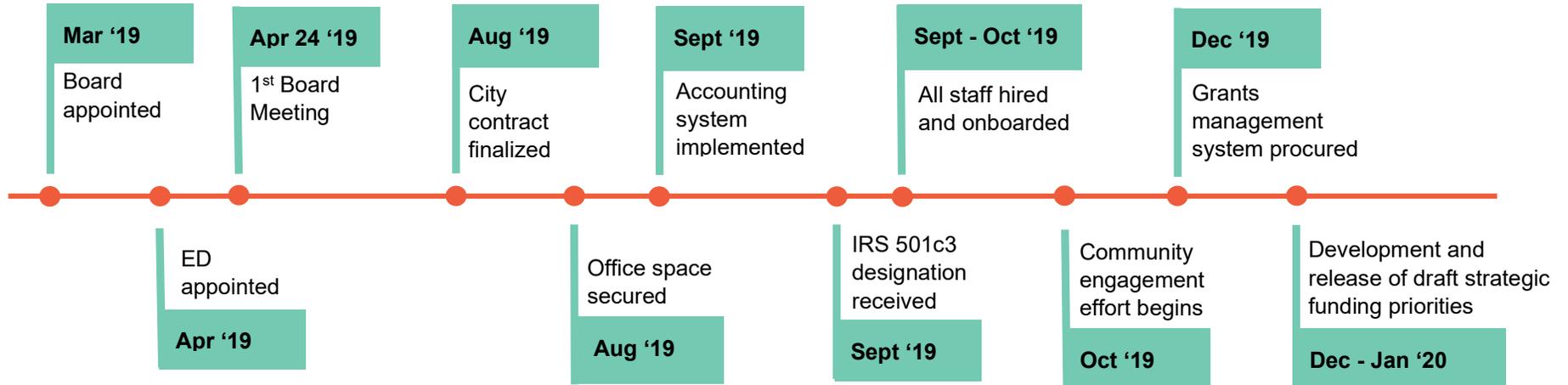


Caring for Denver Foundation 2019 Annual Report



Founded and funded by Denver, Caring for Denver Foundation was established on November 6, 2018 with 70% voter approval to support the mental health and substance misuse challenges facing the City and County of Denver. Since the passage of the ordinance (301) that created Caring for Denver, much has been underway to: create the organization; develop the governance structure; appoint the board; hire staff; and create the operations, marketing, community engagement, evaluation, programmatic, and accounting infrastructure.

2019 proved to be a productive year with the completion of the following:



Key highlights from the above fall in the areas of operations, evaluation and learning, and community engagement.



Operations Overview of Activities

Caring for Denver Board of Director members were appointed and began meeting regularly in April of 2019. Immediate items such as the articles of incorporation, by-laws, and governance structure were finalized including the establishment of a Finance Committee in October. With the Board of Directors formalized, negotiations of the city contract as the administrator of the tax revenue began in early 2019 and were completed in August. A payment was received in September covering January thru September 2019. Operations activities also included identification and selection of key vendors and systems including financial/accounting, audit, professional employment organization, technology services, and grants management system. With the systems in place, key organizational policies including conflict of interest, confidentiality, fiscal policies and procedures, and grant policies were also finalized. In September and October, all staff were hired, trained, and onboarded into permanent office space at Kaleidoscope Collaborative Center, 1035 Osage Street, 8th floor in the Denver La Alma neighborhood.



Evaluation and Learning Overview of Activities

During the 2019 calendar year, Caring for Denver identified an evaluation and learning approach that could be responsive and flexible to the diverse needs of Denver community organizations. Efforts and activities to lay the groundwork for this included:

- a. Staff participation and orientation to emergent learning practices by Fourth Quadrant Partners in October of 2019.
- b. Staff participation in a grant and financial review training by the Johnson Center
- c. Implementation of emergent learning practices to support community engagement work November 2019 thru January 2020 (3 learning sessions during implementation: 1 retrospective learning convening with staff and consultants; and multiple in-house learning sessions). This led to real-time improvements in engagement approach and is being used to inform institutional strategy for community engagement.
- d. Participation in Equitable Evaluation Colorado Cohort meetings and Fourth Quadrant Partners Emergent Learning cohort convening to develop relationships with aligned Foundations and inform the strategy, evaluation, and learning process for 2020.
- e. Development of a strategic framework for the first approved funding area, Alternatives to Jail, using a 26-member advisory committee with representatives from law enforcement, courts, community leaders, emergency and re-integration providers.
- f. Community engagement facilitation in-person, online, and via phone polling. These efforts, along with staff outreach to organizations and their members, reached 1,600 community representatives. Information from this outreach was used to develop an initial draft of the strategic funding priorities for release in early 2020.



Community Engagement Overview of Activities

Caring for Denver engaged over 1,600 community members in an effort to identify gaps and needs to identify and prioritize foundation funding priorities. Engagement activities included information presentations (12 events, 122 participants); organizational hosted meetings (50 meetings, 381 participants); community-based forums (4 forums, 121 participants); and virtual forums (3 virtual sessions; 1,354 unique viewers). Community engagement efforts aimed to reach various communities around the city in less than a two-month period. Participants had the opportunity to identify local gaps and needs, envision what success would look like if foundation funds were effectively invested and finally, attendees identified their top three priority areas for foundation funding. This data was collected and analyzed leading to polling of 500 Denver residents and four focus groups to narrow the focus of foundation funding priorities.

Early 2020 Work

During the first few weeks of 2020, Caring for Denver received proposals from the city for three programs. The Board of Directors approved nearly \$2M to support:

- The Denver Police Department, in partnership with Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD), to expand the existing co-responder program and direct more people with mental health and/or substance misuse needs to the appropriate community resources, reduce hospitalizations and incarceration, and improve system response, especially for those in mental distress and/or with historical traumas that may impact their engagement with law enforcement.
- A DPD community response pilot program in Denver called Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) modeled from a successful program in Eugene, Oregon, to provide mobile crisis response to mental health and/or substance misuse situations that do not require law enforcement presence. STAR will engage community partners to adapt this approach that sends a paramedic, mental health provider and peer support navigator to low-risk behavioral calls to de-escalate and connect a resident in distress with appropriate services.
- Denver Health Paramedics and the Denver Fire Department, which comprise the Emergency Medical Services (EMS), for development and pilot training of front-line staff on identification and verbal de-escalation practices for those in a mental health and/or substance misuse crisis.

Shortly after the start of 2020, Caring for Denver released its draft Strategic Funding Priorities report open for public feedback until March 4, 2020. Community input gathered in 2019 identified and prioritized four areas needing support in our communities:



Youth

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



Community-Centered Solutions

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



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.



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.

