

The Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan:
Building Caring and Livable Communities for All

2006-2007 Background:

For several years, human service funders including Boulder County, several municipalities, and major community funders have been discussing ways to better plan and coordinate funding and grant application/outcomes measurements for human service organizations. Nonprofit service providers have also grappled with the need for comprehensive program planning, addressing resource challenges created by the need for applying for grants from funders who ask for program, financial, and client data in all different ways, as well as being able to communicate to the public that funds are effectively and efficiently used and that services are not duplicated.

The idea of countywide comprehensive human services planning is not new, in fact many folks in our sector would say this conversation began twenty years ago.

Many nonprofit executive directors met with the Commissioners two years ago, expressing support of this effort and various conversations have been held since about the desire to have this happen. At the request of the Commissioners, the members of the Human Services Coordinating Council (nonprofits are represented at this Council by the chairs of the Human Services Alliance and the St. Vrain Community Council), chaired by Commissioner Tom Mayer, agreed that the time for this planning effort was now and that the County would invest in hiring a consultant to support the process. The City of Longmont, Boulder, and Lafayette were also interested in supporting the effort, along with Foothills United Way and the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County.

The Process

The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children - www.coloradofoundation.org - has been selected as the consultant for the project and has been meeting with a steering committee that represents these funding entities as well as the nonprofit coalitions. The membership of the committee includes Robin Bohannan, Director of Boulder County Community Services; David Bolin, chair of Human Services Alliance of Boulder County; Karen Rahn, Co-Director of Housing and Human Services, City of Boulder; Karen Roney Director of Community Services, City of Longmont; Donna Lovato, The Inn Between; Jorge deSantiago, El Centro AMISTAD; Morgan Rogers, Boulder County Civic Forum Director; Barb Pingrey, Executive Director of Foothills United Way; Jane Uitti; Boulder County Commissioners Office; and Michele Seipp, City of Lafayette Community Life Director.

Using an inclusive and broad collaborative process, our mission is to develop a plan that will result in a dynamic, accessible, coordinated, community-wide human service delivery system. The strategic plan will include:

- A shared vision and principles for a comprehensive human services system;
- An integrated and coordinated funding and delivery model that uses evidence based service and funding approaches with improved efficiencies;
- A safety net of services for Boulder County's most vulnerable residents;
- A comprehensive overview of needs and financial map of the major sources of support for human services by type of service;
- A unified application process for all funders to use with service providers;

- A plan for a unified performance measurement system;
- Maximum public benefit from all planning efforts;
- Flexibility to address emerging needs over time; and
- A collaborative governance model to manage the new system.

Our consultants are helping us develop this plan through a very intensive, two-day community-wide planning process called “Future Search.” Basically, the Future Search is an intensive and task-focused planning process that helps people develop action plans very quickly and comprehensively. The process brings together around 64 people who represent a cross-section of the Boulder County community, including human service providers, funders, business, consumers, multi-ethnic and cultural perspectives, and other stakeholder groups. The planning process will include local community forums to invite public comment as the plan takes shape. Following the Future Search, Action Planning teams meet to work on strategies to address specific actions identified during the conference.

This Future Search process has been widely used around the world for many local planning efforts, and we are very excited about its contributions in human services planning here in Boulder County. Attached is a fact sheet about the Future Search process and there is more information at the website: www.futuresearch.net

Two community forums were held in Longmont and Boulder to inform the public about our process and to hear what residents believed to be important issues to inform our planning. These statements are attached.

Our website, www.buildinglivablecommunities.org is the best place to find updated information about the process, our progress, and again, provide additional opportunities for feedback and input. We will also be reaching out to as many community members as possible during this time via presentations, newsletter inserts, newspaper articles, etc. Your support and help for this process will be invaluable.

The Future Search conference has been planned for two days in mid-April, on Friday, April 13th and Saturday, April 14th, 2007. Significant community input helped to identify 64 people (8 groups of 8 people each) that, together, widely represent the many diverse facets of our community. After the Future Search, action teams will continue to meet to work on identified issues that were agreed upon during the Future Search conference.

Our goal is to ensure a diversity of thought, opinion, perspective and experience - to create a microcosm of our community at the two day event. We will pay stipends for participation, provide child care service on site (or reimburse participants for the costs of child care) have bilingual translation services (Spanish-English) and sign language translation.

We have developed this list of “categories” (below) that will be represented at the Future Search:

Policymakers/local government representatives
 Business people
 Consumers (youth, seniors, GLBT, homeless, disabilities, early childhood, immigrants, health)
 Latino/a
 Faith
 Human Service Providers
 Funders

Educators

Additionally, each group of eight are diverse, representing different geographic areas of the county, GLBT, socio-economic, race, age, and disability.

There are many opportunities ahead, especially given the change in leadership at the state and federal levels. We have the local advantage of committed funding streams, political will, and collaborative relationships that will help support the next steps that will truly facilitate change and ensure that we can implement a livable community blueprint - a livable community for all.

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