

# Con Alma Health Foundation

## INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Resilience

Service Delivery +  
Systems Change  
Along the SDOH

## PRIMARY AREAS OF OPERATION

Outward



Founded in 2001, the Con Alma Health Foundation is dedicated to improving health status and access to health care services for all New Mexicans through health policy advocacy, grantmaking, and other investments and contributions. The Foundation's mission is "to be aware of and respond to the health rights and needs of the culturally and demographically diverse peoples and communities of New Mexico." As such, the foundation's advocacy and grantmaking ties into the social determinants of health (SDOH), such as income and housing, and emphasizes long-term policy solutions that address root causes and are informed by community voices.

## APPLYING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS



*Through their focus on health equity, Con Alma seeks to address both the unique needs of individuals and the systemic barriers faced by different populations within New Mexico, particularly people of color and rural and tribal communities that face greater health disparities. Their framework embraces the following:*

**A SHARED LEADERSHIP MODEL THAT INSTITUTIONALIZES DIVERSE VOICES.** Con Alma has both a traditional Board of Trustees that reflects the ethnic and geographic makeup of the state and a Community Advisory Committee composed of experts from across sectors and locations in New Mexico. Its work is done through a committee structure with co-chairs from each group; they come together annually to review grant applications, conduct evaluation, and carry out strategic planning.

**COLLABORATION WITH GRANTEEES AND THE COMMUNITY.** Part of Con Alma's core values is community self-determination, meaning that the foundation makes space for the

communities it works with to define who they are, what their problems are, and what the most appropriate solutions are. Grantmaking is never prescriptive, and Con Alma aims to foster a sense of community and partnership with grantees.

**A TWO-PRONGED FUNDING APPROACH.** While the foundation focuses on long-term systems change, circumstances sometimes demand funding for short-term direct services. In situations like COVID-19, Con Alma is able to support both in tandem.

## IMPACT

With its reach and approach, Con Alma effectively leverages resources to help those left out or left behind. For example, when COVID hit, existing disparities were exacerbated, and the state as whole, which tends to be underresourced, suffered. Con Alma responded swiftly, securing two large grants for a total of nearly \$2 million, one of which was aimed at relief for New Mexico's large immigrant population.

Con Alma can also bridge gaps in terms of need when they arise. In its early years, for example, the foundation mainly funded projects in the Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces area (Rio Grande Corridor). But as the commitment to rural and Indigenous people deepened, its geographic scope naturally expanded. And because health is tied to so many different areas, it has a wide constituency. The foundation funds child care, cash grants, financial security training, workforce diversion training for women involved in the criminal justice system, and broadband access, to name a few examples.



## KEY LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

*Con Alma is complex yet nimble. Its broad focus on health equity allows the foundation to fund many interconnected issue areas while meeting immediate needs and effecting longer-term change. Lessons from Con Alma include:*

# 1

**Embrace the broader context.** On the surface, broadband access or workforce training may seem unrelated to the core mission of health, but research continues to show the important role of socioeconomic issues such as these in health outcomes. Broadening the definition of health and health care and intentionally removing silos helps Con Alma be more impactful.

# 2

**Focus on assets and strengths.** The foundation takes a community-focused approach in its mission to correct health disparities. That means it looks to the communities it serves to build on existing resources and shape culturally appropriate solutions.

# 3

**Search for new solutions to old problems.** Con Alma aims to build strong community partnerships and fill needs as they arise. It is not afraid to try new things, and it does not allow failure or fear to interfere with piloting innovations.