

Strategic plan 2012 – 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

How long has it been since The Denver Foundation has created a strategic plan?

We developed a plan in 2007 for the years of 2008 – 2012. However the changes in the community, especially the economic downturn, spurred us to review our plan one year early.

Why did you do a ten-year plan?

The problems that we're seeking to address in the community – education, basic human needs, and economic opportunity – require long-term, sustained focus. At the same time we wanted to create a plan that would give us flexibility to shift tactics as outside forces change.

Is this a big shift for The Denver Foundation?

All three of the key community objectives are consistent with the Foundation's long-term areas of grantmaking. We're shifting our attention and resources to focus more deeply on those areas of strongest concern to our community.

How often do you make changes like this?

Every four years in the recent past, we have reviewed and adjusted our key grantmaking priorities. We do this in consultation with our volunteer grantmaking committees and, increasingly, with the community as a whole. Certainly, as an 86-year-old foundation, we have made numerous changes over the course of our history. When we first began, one of our main areas of grantmaking was providing wooden limbs for veterans returning from World War I.

This is what community foundations do...we are perpetual institutions endowed with resources to help meet the community's needs, and we continually assess those needs to make sure we're moving in the right direction.

How does this affect your donors?

We always help our donor advisors give to any public charity in the United States that they may wish to support, including many in Metro Denver and even a number that serve needs in other countries. We will also be offering our donors the opportunity to join us in addressing community needs in new and impactful ways, by partnering with us in reaching our objectives.

How will you support Arts and Culture moving forward?

The Foundation and our donors have been huge supporters of the arts for generations in Metro Denver, and that isn't going to change. What will change is that we will now focus those arts grants on how the arts build educational success for kids, and economic development for

communities. This has, in fact, been under discussion for some time. As recently as two years ago, our Arts and Culture grantmaking advisory committee held a gathering about arts in education and some members of that committee considered recommending a shift in focus then.

Given that many arts organizations already see themselves as essential partners in education and community economic development, we believe we will continue our strong partnership with the Metro Denver arts community.

Will general operating support continue?

Yes. In 2012, we'll continue providing grants to organizations in their area of greatest need – which is most often general operating support. As we develop our process moving forward, we recognize that general operating support is of great utility to our key nonprofit partners and this type of funding will continue.

Will the dollar amount of your grants change?

In 2012, the grant size will remain at an average of \$15-18,000. Over time, we do expect the average grant size to go up, and the overall number of grants to go down slightly, but again, we won't know the details until later in the year.

What about your grantmaking process? Will you still have deadlines?

In 2012, we will have three deadlines and use the same process that we have used for the last several years. In 2013, there will be a change, and we will let you know details about the new process as soon as possible.

What about “civic” groups like voter registration drives and citizen involvement in community decision-making? How will those fit into your new plan?

The short answer is, we don't yet know, and we strongly support such activities. The Strengthening Neighborhoods Program and the Inclusiveness Project both support citizen involvement in many different forms and will continue to do so. We also welcome ideas on how such programs can help us achieve our community objectives.

You don't have health as a separate grantmaking area in this new plan. How will that be handled?

As the trustees and staff were analyzing where our resources could best be put to use, we noted that the Metro Denver community is blessed with numerous foundations that fund health-related issues. We chose to focus on those aspects of health care that are related to meeting basic human needs, and those specific strategies will be developed over the course of 2012.

What about Strengthening Neighborhoods and the Inclusiveness Project?

Yes. We believe the core values and knowledge gained through these key programs will help us do our best work in all of our grantmaking areas. The programs themselves will still exist, but we will be spending 2012 figuring out how they will be structured and how they will operate in years to come. Stay tuned!

How will you support nonprofits through technical assistance and capacity-building efforts?

We definitely believe that strong nonprofits make for a strong community. Our Technical Assistance program will continue to operate as it has done throughout 2012, and it will continue in the future. We'll keep you updated on the changes in store. Similarly, we expect to keep our partnerships strong with organizations like the Colorado Nonprofit Association. How those partnerships will be shaped is yet to be determined.

Aren't numerous foundations in Denver making similar changes?

All foundations have the freedom to shift their grantmaking as they see fit. What's different here is that The Denver Foundation has a long tradition over many generations of listening to the community and adjusting our grantmaking accordingly. This is a shift in focus based on the changing times. We reached out and listened to the needs of Metro Denver residents and responded. We're also taking time to listen to folks again, as we design our new grantmaking process.

How are you specifically addressing your key objectives?

With each of our community objectives, we're spending the year of 2012 examining our current programs and activities and talking to the community about what will be the very best use for our limited resources. Check out and follow our Plan Progress website -- available through DenverFoundation.org/listening.

If you're going to spend all of 2012 planning and listening, how can I get involved?

We will have a "Plan Progress" website/blog to track the development of the plan. You can check that out at any time, and it will list opportunities for community input throughout the year. You can always provide us feedback at listening@denverfoundation.org.