The Denver Foundation’s Focus on Basic Human Needs
The Denver Foundation is a community foundation serving our Metro Denver community. The Denver Foundation (TDF) mission is to inspire people and mobilize resources to strengthen our community. As the oldest and largest community foundation in Colorado, one of our jobs is to work with the community on key issues.

In 2011 and 2012, TDF listened to people in our community to learn about the things that lead to a high quality of life. We heard that we should work to help to meet residents’ basic human needs. Our Basic Human Needs’ Long-Term Goal: As a Metro Denver Resident, I can meet my basic human needs in a way that is safe, respectful and easy to do.

We work to support those who struggle to meet their basic human needs, including people of color and immigrants/refugees living in poverty. To do this, we value people helping one another to find resources and using what they know and their experiences help services to meet people’s needs better.

Our Community Opportunity
The Denver Foundation is looking for community leaders to join the Basic Human Needs Community Navigator Learning Cluster. This two-year project is Peer Learning Group of resident community navigators. It will use our community’s existing assets to make a system of Basic Human Needs Community Navigators in three communities (Aurora, Commerce City and Denver’s Westwood neighborhood). This work will help to make sure people are able to easily find person-friendly resources to get healthy food, shelter, and to be safe from family violence. We know community navigators focus on many needs other than these three. We hope this project will help to link resources in these areas to other needs within our communities, including health care. The work of this group will focus on connecting immigrants and refugees and people of color who are low-income to services.

This application is for resident leaders who connect people to services to join the Peer Learning Cluster. This group will talk about ways to do work with others on their Basic Human Needs. This group will create ways to expand and strengthen community navigation. Each person will work on a project to help their community get access to resources and to learn from the project.

The What:
1) Connect low-income immigrants/refugees and people of color to Basic Human Need resources through community navigators/connector
2) Make it easier to access Basic Human Needs resources
3) Help everyone in our community learn that people have unmet Basic Human Needs

The How:
1) Create a Learning Cluster of both resident navigators/connector and community groups’ navigators to share what works and what is difficult about connecting people and to improve our work to better meet people’s needs.
2) Fund residents to join this work, to share learnings and to expand networks.
3) Collect on-the-ground stories to help organizations to make their services better for people in our communities.
4) Collect stories to share with others about the basic human needs in our communities.
The Why:
Organizations are learning that issues facing immigrants and refugees and people of color are tough. Often for these people, the things they need do not fit neatly into the services in the community. This has changed how agencies help people find and keep stable housing, stay safe, and feed themselves.

In the past ten years, leaders have begun to coordinate access to different services to meet the needs of their clients. Community navigators/connectors are a great way to do this. This Peer Learning Cluster is for residents who are on the ground helping others with basic human needs to find the resources that will meet their needs and help them get to a safe and stable place. This group will be those who do this as part of their job and those who do it as part of the community.

About the Project
This project is a partnership in which those in the Peer Learning Cluster and The Denver Foundation will work together to meet our goals. There will be up to six nonprofit organizations and up to 15 community members. Year One will begin February 7, 2014.

The Denver Foundation’s Investment:
The Denver Foundation Community Navigation Faculty will do the following:
- Appreciate the time of resident leaders in this Learning Cluster. We will provide up to $5,000 in Year One to be in the Learning Cluster and to do a project as part of this work.
- Host and assist with Learning Cluster gatherings. These in-person gatherings will help to make sure everyone shares what they learn to meet our goals, including lessons, challenges, solutions, and successes. The Denver Foundation will help you to create and begin your project. Your work will be other members of the Cluster to help you to succeed.
- Offer one-on-one coaching and support for Learning Cluster Participants.
- Offer help with evaluating your project and the Learning Cluster as a whole.
- Create tools to support Basic Human Needs Community Navigation based upon lessons learned by the Learning Cluster.
- Keep track of and share lessons from the Learning Cluster through digital storytelling, The Denver Foundation website, reports and a toolkit for others to use.
- Commit to being your partner to advance Basic Human Needs navigation to benefit low-income immigrants, refugees and people of color in our communities.

Your Investment:
Each person in the Learning Cluster will need to do the following:
- Active join group gatherings and one-on-one meetings with the Community Navigation Faculty to talk about lessons, challenges, solutions, and successes. The meetings without dates will work around people’s schedules:
  - A 2 ½ day retreat, February 7 – February 9, 2014.
  - Four 4-hour group gatherings, to be scheduled when the work begins.
  - Up to four one-on-one meetings of 1-2 hours in the months when there is not a Learning Cluster gathering.
- Join trainings that the group thinks will help them with the work.
- Expand on an existing project or create and do a new project that links with other community navigators and organizations with navigators using the things we learn from the Community Navigation Learning Cluster, including:
  - Create and start a project
  - Keep track of things that work and things that do not work in the project
  - Do a final presentation to the Learning Cluster about what you have learned
  - Tell us how your project can keep going, should change or should grow
Agree to share materials about the project
• Commit to being a partner to advance Basic Human Needs navigation to benefit low-income immigrants/refugees and people of color in our communities.

Who Can Apply:
To apply to be a Learning Cluster member, you need to be someone who, as a member of your community, spends time helping others find the resources they need. This project is for people who are community navigators or connectors. When you are connecting with others, the work should be:
• Within one or more of these communities:
  o Commerce City
  o Westwood and contiguous neighborhoods in South West Denver
  o Original Aurora
• With people of color and/or immigrants/refugees.
• Focused on helping people to do at least two of the following:
  o Get healthy food
  o Find shelter/stable, affordable housing
  o Be safe from domestic violence

For Additional Questions please contact LaDawn Sullivan, Program Officer of Strengthening Neighborhoods, at lsullivan@denverfoundation.org or 303-996-7350, or Monica Buhlig, Director of Basic Human Needs, at mbuhlig@denverfoundation.org or 303-996-6492.
Request to Participate
Letters should be submitted by email to lsullivan@denverfoundation.org
by 5:00 pm on Monday, January 13, 2014

Name:
Phone:
Email:
Address (not necessary):

Please answer the following questions in three pages or less on a separate sheet. Please number your answers, as well.

1. *What you do in your community.* Please tell us how you support people in your community. In what community to you connect with people? Who do you connect with most often (e.g., African American, Latino, Somali, etc...)? Tell us how you reach people and to what you connect them (e.g., community organizations, food pantries, etc...).

2. *Needs of your community.* What are the issues people in your community struggle with right now? What services are needed and what makes it difficult for people to get services?

3. *Current partners and links to Community Based Navigators.* Describe your community partners and how you link to other organizations in your community. What do you like about working with community organizations? What is tough about working with community organizations?

4. *How would the Learning Cluster help you and your community?* What do you hope to achieve by participating in the Learning Cluster? What would you like to learn? How would you like to improve what you do for your community? How will you bring what you learn into your community?

5. *Capacity.* Tell us how you got started helping people in your community. How long ago was that? How many staff/volunteers help you do the work? How often do you help people in your community? What are the results you have seen because of what you do? Share a few sentences about you as a community navigator/connector.

6. *Other.* What else would you like to tell us about your community or your interest in this project?