



2016 Grant, Program Related Investment, and Mission Investing Highlights

The brief summaries below provide a sample of the nearly 160 commitments of capital made by the Gates Family Foundation in 2016.

High-Performing Public Schools

The Foundation made direct investments in a wide variety of public schools. These schools were primarily a combination of charter and innovation status schools located in the Denver metro area. Direct school investments also included some district schools and schools in other parts of the state. Schools supported directly by the Foundation in 2016 included Compass Academy, Crestone Charter School, McAuliffe and Grant Beacon middle schools, Girls Athletic Leadership School, KIPP Colorado schools, Roots Elementary, STRIVE Prep, Academy for Advanced Learning, Garden Place, Montessori del Mundo, and the Pueblo School of Arts and Sciences. The Foundation supported an additional 14 public schools in the metro area through the Foundations for Great Schools effort in collaboration with other Colorado funders.

Land Conservation and Focus Landscapes

The Foundation continued its focus on and investment in four critical landscapes – the grasslands of southeast Colorado, the headwaters of the Upper Colorado River, the Rio Grande basin in the San Luis Valley, and North Park in north central Colorado. The Foundation also invested in conservation and open space projects in areas beyond the focus landscapes, including Hinsdale, Dolores, Fremont, Larimer, Arapahoe, and Routt counties. In addition, the Foundation has kicked off an effort in conjunction with leaders from the land trust community and key partners such as Great Outdoors Colorado to address critical issues facing the conservation community. These issues include orphan easements, bottlenecks in the state tax credit program, long-term concerns about the adequacy of stewardship endowments and the durability of some land trusts, and ensuring the continuing availability of tools, professional development, and dedicated revenue streams needed to support conservation work at scale in Colorado.

Community Development in Urban Areas

The Foundation engaged in a variety of projects and efforts focused on improving the long-term quality of life in urban environments. These activities included work with Denver Urban Gardens, Re:Vision, and Groundwork Denver on urban agriculture, Trust for Public Land on park and open space resources, continuing support for the Mile High Connects transit opportunity collaborative, investment in the University of Colorado/Denver's Center for Sustainable Urbanism, support for the West Denver Renaissance Collaborative, commitment to the Metro Denver Mobility Choice Blueprint, work with the Urban Land Conservancy and other partners to explore housing affordability issues and community land trust models, and continuing involvement in the statewide Colorado Pedals project and a variety of bike infrastructure and policy issues.

Innovation Zone Development

The Foundation continued to explore new models of urban school district governance as tools for driving student achievement. The most significant effort in 2016 was the launch of the Luminary



Learning Network (LLN), an innovation zone created to accelerate momentum at innovation status schools already seeing some good progress. The LLN provides for management through a nonprofit structure that combines community governance with district representation. The zone provides a vehicle to ensure the grant of autonomy made to zone school leaders is sustained, and to create a learning network of school leaders that learn from and support each other. The Foundation continued to have involvement in innovation zones focused on turnaround of low-performing schools in Pueblo and Aurora. The Foundation has also been working with partners such as Empower Schools and Bellwether Education Partners to explore other opportunities for governance reform, and to engage local and national thought leaders on these topics, including co-hosting a national governance summit in New Orleans in early 2017 in conjunction with New Schools for New Orleans.

Colorado Water

The past year was an active year with respect to water-related investments and partnerships. The Foundation worked with multiple partners to explore areas for early progress in implementing Colorado's state water plan. The Foundation continued to support interesting pilot efforts to share water across the needs of nature, cities, and the agricultural sector, working with partners such as Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, the Roaring Fork Conservancy, the Pueblo Water Board, and the Colorado Water Trust among others. The Foundation provided seed funding to explore market-based tools that could offer solutions for water resource management, and invested in growing the capacity of local watershed groups statewide. The Foundation also continued to work with both the Keystone Center and Western Resource Advocates to advance best practices in connecting land use and development decisions with their water resource implications.

Investment in Rural Colorado

Almost half of all of the Foundation's grant making in 2016 directly impacted rural Colorado. The Foundation supported Community Builders to provide tools and training for West Slope communities grappling with growth and change, and invested in Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to support the development of coop models and food hubs throughout the state. Gates continued to be an active partner in the Space to Create initiative, a partnership with the state of Colorado, the Boettcher Foundation, the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority and others to create affordable housing and community spaces to serve the creative sector in rural communities across Colorado. Initial projects have advanced in Loveland, Trinidad, and Ridgway. The Foundation has also made a large number of investments this year in communities as diverse as Arriba, Cortex, Frisco, Granby, Grand Junction, La Veta, Montrose, Rocky Ford, and Steamboat Springs. The Foundation assisted the City of Leadville with the purchase of the Tabor Opera House, supported the restoration of the Amache internment camp site in Prowers County, worked with heritage tourism partners to improve Kit Carson's home at Boggsville in Bent County, contributed to the restoration of a public theater on main street in Burlington and the restoration of a historic main street structure in Eads. The Foundation also continued to support the M12 arts group's role in bringing art, culture, and engagement to residents of Byers, Deer Trail, and Last Chance. Finally, the Foundation continued its support of the community of Kim through an investment in the final phase of development of Kim's Mustang Equine Pavilion.



Program Related Investments (PRIs) and Mission Investing

The Foundation continued to grow its ability to commit capital to mission relevant efforts through methods beyond grant making. In addition to existing PRI commitments to a charter school facility project, a fund for nonprofit energy retrofits, and the regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Fund, the Foundation also prepared to commit \$5 million in PRI capital to an effort to provide facility solutions for high-performing charter schools statewide. The Foundation's target is to grow its PRI portfolio to approximately 5% of the main foundation's assets (\$10-11 million). These commitments of capital are in addition to the Foundation's annual grant distributions. Within its portfolio, the Foundation continued to release capital to the Colorado Impact Fund as it continues to grow its portfolio of Colorado companies with potential for growth and triple bottom line characteristics. The Foundation also made a commitment in 2016 to a portfolio investment in Beartooth Capital Fund III. This fund is a market return vehicle focused on the conservation and restoration of ranch properties in Colorado and the intermountain west. When fully funded, these mission-driven portfolio investments will total \$5.5 million. The Foundation continues to explore other potential mission related portfolio investments.

Lake County Schools

This past year saw a continuation of the Foundation's commitment to support the Lake County School District and local community in Leadville in their efforts to transform the Leadville public schools and drive higher levels of student achievement. While still early, there are signs the transformation to an Expeditionary Learning model and the renewed commitment to achievement are paying off. The district no longer has any schools targeted for state turnaround intervention. The Foundation will continue to invest in and support the district and local community in 2017 in their effort to serve the needs of Leadville's children. The potential exists for Leadville to be an important proof point for other rural school districts facing similar challenges.

We-Cycle

The Foundation provided support to expand Aspen's successful bike share program to serve low-income residents in El Jebel and Basalt. We-Cycle has developed a very innovative program to engage these communities, and pioneered ways to make bike sharing infrastructure less expensive and more adaptable to patterns of demand. We-Cycle's approach and experience, if successful, could potentially be relevant for other rural communities.

Valley Settlement Project

The Foundation invested in an innovative approach to delivering early childhood education services to Latino families living in mobile home parks in the Roaring Fork Valley. The Valley Settlement Project has built strong ties to these communities, and uses creative approaches, such as two school bus-based mobile early childhood education classrooms ("el busesito"). The program serves young children, but also engages and trains their caregivers as well.

Media-Related Investments

The past year saw continuation of the Foundation's support of and involvement in a number of media-related projects. The Foundation continued to provide support for Colorado Public Radio's



education beat reporter, assisted High Country News with its evolution from a print to print and digital publication, supported the operations of education reporting resource Chalkbeat, and supported the digital publication Streetsblog, focused on mobility options. The past year was also an important year for the Emmy-winning, four-part series “Standing in the Gap.” The Foundation collaborated closely with Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Service, iNews, and Chalkbeat to create this documentary focused on the status of the achievement gap and the history of segregation, desegregation, and re-segregation within Denver Public Schools. The project first aired in late 2015, with structured community conversations at schools and other community locations continuing on into 2016.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Projects

The Foundation supported a number of important projects, both big and small, throughout the state. The list included investment in the Poudre River Greenway with the City of Fort Collins, support for the Re-Imagine Play project at Paco Sanchez Park in the Westwood neighborhood of Denver, construction of the Levitt Pavilion in Denver’s Ruby Hill Park, support for amphitheater improvements at the Los Colonias Park in Grand Junction, enhancement of the park and outdoor play areas at West Park Elementary in Leadville, improvements to Rafferty Park in Granby, open space acquisition on the Lake Fork River near Lake City, creation of a splash pool in Babcock Park in Rocky Ford, and completion of the Tom Bennhoff Lake Trail in Georgetown.

United States Olympic Museum

The Foundation made a \$300,000 commitment to this important element of the continuing revitalization of downtown Colorado Springs. The U.S. Olympic Museum will provide a highly-interactive experience, showcasing the history and future of the Olympic movement and the role and accomplishments of American athletes. The Museum, along with the U. S. Olympic Training Center, will be an important draw for local, national, and international visitors.

Rose Adom Center

The Rose Adom Center is an innovative resource providing access to all of the supports and services needed by victims of domestic abuse. The facility provides access to counseling, mental health services, crisis intervention, civil legal support, law enforcement services, job readiness and job search assistance, information regarding the criminal justice system and other critical services. The site will also provide referrals to other community organizations that can provide for victims’ other needs. The center is named for a successful Denver entrepreneur, former McDonald’s franchise owner and lead donor, Rose Adom, herself a victim of domestic violence. The grant provided by the Foundation in 2016 was the second Foundation grant to the project. This most recent commitment was in honor of the thirty years of service of Diane Wallach on the Gates Family Foundation board.

Talent Development for the Public Education Sector

The Foundation supported a number of efforts to grow teacher, school leader, and other kinds of talent for public education in Colorado. These efforts included support for Teach for America Colorado, Education Pioneers, Generation Teach (an early teacher recruitment and training program), the Teach Plus Colorado Teaching Policy Fellowship, Relay Graduate School, and the



Make Your Mark effort to recruit more school leaders and teachers of color to the profession. The Foundation also provided support to launch Moonshot edVentures, a program focused on incubation of future school leaders with an interest in innovative school models and next generation school designs.

Performance-Based Learning in Mesa County

The Foundation made the first payment in a significant commitment to support the transition to performance-based (also sometimes called competency-based) learning in Mesa County Valley School District 51. Mesa County is among the pioneers in the state to begin the process of orienting learning more around mastery of skills and content rather than notions of learning tied to grade levels and the school calendar.

Bicycle Cooperative of Fort Collins

The Foundation continued its interest in supporting bike hubs, bike sharing, and other forms of bike infrastructure in communities throughout the state. The renovation of the Bicycle Cooperative of Fort Collins was just the latest in a growing set of investments focused on expanding mobility options and keeping people active and healthy.

Rise Colorado

The Foundation continued its investment in RISE Colorado, a grass roots organization working to educate and organize low-income parents in Aurora so they may better advocate for policy changes that will drive improved academic achievement for their children attending Aurora Public Schools.

Find Your Fourteener

The Foundation made the first of two payments supporting the launch of this partnership between the National Forest Foundation and the Colorado 14ers Initiative. The goal of the program is to pursue new, innovative methods for approaching stewardship of Colorado's 14,000 foot peaks at scale.

Empower Schools

The Foundation supported expansion of the Colorado presence and activities of Massachusetts-based Empower Schools. Empower has been a national innovator in pioneering new models of school and district governance. Their work on "third way" strategies that fall between district-driven and charter-driven solutions has helped influence the design of the Luminary Learning Network in Denver, and could have relevance for other Colorado school districts.