



Vibrant Communities

A core strategy of Colorado State University's Rural Initiative.



BUILDING CIVIC CAPACITY THROUGH COMMUNITY

2022-2023 FY REPORT



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Colorado State University Extension is an equal opportunity provider: <https://col.st/OWMJJA>



Vibrant Communities

2022-2023

This work focuses on supporting the development of thriving rural communities in Colorado. Using research-based leadership development training, storytelling workshops that celebrate shared regional heritage, and events designed to engage residents in community dialogue, our work builds greater local civic capacity and strengthens community resilience.



Photo provided by Ty Coleman, Alamosa Mayor

San Luis Valley: Emerging community leaders gain access to and learn the importance of connecting with their local and state elected officials as part of their FLTI training.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES FOCUS AREAS

Increased Civic Engagement and Inclusive Leadership

Activities in this category support the development and implementation of community-based programming and opportunities to support new and emerging leaders from all backgrounds and engage local voices in public participation. Programs achieving these goals include:

- Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI)
- Civic Learning Labs

TIMELINE OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES ACTIVITIES IN FY 2022-2023

SUMMER 2022

Positions posted for regional Vibrant Communities Specialists



Planning and program development begins for launching Rural Action Project pilot

FALL 2022

Vibrant Communities Specialist hired and onboarded for Mountain region



Local cohorts of FLTI begin in Eagle County, Morgan County, and San Luis Valley

Outreach to rural communities about hosting locally sponsored Rural Action Projects begins



Onboarding training provided for Rural Action Project Host Organizations



FY REPORT

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES TEAM

Patti Schmitt

Director of Community Development & Family Leadership Training Institute of Colorado
patti.schmitt@colostate.edu

Aliria Bello

Extension Specialist
Statewide
aliria.bello@colostate.edu

Heather Meyer

Extension Specialist
Statewide
heather.a.meyer@colostate.edu

Willie Wilkins

Extension Specialist
Mountain Region
willie.wilkins@colostate.edu

Alice Dong

Extension Specialist
Eastern Region
alice.dong@colostate.edu

Jeff Engell

Extension Specialist
Western Region
jeff.engell@colostate.edu



Photo provided by Glenda Wentworth

Denver: FLTI of Eagle County participants outside the Capitol with State Senator Dylan Roberts (District 8) during his time with them at their Day at the Capitol event in April, 2023.



Photo provided by Judith Alvarez

Glenwood Springs: Community members have small group discussions after attending a virtual presentation regarding asset mapping in rural communities.

Bridging Rural and Urban Communities

Activities in this category focus on fostering connections between rural and urban communities through programming focused on public issues commonly experienced throughout Colorado. Programs working toward these goals include:

- Statewide FLTI Facilitator Certification Training
- Day at the Capitol Events

Extended Humanities

Activities in this category use the art of storytelling and conversation to strengthen sense of connection and belonging throughout communities, spread awareness regarding community activities, future connections, and opportunities for change.

- Programs achieving these goals include:
- Rural Action Projects
 - The Art of Ranching Storytelling Project

WINTER 2023

Three-part Community Conversations phase of Rural Action Project begins



Individual civic projects are implemented by 31 FLTI participants in 3 rural areas

SPRING 2023

Over 30 individuals from rural FLTI cohorts attend Day at the Capitol events



Community-driven local projects implemented in 10 participating Rural Action Project areas

Three rural cohorts of FLTI graduate 31 new community leaders



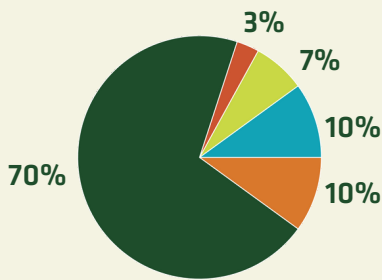
Vibrant Communities regional specialists hired for Western and Eastern regions

DEMOGRAPHICS FOR RURAL FLTI PARTICIPANTS

GENDER



RACE & ETHNICITY



- Latinx/Hispanic
- White, not-Hispanic
- American Indian/Native American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black

INCOME

50%



reported annual household incomes at or less than \$40,000.



FAMILY LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE (FLTI)

Using a research-based curriculum that has yielded proven results across the country for over 30 years, FLTI offers bridging between historically marginalized community members and those in formal leadership roles to develop and implement local policies that serve all members of a community. FLTI promotes leadership development, increased civic engagement, and equity in all policies.

Since 2009, FLTI of Colorado has made accessible leadership development opportunities available in partnership with community organizations and local CSU Extension offices, using the nationally renowned [Parent Leadership Training Institute](#) (PLTI) curriculum.

During the 2022-2023 FY, three rural FLTI cohorts completed their 20-session journeys: Eagle County, Morgan County, and San Luis Valley (Alamosa). A total of 31 participants completed FLTI in these communities.

Across the board, FLT uses several key practices that make it accessible to diverse members from each community, making critical progress toward Extension's goals for achieving USDA-NIFA's REG parity requirements. Such practices include:

- **Affordability** - Every applicant accepted into an FLTI cohort receives 100% tuition scholarship.
- **Child Care Assistance** - Child care is either provided on-site or via childcare stipend depending on the needs of each cohort.
- **Language Justice** - As resources permit, simultaneous interpretation is provided for participants with Limited English Proficiency. Two of the three rural sites were able to offer these services in this year's cohorts. All printed materials are available in English and Spanish.
- **Shared meals** - At every session of FLTI, cohort participants, facilitators, site coordinator and invited members of the community come together to share a meal, fostering community connectedness and supplemental nutrition to individuals and families who may be struggling with food insecurity.

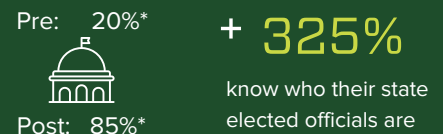
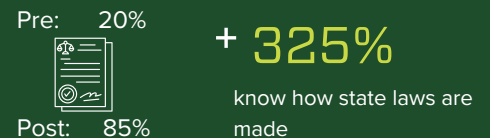
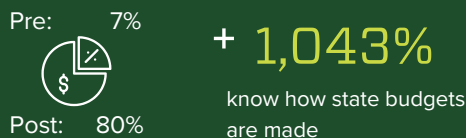


Photo provided by Letitia Bancroft

Morgan County: Participants in Morgan County FLTI learn about public policy and the importance of using one's voice in the policy-making process.

INCREASES IN CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

All FLTI participants are surveyed regarding their levels of public participation, civic knowledge, social connectedness, and sense of belonging in their community before they begin FLTI and then again at the end of their cohorts. Gains in civic knowledge shown here are the degree of change between pre- and post-surveys for all rural participants.





RURAL ACTION PROJECT (RAP)

In partnership with CSU's [Center for Public Deliberation](#), CSU Extension collaborated with 10 rural communities to pilot the RAP initiative.

The RAP model featured the following components in its first iteration:

Onboarding and Training

Ongoing training and materials were provided for rural community partners to local residents in their community conversations.

Distributed Conference Model

For each of the 3 community conversations, all RAP hosts across the state livestreamed a guest speaker presentation. After each presentation, communities then participated in facilitated conversations with others from their area only.

Targeted Topics

The three topics that all RAP sites covered included:

1. Identifying Community Needs & Goals
2. Telling Community Stories
3. Developing Community Projects

Locally Designed and Driven Community Projects

Using the data collected at each community conversation, RAP hosts worked with their community members to design and implement a project that would strengthen their community.

Funding to Support Project Implementation

Rural Initiative funds were provided to support the projects proposed by RAP Hosts.

Nine of the ten initial RAP Hosts proposed projects for implementation. One of these was a consolidation of two efforts in the same area (Garfield County). Projects were designed and implemented through the end of FY 2022-2023 and final reports have captured some promising data about the impact of this pilot.

A second round is scheduled to begin in Fall 2023 and will continue through June 2024.



Photo provided by Judith Alvarez

Garfield County: A large crowd of Garfield County residents tune into the statewide presentation about asset-mapping in rural Communities.

"Thanks so much for this opportunity. CSU is really becoming very involved in rural CO and I appreciate that as CSU is more than a college and Extension office in our four counties. Please stay in touch!"

*- Candace Payne, Executive Director
East Central Council of Governments | Burlington, CO*



Photo provided by Peggy Stoltenberg

Sterling: The RAP Community Project Sterling developed by Logan County residents was a wildly successful, culturally relevant Cinco de Mayo Kermis in which over 600 residents and 100 local vendors attended.

RAP COMMUNITY PROJECTS BY CATEGORY



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Garfield County
Health Equity & Resource Fairs

Sedgewick County
55+ Forever Young



CULTURAL HERITAGE

Logan County
Cinco de Mayo Kermis

Cheyenne County
Cheyenne County Heritage Trail

Prowers County
Stories of Our People

San Luis Valley
Adobe Clay Oven Exhibition



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Morgan County
ESL & Textile Production Classes

Huerfano County
Community Tree Planting

Kit Carson County
Improved Library Communications



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Colorado State University Extension is an equal opportunity provider: <https://col.st/OWMJA>