Community Action Programs: Educate > Empower > Succeed

“There are no problems we cannot solve together and very few that we can solve by ourselves.” – President Lyndon B. Johnson

As a part of LBJ’s War on Poverty, Boulder County Community Action Programs (CAP) has been working since 1965 to empower people struggling with poverty and those underrepresented in the community to become self-sufficient and have their voices heard.

CAP, working collaboratively with community partners, works with small groups of clients to foster long-lasting changes in their lives. We work an “inch wide and a mile deep” to move people closer to their goals of self-sufficiency, self-determination, and success.

Populations Served
CAP manages several programs including the Personal Investment Enterprise (PIE), the People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL), and the Cultural Brokers Resiliency Program (CBRP). In 2021, CAP served 171 clients through its programming:

- Personal Investment Enterprise (PIE) 96
- People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL) 33
- PERL Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) 33
- Boulder County Boards participated in PERL’s Creating Connection’s DEI Training. 9

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Community Partners
Community Action Programs (CAP) understands and believes that collaboration is the best way to serve our community. All CAP programs work in partnership with nonprofit organizations, county and city departments, faith communities, educational institutions and others to accomplish goals. Our key external partners include:

- Sister Carmen Community Center
- EFAA
- OUR Center
- Philanthropiece Foundation
- Mile High United Way
- Social Venture Partners Boulder County
- Small Business Development Center
- Front Range Community College
- City of Longmont
- City of Boulder
- Community Foundation Boulder County
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CAP is funded primarily by the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) through the Office of Community Services, which supports staff and some program costs. CSBG requires that CAP’s administrative board include members who are either low-income or can represent low-income communities. This board is appointed by the Boulder County Commissioners and provides input and oversight to CAP.

CAP Administrative Board Members
Maryel Barron
William Benjamin
Robin Brenneise
Megan Delaney
Bhola Katuwal
Doug Hofmeister
Asna Jefferies
Sandra Reisman
Jay Schaeffer

In 2021, the Community Action Programs (CAP) Annual Report provides a comprehensive overview of the organization’s work and achievements.
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Revenues
- Federal Grant $433,714
- CARES ACT $165,970
- Commissioners Supplement $22,198
- Total $621,882

Expenses
- Salary and Benefits $444,055
- CARES ACT $165,970
- Operating Expenses $11,657
- Total $621,882

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CAP staff team building.
Personal Investment Enterprise

Community Action Program’s Personal Investment Enterprise (PIE) program is designed to help working, low-income families and individuals save money exclusively for first-time home ownership, post-secondary education, and small business development. As part of this program, participants can enroll in financial education classes and save through a matched savings account at a rate of four to one. PIE is a local savings program that focuses on monthly saving goals that helps residents purchase a home, pursue post-secondary education, or develop a new business.

“From my entry into PIE (June 2019) to today, my credit score has gone up over 100 points from the 650s to 790. The skills and strategies I learned in PIE definitely helped me follow through on reducing my debts and raising my score.”

-- H.S., PIE participant

People Engaged in Raising Leaders

Through People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL), CAP manages other initiatives designed to support and acknowledge the contributions of people of color and those living in poverty. Creating Connections is a workshop tailored for executive directors and board members of non-profit organizations or agencies on how to diversify Boulder County boards to include traditionally underrepresented populations and offer a seat at the table. For those who wish to take leadership positions on boards and commissions, CAP promotes several workshops to ensure participation and offer the skills and knowledge in trainings.

Boards & Commissions Training

Boards & Commissions Trainings is a four-week workshop designed for people of color with low-incomes across Boulder County to learn about and become members of a governing board. PERL helps increase the number of individuals from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds who join non-profit boards and government commissions. The program empowers people to participate and become more involved civically in the community.

“Everybody has to be heard. Youth voices are important as they continue to evolve as people. We know that social problems are generational.”

-- YLA participant

Program Participants

To date, PIE has served 397 participants from 2002 to 2021. The program switched to a hybrid model of interaction throughout this past year to align with COVID-19 guidelines and participant preference.

15 participants started financial education classes
15 participants completed their financial education classes
13 participants completed a financial coaching session
28 participants achieved their goal of investing in their first home, starting a new business, or obtaining education

96 total number of participants served in the PIE program
62 of the total number of participants served were low-income at below the 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
34 of the total number of participants served were low-income at below the 80% of the Boulder County Median Income

People Engaged in Raising Leaders

Overall PIE Program Successes

88% of PIE graduates have completed or are still completing their degree
86% of small business owners are still operating their business
73% of homeowners still own the home they purchased one year after completing the PIE program

“Overall, the PERL program is a great way to empower and support youth who are interested in leadership opportunities.”

-- Iris Prieto Medina, Cultural Brokers training program participant

PERL 2021 Highlights

- PERL was featured in the National Association of Counties, The Longmont Leader, and KGNU
- Belinda Hearm, PERL Program Coordinator, was featured as a panellist at CU Denver, School of Public Affairs at the series on social equity.

Youth Leadership Academy (YLA)

In 2021, CAP’s People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL) and Workforce Boulder County (WBIC) launched a new initiative for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) young adults called the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA). The program recruited youth ages 16-24 who identify as BIPOC, and had an interest in learning about educational, employment, mentorship, and leadership opportunities in Boulder County.

The first class of cohort had 33 participants. Some were working towards completing their high school diploma or GED, while some were working on state or local certifications to pursue higher paying employment opportunities. Participants attended classes on budgeting, finance, and resume building through WBIC, and attended a leadership series developed and facilitated by Belinda Hearm, PERL Coordinator.

“Cultural Brokers Resilience Program

The Cultural Brokers Resilience Program (CBRP) focuses on community engagement and professional development of cultural brokers in the county and neighboring areas. This program works in partnership with local governments and non-profits to advance racial equity and social justice by supporting the work of bilingual, bicultural staff and community members.

In 2021, CBRP was the recipient of a National Association of Counties (NACo) Award and the Boulder County Healthy Community Award.

Marshall Fire & Cultural Brokers

On December 30, 2021, two grass fires broke out in Boulder County causing devastating losses for residents that burned approximately 1,084 structures. The county mobilized a crisis call center and opened our Disaster Assistance Center (DAC) that offered in-person resources including FEMA assistance, the Red Cross trauma services, financial assistance, and mental health resources.

As the DAC welcomed community members impacted by the Marshall Fire, cultural brokers mobilized to offer services that were inclusive, culturally responsive, and attainable to our non-English speaking fire victims. Cultural brokers responded to assist fire victims whose native languages included Hindi, Chinese, Korean, Nepali, Hmong, and Spanish. Given the trauma from the Marshall Fire, cultural brokers followed a trauma-informed approach that was multi-faceted, effective, and immediate. Cultural broker intervention framed within a multicultural lens expanded how Boulder County responded to this disaster. The response and experience also opened the opportunity for cultural brokers to participate in the ongoing, long-term recovery of services.
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PERL 2021 Highlights

- PERL was featured in the National Association of Counties, The Longmont Leader, and KGNU
- Belinda Hearn, PERL Program Coordinator, was featured as a panelist at CU Denver, School of Public Affairs at the series on social equity.
- The PERL governance structure has been reimagined to be more diverse, and individuals were selected from diverse backgrounds.
- 15 non-profits and community groups used CBRP’s Resource Catalog to support case management.
- 15 cultural broker gatherings, open houses, and COVID information meetings hosted by CBRP
- 644 attendees at CBRP meetings
- 38,402 total CBRP webpage and social media views

Program Participants

To date, PIE has served 397 participants from 2002 to 2021. The program switched to a hybrid model of interaction throughout this past year to align with COVID-19 guidelines and participant preference.

- 15% participants started financial education classes
- 96% total number of participants served in the PIE program
- 15% participants completed their financial education classes
- 62% of the total number of participants served were low-income at below the 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
- 13% participants completed a financial coaching session
- 34% of the total number of participants served were low-income at below the 80% of the Boulder County Median Income
- 28% participants achieved their goal of investing in purchasing their first home, starting a new business, or obtaining education
- 98% of participants reported that their confidence in managing finances and ability to plan for a financial future has improved one year after completing the program
- 73% of participants reported achieving new savings goals
- 88% of PIE program graduates have completed or are still completing their degree
- 86% of small business owners are still operating their business
- 73% of homeowners still own the home they purchased one year after completing the PIE program
- 95% of homeowners continue saving on a regular basis after completing the program

Overall PIE Program Successes

From my entry into PIE (June 2019) to today, my credit score has gone up over 100 points from the 650s to 790. The skills and strategies I learned in PIE definitely helped me follow through on reducing my debts and raising my score.

-- H.S., PIE participant

PERL 2021 Outcomes

- 33 individuals completed PERL Administrative Boards & Commissions training
- 9 Boulder County boards participated in PERL’s Creating Connections’ DEI training
- 11 non-profits and community groups used CBRP’s Resource Catalog to support case management
- 644 attendees at CBRP meetings

Youth Leadership Academy (YLA)

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The first class of cohort had 33 participants. Some were working towards completing their high school diploma or GED, while some were working on state or local certifications to pursue higher paying employment opportunities. Participants attended classes on budgeting, finance, and resume building through WfBC, and attended a leadership series developed and facilitated by Belinda Hearn, PERL Coordinator.

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I had the opportunity and fortune of being part of the first group to participate in the Cultural Brokers pilot training. These classes were an important tool for the rediscovery in the potential that people like me, who act as a bridge between individuals and organizations, are recognized as agents of value and positive change. Thanks to CBRP’s program, collaborative teams have raised the title of Cultural Brokers.

-- Iris Prieto Medina, Cultural Brokers training program participant

Cultural Brokers Resilience Program

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