University of Denver
COLORADO EVALUATION AND ACTION LAB

Open Call for Letters of Interest to Conduct Cross-System, Actionable Social and Health Policy Research

The Colorado Lab believes that smart, strategic partnerships with government have the potential to improve people's lives. The Lab serves as a bridge and translator between government and the research community.

The Colorado Lab anticipates investing $1,000,000 in new research projects that can be completed by the end of 2020.

The purpose of this Open Call for Letters of Interest is to activate the research community to develop and disseminate cross-system, person-centered research or evaluation projects that generate actionable information tailored to one of the following priorities:

- **Fulfill every child's potential regardless of zip code**
- **Save Coloradans money on healthcare**
- **Foster an economy that works for everyone**
- **Move electric grid to renewable sources by 2040**
- **Prevention and Intervention for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Involved Youth**
- **Reducing Adult Recidivism**
- **Cross-System Solutions for Coloradans[1]**

The goal of this opportunity is to equip government partners with information that can inform cross-system collaboration, policy, and practice. To learn more about what is important to Governor Polis's administration, read about key issue areas, state agencies' Wildly Important Priorities and Goals, and visit the Governor's Dashboard.

> This opportunity is designed for **research teams outside of state government** to propose projects. State agencies' staff will be engaged in the review of proposed projects to assess actionability and relevance to their priorities.
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> **Research Ideas from Inside State Government** have two avenues for Lab support:
> - Call for Ideas
> - Cabinet-Driven Projects

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[1] Sometimes highly relevant and timely cross-system research or evaluation projects do not fit neatly in a priority area. The "cross-system" solutions for Coloradans offers researchers flexibility to pitch person-centered projects that are aligned with a high priority for one or more state agencies.

Cross-System Research:

Regardless of priority area, all projects must be person-centered and cross-system, which is defined as:

- Having clear policy or practice implications for two or more state agencies.
    OR
- Requiring information (data) from two or more state agencies to inform policy or practice.
    OR
- Focusing on state agency collaboration or coordination with one or more local government partners or the private sector. The value of the research to state government decision-making must be clear.

Cross-system research projects that would not happen but for this opportunity will be prioritized.

Types of Studies:

- Descriptive studies using data that are linked across systems and put the spotlight on opportunities to make progress on a priority.
- Predictive models that can be used routinely by agencies to inform service delivery or other actions relevant to a priority.
- Causal studies of programs or policies implemented by or in partnership with Colorado government agencies aimed at making progress on a priority.
- Mixed-methods studies that inform theory of change for priority-relevant programs or policies implemented by or in partnership with Colorado government agencies.

Any of the aforementioned study types may be supplemented by a qualitative component, but that is not a requirement. Purely qualitative studies will not be considered; leveraging administrative data is encouraged.

Where appropriate, projects are encouraged to use the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) for obtaining anonymized cross-system data. Consultation on LINC will be offered after the Letter of Interest stage.

Letter of Interest Process:

Step 1: Researchers submit a Letter of Interest, rolling basis.

Step 2: Colorado Lab, in consultation with government partners, reviews letters of interest.

Decision Point: (A) Invitation to participate in a video call or in-person meeting to discuss the project; (B) Notification that the project was not selected to move on in the process.

Step 3: Research team and Colorado Lab have a conversation about the project to discuss potential for actionability, feasibility, and the research or evaluation design. The Colorado Lab may suggest that the research team expand, narrow, or shift their focus in response to government partners' initial feedback.

The Colorado Lab will follow up in writing with the full proposal requirements for this project. The requirements of the full proposal will be tailored to the aspects of the project that need to be clarified to make a funding decision (e.g., draft analysis plan, engage government partners, assess feasibility, define the deliverables and milestones). The Colorado Lab's goal for the full proposal is to have enough information to make a thoughtful decision about funding a project.

The Colorado Lab will assign a staff member to serve as a thought partner in developing and strengthening the project design and facilitating communication with key government partners. This staff member will be the research team's point of contact throughout the development of a full proposal. If the project is funded, Colorado Lab staff member(s) will stay involved throughout the life of the project.

Step 4: Full proposal and deliverable-based budget is submitted.

Decision Point: Colorado Lab convenes a review team and makes a funding decision. Review teams will be convened on a rolling basis and tailored to evaluating the rigor, actionability, and feasibility of the proposed project. Review teams may include government partners, academic researchers, subject matter experts, and Colorado Lab staff.

Timelines and Award Range:

Letters of Interest will be reviewed and funding decisions made on a rolling basis. All projects must be completed by the end of 2020.

Award Range and Allowable Costs:

- The Lab typically funds projects that range from $25,000 to $150,00. The Lab will consider proposals outside of this range.
- Awards over $75,000 require a 25% cost-share in addition to funds requested from the Colorado Lab. For example, if $80,000 is requested in Lab funds, then $20,000 would be required in cost-sharing.

All costs must be research or dissemination related (i.e., program implementation is not allowable). No Indirect Costs are Allowed.

Applicant Eligibility:

Colorado institutions of higher education and Colorado-based non-profit and for-profit research firms that have the ability to conduct actionable research and engage in mutualistic partnerships with government agencies are encouraged to apply. Eligible lead applicants may include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities. Priority will be given to proposals that include representatives from one or more Colorado institutions of higher education on the research team.

This Call for Letters of Interest is tailored to the research community. State agencies are encouraged to submit through the Call for Ideas.

Letters of Interest Requirements:

Letters of Interest must be submitted via the online submission portal **as one PDF document** and include: (1) coversheet, (2) narrative and reference list, (3) description of key personnel.

Cover Sheet (entered directly into the online submission portal):

- Project title
- Priority that is the focus of the proposal
- Length of Project: Number of months
- Project Dates: Range of start dates that would allow the project to be completed by end of 2020 (i.e., from a research feasibility perspective, how soon could the project start; what's the latest it could start and finish by end of 2020).
- End Users of the Information: Be specific about the government agencies and, if appropriate, offices or divisions within the agencies.
- Abstract (125 words): Purpose of the study, data sources, how this project takes a bold step toward a 360-degree view of the problem/opportunity/priority, and "so what" or why it matters. Write the abstract for the audiences identified as end users of this project.
- Principal Investigator: Name, title, affiliation, email address, and preferred phone number[2]
- Research Team Members (Optional): Name, title, and affiliation
- Contracting Contact: Name, title, email address, phone number, mailing address

Letter of Interest (3 pages max. excluding References, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1" margins):

Page 1: Articulate your research question(s) and why addressing it is important for Colorado.

Pages 2 to 3: Articulate how you will achieve the goals of your project on your proposed timeline (ending no later than 12/31/2020). At a minimum, discuss research methods, partnership strategies, and communication/dissemination strategies as well as:

- Why this project will not happen but for the Colorado Lab; consider the menu of Lab supports linked HERE.
- Project feasibility in the proposed timeline, including anticipated barriers (e.g. access to data, staff capacity and expertise, prior experience). The Colorado Lab anticipates being an active partner in addressing feasibility issues for some projects. See menu of supports linked HERE.

Key Personnel and Curriculum Vitae

- Description of key personnel, role on project, and description of experience collaborating with government partners (2 pages maximum, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1" margins)
- Curriculum vitae for key personnel (4 pages per person maximum, no formatting requirements).

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[2] Principal Investigators from Colorado institutes of higher education should share the contract template linked HERE with their legal teams to ensure the language will be acceptable prior to submitting a letter of interest. To ensure consistency, only project-specific language (e.g., scope of work, deliverables, funding amounts) are negotiable. CSU and UNC have active projects with the relevant contract terms and may not need to review the template in advance.

All submission materials must be submitted **HERE**

Expectations for Project Teams:

- Demonstrate commitment to achieving the spirit of the goals of the project in addition to fulfilling the deliverables.
- Commitment to developing or strengthening a mutualistic relationship with government partners.
- Engage in monthly virtual meetings with the Lab to discuss project progress and brainstorm strategies to address barriers (select one representative of the research team to participate).
- Develop a pre-analysis plan prior to receiving outcome data and register causal studies with the Open Science Framework.
- Collaborate with the Colorado Lab and government agencies to develop communication strategies for the results.
- Final reports and presentations are branded as Colorado Lab products that are authored by your research team. Affiliations of research team members will be listed.

Questions? Contact Dr. Elysia Clemens, Deputy Director of the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, elysia.clemens@du.edu or 303-871-6262.

OTHER OPEN CALLS FOR RESEARCH

THERE IS AN OPEN CALL FOR COLORADO STATE AGENCY STAFF MEMBERS TO SUBMIT CROSS-SYSTEM RESEARCH IDEAS.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE.