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GrowHaus

CO4F METRICS

AS OF MARCH 31, 2016

\$8,300,000
Total Capitalization

\$5,946,982
Funds Available



\$2,353,018
Total Funded and Committed

The GrowHaus: How CO4F is Cultivating Innovation

Nestled among the train tracks, I-70 interchange, and the industrial backdrop of Denver's Elyria-Swansea neighborhood is The GrowHaus. Founded in 2009, this nonprofit indoor farm serves as a local hub for fresh food production, distribution, and most recently-retail.

Nearby residents live in a USDA designated food desert, thereby creating demand for retail access to fresh food. The GrowHaus began distributing food to local residents in 2013 at a discounted price and opened its onsite market, Mercado de al Lado.



Coby Gould

As demand continued, The GrowHaus sought options to finance expansion. In 2015, CO4F awarded The GrowHaus a \$40,000 grant for development of the facility's market, upgrades, and other uses.

"Because of the CO4F grant, we have been able to extend product freshness and increase our overall selection. Now we offer

Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) improves access to healthy food in underserved Colorado communities by financing grocery stores and other forms of healthy food retail.

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customers meat and dry goods such as beans, rice, seeds, and flour," said Coby Gould, The GrowHaus's executive director. "This has shown our customers that we're listening to them and doing more to meet their needs."

The GrowHaus is a unique, innovative concept whose vision is to catalyze a neighborhood based food system that is healthy, equitable, and resident-driven. In addition to its production and distribution programs, The GrowHaus offers food education via workshops and other events that teach participants about nutrition, gardening, cooking, and more.

"Barriers to food access are more than just lack of a grocery store. In terms of who we serve, we consider what makes them feel comfortable and what's culturally relevant," said Coby. In Elyria Swansea, 37 percent of families live in poverty compared to 9 percent of families in the Denver metro region. "At The GrowHaus, we want to create a welcoming feeling. I truly enjoy creating a space where residents can see fresh food, grow plants, and really connect with the food experience. It's part of our purpose to help create a sense of security among such insecurity here in our community."

Partner Spotlight: CO4F Board of Directors Chair, Cameron Bertron

Cameron Bertron is executive vice president of Development Services for Enviro Finance Group, a real estate development firm in Denver. He also serves as Chair of the CO4F Board of Directors.



Cameron Bertron

Bertron is originally from Tampa, Florida, and earned a degree in economics from the University of North Carolina. After college, he taught a number of subjects in schools located in Bangkok, Thailand, and Washington, D.C. Bertron moved to Denver to earn graduate degrees in urban planning and public administration at University of Colorado Denver.

"After graduate school, I started a small consulting company specializing in land use and public finance. This led me to working on urban renewal projects such as Belmar and Stapleton, and from there I began working for Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA). As part of my work at DURA, I joined a working group that was tasked with studying food access issues and fresh food funding programs in other states, and exploring how those tools might be applied in Colorado," said Bertron.

The working group Bertron participated in eventually became CO4F. Having participated in the formation of CO4F, and staying involved in the program to the present day, he has learned a great deal about the challenges CO4F helps to address.

"On the CO4F Board, I offer my experience in bringing both public and private sector financing to areas that traditionally struggle to find sources of new investment. But along the way I have learned much more about the health component of this work and the impact it makes on the lives of the residents served," he said.

As to the accomplishments of CO4F thus far, Bertron says he's



most proud of the staff and board's commitment, and of CO4F's ability to serve rural, impoverished areas of Colorado.

"It's not easy to underwrite this type of nontraditional funding, and I'm proud of the staff and board as they navigate those waters. It's a lot of complex work, but the goal is something as basic as everyday access to fresh food," said Bertron. "In the coming year or two, I look forward to seeing CO4F build on our partnerships in the metro Denver area. Fresh food access requires an innovative and collaborative approach, and we hope that together we can begin to fill holes in the food access fabric for Denver residents."

CO4F Partners with Denver OED on "Healthy Food Challenge"

The Denver Office of Economic Development announced the launch of its "Healthy Food Challenge" in the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods. The initiative will award grant funding and refer applicants to loan finance opportunities to support projects that address healthy food issues in Globeville and Elyria-Swansea.

CO4F has set aside up to \$500,000 in loan financing and \$50,000 in grant funding for potential CO4F-eligible projects that reply to the Healthy Food Challenge Request for Proposals. Applicants whose projects may be a good fit for CO4F will be referred to apply for CO4F funding. Those applicants will be required to follow the standard CO4F application process, and there are no guarantees of funding based on the OED application or referral.

"CO4F is excited for this collaboration with Denver OED, as they have been great partners in our efforts to bring healthy food retail to underserved areas of Denver," said Tim Dolan, Senior Commercial Loan Officer at CHFA, which administers CO4F.

To learn more and apply, visit OED's [funding opportunities](#) page.

Hunger Free Colorado Releases Food Stamp Impact Reports

Submitted by The Colorado Health Foundation on behalf of Hunger Free Colorado

New data, released in January by Hunger Free Colorado, underscores unnecessary barriers to food stamp access and longstanding issues with program administration. The "[Food Stamp Impact Reports](#)" for all 64 counties detail the efficiency and effectiveness of the state-supervised, county-administered program. While some Colorado counties meet national averages and federal guidelines, the overall data shows below-average performance at the state and county levels.



"A growing body of national research shows the importance of food stamps' role in supporting the well-being of individuals and communities, such as lowering health care costs, promoting work and economic stability and enhancing academic performance in children," said Kathy Underhill, CEO for Hunger Free Colorado. "We now have an opportunity to build a shared vision for improving

food stamp access, enrollment and administration, so all Coloradans can get the fuel they need to reach their potential."

Everyone is at their best when they have enough to eat, but nearly one in seven Coloradans struggle with hunger, not always knowing when or where they will get their next meal. Colorado aims to become the healthiest state in the nation, and community resources like food stamps, federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, exist to ensure families and individuals can purchase food and access needed nutrition.

"No one should go hungry, which is why we hope to see genuine action and results for the people of Colorado," said Underhill. "If the state and counties can prioritize food access, we not only can avoid future federal fines but ensure all Coloradans have the chance to thrive."

View your county's impact report and learn more about solutions to address hunger across Colorado at HungerFreeColorado.org/Impact-Reports.

Photo courtesy of Hunger Free Colorado

Erin Lyng, P.U.M.A.
720.519.0535, CO4F@pumaworldhq.com

Tim Dolan, CHFA
303.297.7318, tdolan@chfainfo.com



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