



# UNIVERSITY *of* DENVER

## COLORADO EVALUATION AND ACTION LAB

### Colorado Lab Newsletter

July 2022

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### Imagination Library Impact Evaluation



Dolly Parton reads to children at The Library of Congress. Photo courtesy of Jake Tate;  
[CPR News](#)

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is inspiring a love of reading for children in Colorado, across the U.S. and around the globe. The nonprofit provides books at no cost to families with young children (0-5 years old) to foster a love of books and promote a culture of reading among families.

The program launched in Colorado in 2005. Today, there are 34 local affiliate programs serving 50 counties with the goal of making books available to all young children in every Colorado zip code. Community-based organizations distribute age-appropriate books each month to more than 22,750 children.

Nearly 20% of the books are either fully bilingual in English and Spanish or have Spanish language content.

*"One of my goals is to make Colorado the very best state for children and families, and the Imagination Library embodies our commitment to make sure that every child and family thrives. We know that the most important factor in a child's success is an early introduction to books."*

**Governor Jared Polis**

The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab is supporting the [Imagination Library of Colorado \(ILCO\)](#) in assessing the impact the book program is having on kindergarten readiness. Because the state of Colorado does not collect student-level kindergarten-readiness data, a statewide study is not possible. Instead, the Colorado Lab is targeting a few school districts that have a large number of ILCO book program participants residing in their catchment areas to share data through the [Linked Information Network of Colorado \(LINC\)](#). The evaluation will compare ILCO program graduates to demographically similar students at the same school district who have not participated in the ILCO program.

Look for an interim impact report in 2024 and learn more by reaching out to [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#).

## Office of Economic Security Technical Assistance

The Colorado Lab is excited to have been selected to provide research and evaluation technical assistance to the evaluation staff at the Employment and Benefits Division (EBD) of the Office of Economic Security at the Colorado Department of Human Services. EBD administers [Colorado Works](#) (TANF) and [Colorado Refugee Services Program](#), employment programs like [ReHire Colorado](#) and [Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program](#), and [Adult Financial Programs](#) like Aid to the Needy and Disabled. In addition to supporting EBD in designing and implementing statutorily-required evaluations, the Colorado Lab will help division staff develop the internal capacity to leverage the available data to most effectively inform policy and practice. Areas of potential support include reviewing existing data and determining the type of evaluation design to fit that data; recommending changes to existing data collection structures; making recommendations on methodology and design decisions, including procedures for analyzing differences between treatment and comparison groups and addressing threats to validity; and demonstrating how to conduct those procedures utilizing existing EBD data using R or SPSS software, as relevant.

To learn more, contact [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#).

## Welcome to New Colorado Lab Staff

John Hokkanen returns to the Colorado Lab, having worked here initially in 2019 and then transitioning to work with our LINC partner, the Colorado Governor’s Office of Information Technology. As a senior data scientist, John brings his extensive skill set tailor-made to inform and guide a myriad of Colorado Lab projects. His expertise includes the merging of datasets, analytics, and statistical modeling. Having also worked in both the private sector, in banking and as an entrepreneur, and in the public sector, as an attorney for the Department of Health and Human Services, John is motivated by his desire to work with data that can improve people’s lives. John earned his JD at the University of Virginia School of Law and holds an MS in Predictive Analytics from Northwestern University.



John Hokkanen

Learn more about John on our [website](#).

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