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## Colorado Lab Welcomes New Staff Members

What do being a Certified ScrumMaster, working with teams across 10 countries to create a new culture of learning and evidence building, having a Master's degree in Professional Creative Writing, and being a What Works Clearinghouse certified reviewer for group design standards have in common? They are among the many skills of the Colorado Lab's four newest staff members. Read more about the expertise and inspirations of Val Henderson, Ellen Witt, Jordan Cass, and Jing Liu and join us in offering them a warm welcome to our team!



### Val Henderson

Val is a project manager who thrives at the intersection of people and technology. She was drawn to the Colorado Lab because of its focus on relationship-building and the use of data to address social issues in Colorado. As a **Project Specialist**, she will employ her organizational and people skills to ensure the success of Linked Information Network of Colorado projects. Val earned her bachelor's degree at the Loyola University of Chicago and is a Certified ScrumMaster.

### Ellen Witt

Ellen joins the Lab as a **Senior Policy & Program Manager** to support the Early Childhood Evaluation Hub and coordinate evaluation needs for the Colorado Department of Early Childhood's federal stimulus-funded activities. Ellen previously worked with Water for People as a Senior Evaluation and Learning Manager to create a new culture of learning and evidence-building among teams in over 10 countries. She has a background in project management, learning, and evaluation within the health systems transformation and international development sectors. Ellen



received her master’s in International and Intercultural Communications with a concentration in Global Health from the University of Denver.



**Jordan Cass**

As **Business Coordinator III**, Jordan will provide administrative support to the Colorado Lab. He was inspired by the Lab’s evidence-based approach to addressing pressing social problems, and is excited to work in a positive, collaborative environment with an eye on examining proactive solutions. Jordan previously worked in a variety of analyst, administrative, and support roles, both inside and outside higher education. He earned his Bachelor’s in Political Science and English and Master’s degree in Professional Creative Writing from the University of Denver.

**Jing Liu**

Jing joined the Lab because she believes in the power of data to present evidence to inform policies, programs, and investments. As a **Senior Researcher**, she will use her experience conducting applied research and evaluation studies to support the Lab’s portfolio of projects. Prior to joining the Lab, Jing worked closely with state agencies, educators, and policymakers through the Institute of Education Science—Regional Educational Lab Central. Jing is a What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) certified reviewer for group design standards (version 4.1) and holds a PhD in Educational Policy Studies from the Pennsylvania State University with a focus on teacher attrition.



**Spotlight: External Research Partners**

The Colorado Lab is excited to highlight two external research partners, Dr. Alena Clark and Dave Anderson! They join more than 70 skilled, passionate researchers we have had the pleasure of partnering with on diverse projects over the past 5 years.

**Bridge to the Research Community**

Watch for the next post in our [special blog series](#) marking the Colorado Lab’s fifth anniversary to learn how we’re working to build a network of highly-qualified researchers and evaluators to connect governmental partners with the right evaluators, at the right time, for the right project.

**Alena Clark**

Dr. Alena Clark is serving as an external project partner to support our work with [Plans of Safe Care](#) through the Perinatal Substance Use Coordinated Care and Support pilot program. Plans of Safe Care were identified during the [perinatal substance use data linkage project](#) as a means to improve cross-system care coordination and health outcomes for families impacted by perinatal substance use disorders.



Dr. Clark will serve as Project Director,

facilitating the work of pilot program partners, Kempe Center, Illuminate Colorado, and the Colorado Lab. She brings to this work her deep background in maternal and child health, nutrition and public health, as well as extensive on-the-ground engagement experience working with people receiving support through the WIC program and across faith communities.

An instructor at Colorado State University, Dr. Clark’s primary areas of research and practice are lactation support, global health, infant and young child nutrition, and evaluating the access of under-resourced communities to nutrition education and public health resources. She earned a PhD in Human Nutrition at Colorado State University, an MPH in Public Health Nutrition at the University of Minnesota and a BA in Nutrition and Dietetics at Concordia College.



**Dave Anderson**

Dave Anderson is supporting our work with the Colorado Department of Higher Education’s [Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative \(COSI\)](#). The initiative aims to increase available scholarships and provide students with needed support to increase the number of Coloradans who enroll in and complete their postsecondary education—and go on to good careers with little college debt. The program particularly focuses on supporting underserved students, for whom college may seem out of reach.

As an external research partner, Dave’s role is to work closely with the COSI team, helping them to strengthen program effectiveness, achieve desired outcomes, and identify the types of research studies to consider for continuous improvement. He brings to this project extensive experience in funding, reviewing, and helping to design evidence-based research across numerous policy areas, including education and workforce development.

Dave is the President of EBP Consulting LLC where he advises government officials, philanthropies, and nonprofits on rigorous evaluation design, interpreting research findings, evaluation strategy, and advancing evidence-based policy reforms. He previously served as Vice President of Evidence-Based Policy at Arnold Ventures and as Vice President of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. He holds a master’s degree in Public Policy from Duke University and a bachelor’s degree in International Studies from the University of Denver.

**Call for External Research Partners**

If you are interested in being considered for future projects and have not done so already, please [learn more](#) and fill out the [brief questionnaire](#).

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