning, we'll develop strategies to improve outcomes with an emphasis on equitable, sustainable, and meaningful changes.

# The work must reflect our core principles



## Community-Focused

Our commitment to innovate solutions and community-driven interventions isn't a traditional approach. Because of this, we're:

- > Providing technical support when needed to help grantees plan and meet goals
- > Working to make evaluation and learning as easy as possible for grantees
- > Committing to being learning partners with the community

## Equity-Driven

Equitable Evaluation principles are part of our approach, which include but aren't limited to:

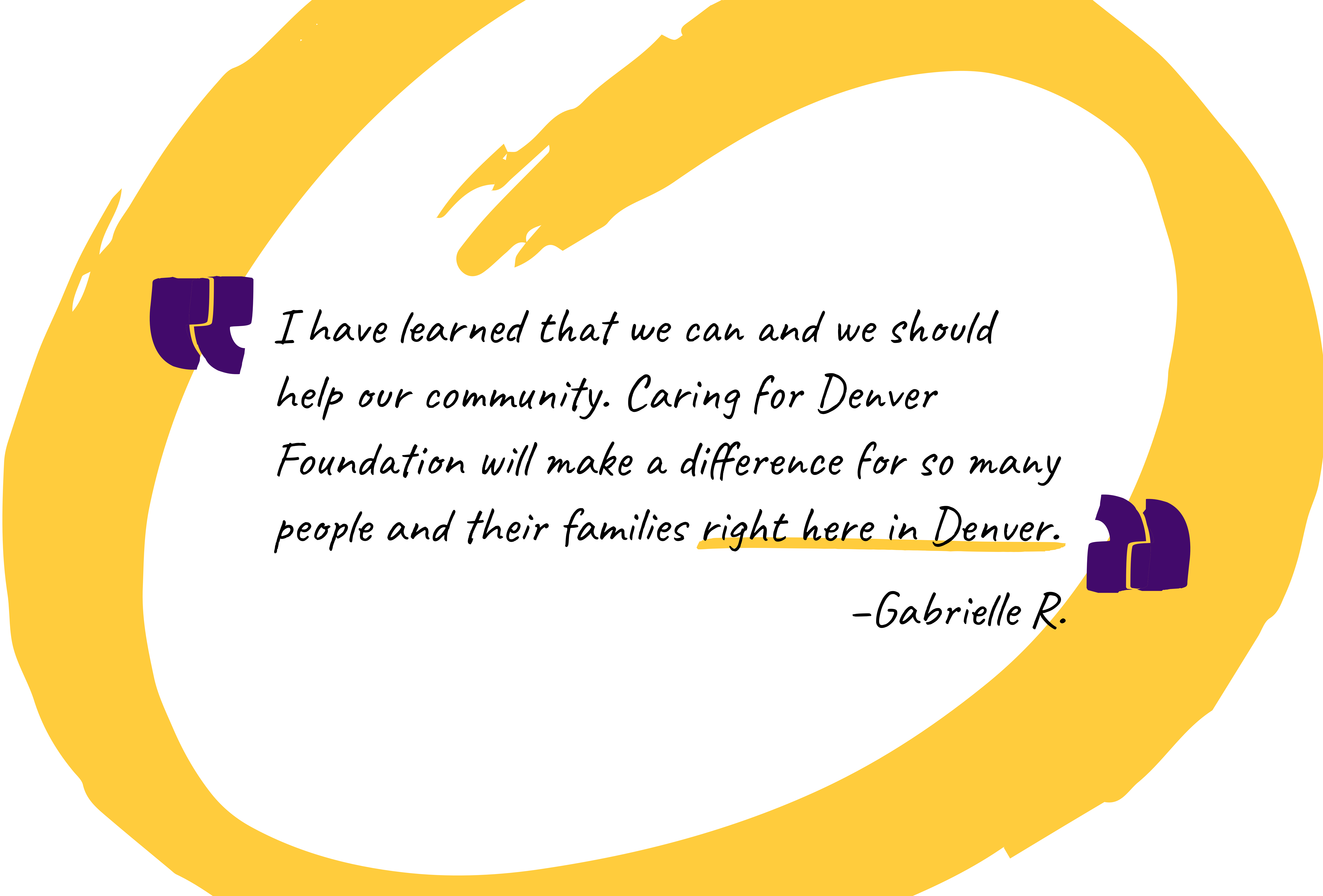
- > Designing evaluation and learning in partnership with grantees
- > Recognizing and valuing stories as data
- > Monitoring our own equity practices in funding, technical assistance, capacity building, and more

## Meaningful Impact

Our investments only matter if they're meaningful. Our process serves as a tool that will help us uncover meaning through:

- > Evaluating outcomes that make both small and large-scale differences to community
- > Making sure evaluation and learning methods help grantees see their impact
- > Promoting ways to use data for decision making and improvements





*I have learned that we can and we should help our community. Caring for Denver Foundation will make a difference for so many people and their families right here in Denver.*

*-Gabrielle R.*

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[caringfordenver.org](http://caringfordenver.org)