

The Next 75



# 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

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Deepening our commitment to Colorado



# Gates Family Foundation

## 2022-2026 Strategic Plan: Informed Communities

Thursday, Mar. 3  
12 to 1 p.m.

### AGENDA

#### Welcome

- Webinar overview and objectives

#### Presentation

- Gates Family Foundation Background
  - Mission, Vision, Values
- Strategic Plan Overview
  - Community feedback / development process
- What's Staying?
- What's New?

#### Discussion

- Questions from attendees

#### Closing

- Next steps and future engagement

Building on 75  
years of  
addressing  
some of  
Colorado's  
toughest  
challenges



- Celebrating 75 years of impact
- More than \$456 million in grants since founding
- Continuously evolving while maintaining intense focus on people, communities, and natural resources of Colorado.





# Strategic Plan Process: *Throughout 2021*

## LOOKING AHEAD

Trends, Challenges  
& Forecasting

## REACHING OUT

Community Feedback

## LOOKING BACK

Internal Reflection  
& Assessment

# Gates Family Foundation

## Mission & Vision

### ▣ MISSION

We work with partners and communities to build a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable Colorado for all.

### ▣ VISION

A vibrant and verdant Colorado where all people and communities thrive.



# Gates Family Foundation Values

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RESPECT

CREATIVITY

ENGAGEMENT

PLACE

EQUITY





# Commitment to Equity

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We prioritize individuals and communities that have been historically marginalized by addressing systemic barriers and creating pathways to opportunity.



# Foundation Approach

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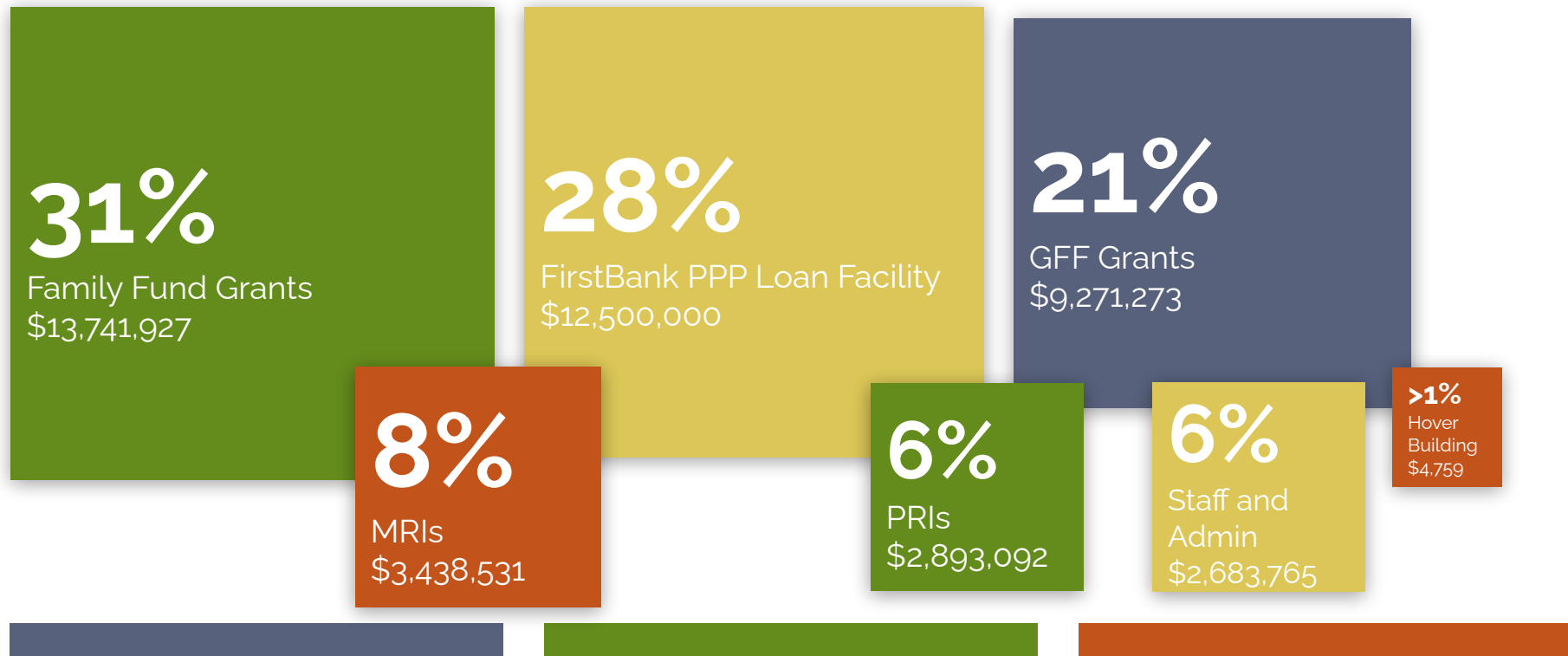
- We use both financial and non-financial tools to serve partners and advance core strategies
- Our staff serve as connectors, resources and thought partners in the ecosystems where they work
- We intentionally convene and participate in multi-partner, systems-level work to drive innovative solutions
- We actively seek to collaborate with an even more diverse array of stakeholders and potential partners





# 2021 Total Philanthropic Activity: \$44.5M

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# 2021 Strategic Grants Paid: \$5,699,000

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**39%**

Natural Resources  
\$2,232,000

**39%**

Education  
\$2,209,500

**15%**

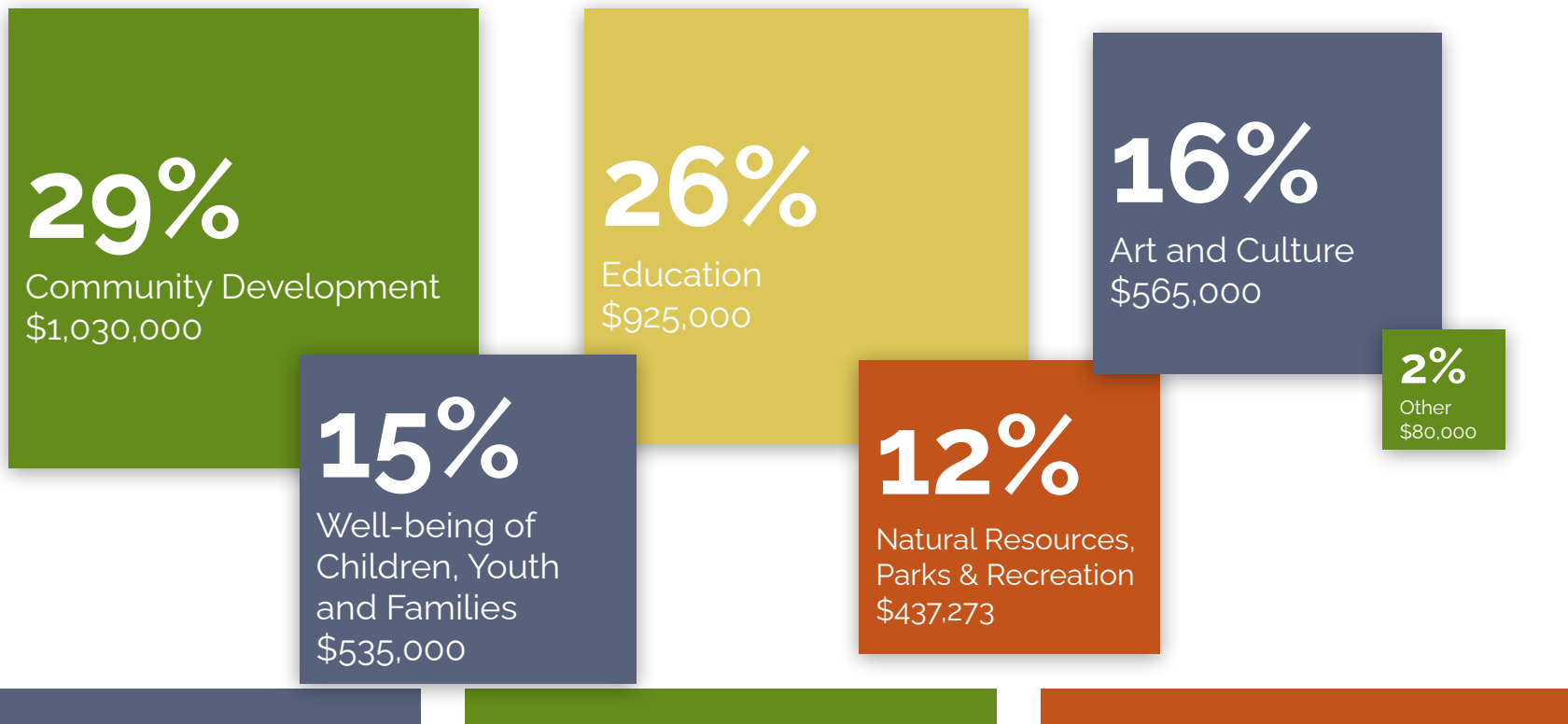
Community  
Development  
\$882,500

**7%**

Informed  
Communities  
\$375,000



# 2021 Responsive Grants Paid: \$3,572,273



# What's New

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- Foundation-wide focus on addressing **climate change** and advancing **diversity, equity and inclusion** across all programs
- Education increases focus on **rural education** (developing teacher talent, climate change education) and **out-of-system learning innovations**
- Natural Resources expands focus on **forest health** and **watershed restoration**
- **Informed Communities** formally becomes a fourth program area
- Community Development topics (mobility, food systems, placemaking, community planning) encompassed within new focus on **economic mobility** and **place-based community asset-building**, with a particular focus on **affordable housing**
- Increased focus on **leadership development** and **capital project planning support** for leaders and communities of color, and others needing early-stage support
- Increased percentage of Foundation assets dedicated toward **impact investments**





# Informed Communities: Vision

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Coloradans are actively engaging with reliable local news and information in order to participate in a healthy democracy and make well-informed decisions about the issues most important to the future of our state.





# Long-Standing Commitment to Informed Communities

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Gates has a long history of viewing local media as vital civic infrastructure, connected to all of our issue areas.

## Strengthening public media

Since 1967, operating and program/project support for public TV and radio

## Filling coverage gaps

Since 2010, seeding nonprofit startups, new beats, special projects

## Reimagining the sector

Since 2018, building support for a collaborative, mission-driven ecosystem

# Addressing a Crisis in Local News



In 2018, Gates joined with University of Denver and civic leaders to launch the **Colorado Media Project**

In 2019, we made a catalytic, three-year commitment, alongside local and national foundations

In 2022, we're doubling down and expanding the funder table

**Launch + support projects that speed local news innovation & sustainability**

**Build a more inclusive, equitable, solutions-oriented news ecosystem**

**Attract more state, local and national investment in Colorado's local media**

# Colorado Media Project: 2021 Grantees & Projects



National Trust for  
**LOCAL NEWS**



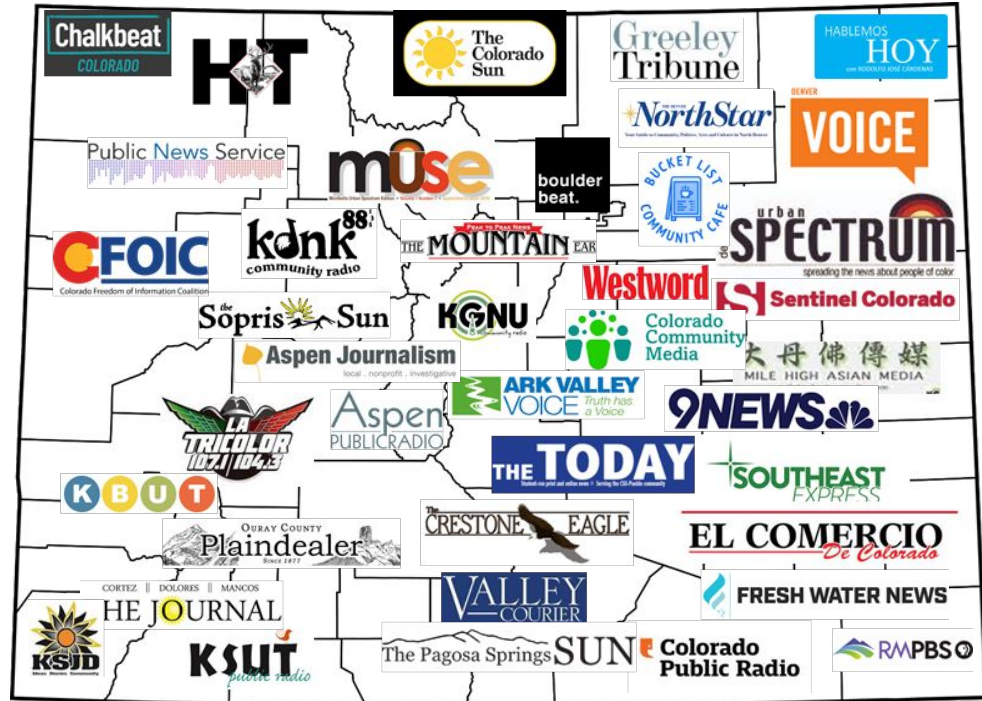
Colorado  
Public Radio

Denverite



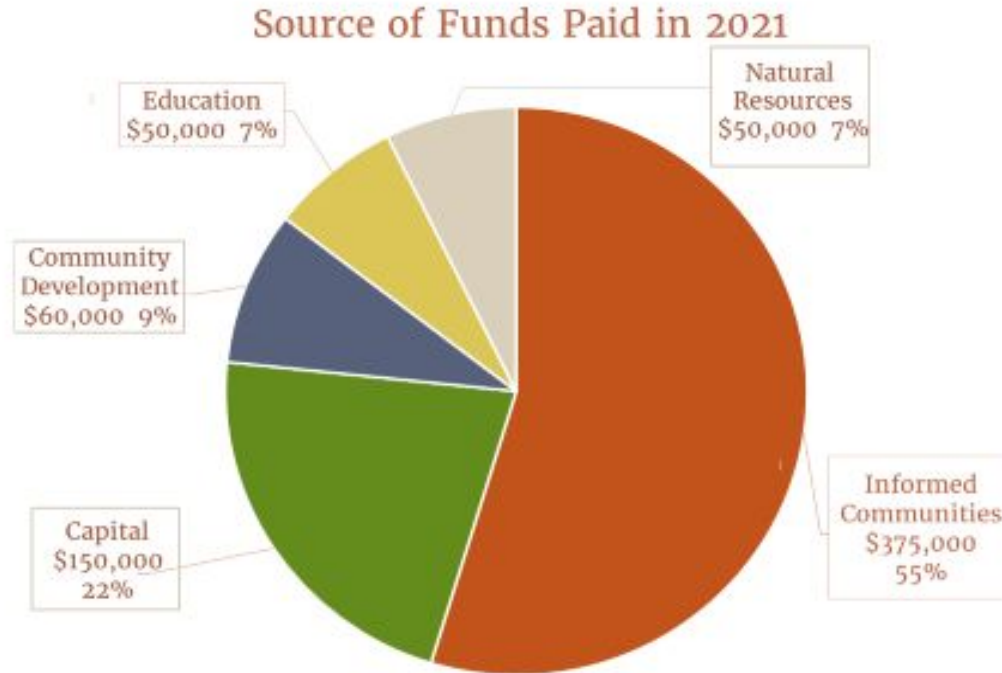
## Open Call Grant Opportunities

- Vaccine Equity
- Water Fellows
- #newsCOnneeds



# All Gates Programs Support Informed Communities

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# Gates Family Foundation: 2021 Grantees & Impact Investments

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**COLORADO  
MEDIA  
PROJECT**



# Stakeholder Feedback Guides Our Strategies

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- **2,000+ Colorado residents:** Two statewide surveys with representative samples (*2018 and 2019, Colorado Media Project*)
- **Journalists statewide:** Interviews and surveys with Gates and CMP grantees and COLab/CPA needs-assessment survey
- **National and local thought leaders:** Interviews and surveys with philanthropic peers, civic leaders, and media innovators





# What We Heard

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What are 2-3 of the biggest opportunities for strengthening local journalism and civic information in Colorado right now?

- More community engagement (40 percent)
- More funding, more philanthropy (39 percent)
- More collaboration among newsrooms (36 percent)
- More media literacy (30 percent)
- More attention to diversity and inclusion (21 percent)



# Voices from the Field

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“We can't lightly support a thousand seedlings.

We need to nurture deeply planted efforts  
and elevate the recognition of  
strong, locally owned and committed institutions.”



# Voices from the Field

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"There's a huge disconnect between the nostalgia-oriented concepts of local news held by people with means, and the urgent, complex information needs of people at the grassroots level.

We need to be building for the present and the future by centering people and their needs as we design a reimagined local news content and distribution ecosystem."



# What We Learned

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- **Local journalism is fundamental to civic engagement** - when it helps people understand issues and each other, fosters civic dialogue, and inspires solutions. It can be a vital antidote to mis/disinformation, disengagement and polarization.
- **Saving what exists is not a strategy.** Even strong local media brands must continue to evolve to better connect with more Coloradans.
- **Ownership matters.** Local, mission-aligned control of civic news organizations empowers leaders and staff to prioritize community service over profits.
- **Diversifying voices, perspectives, partners, and leadership** is key to capacity, accountability, relevance, trust, revenue, and survival. Civic news must reach beyond journalists to develop new partners and models for reaching new audiences.



# Informed Communities: Priority Strategies for 2022-2026

## Evolve and Strengthen the Civic News Ecosystem

Catalyze and support innovations that help make Colorado's civic news ecosystem more collaborative, sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the communities it serves

## Address Civic News and Information Gaps in Gates' Core Focus Areas

Support civic news organizations and projects that increase the amount and reach of high-quality reporting on public education, natural resources, and community development issues

## Cultivate More Inclusive Civic News Leadership, Voices and Models

Support people and projects that harness a more diverse array of partners and community assets to reimagine civic news, with an emphasis on better service to communities of color, rural areas, and other underserved communities

# Evolve and Strengthen the Civic News Ecosystem

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Gates' support might look like:

- A continued role in helping to steer the **Colorado Media Project** by working with partners to design initiatives, pool funds, and offer grants that spur innovation, impact, and equity in civic news
- A contribution to **CMP's #newsCOnneeds fund** to offer matching grants and build philanthropic fundraising capacity of nonprofit and locally owned civic newsrooms
- Support for **COLab and its core partners** as a **hub for building capacity** in local newsrooms and among civic news entrepreneurs
- Leveraging staff time and connections to support significant **media ownership transitions, innovations, or growth**
- Convening working groups to develop **ecosystem innovations** and **shared policy agendas**





# Address Civic News and Information Gaps in Gates' Core Focus Areas

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Gates' support might look like:

- Operating or project support for **strong civic news organizations** covering Gates' core issue areas
- Support for **innovative reporting projects** that **amplify issues and solutions** in core issue areas
- Support for **topical reporting fellowships** or other **learning opportunities** for reporters to gain in-depth content knowledge and context, and to develop skills, sources, and story ideas
- **Underwriting or advertising support** to promote stories, research, events or messages from Gates or its grantees



# Cultivate More Inclusive Civic News Leadership, Voices and Models

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Gates' support might look like:

- Support for **community polling, engagement, working groups** to drive strategy and inform the evolution of local newsrooms or the news ecosystem
- A contribution to **CMP's Informed Communities Fund** to support projects that address demands for more **diversity, inclusion, and equity** in local newsrooms and their coverage
- Support for projects that leverage **higher education, students, faculty, libraries, trusted nonprofits**, and **community leaders and residents** to meet civic news and information needs
- Support for **media ownership transitions, innovations or growth** that significantly impact communities of color, rural or other underserved communities
- Prioritizing **equity, inclusion, and service to diverse communities** in grantee selection



# Informed Communities: Application Process for Strategic Grants

## Outreach to Program Officer (Melissa Davis)

- Program officers are eager to hear about evolving opportunities
- Send an email
- Submit an inquiry via online form
- Call to introduce your organization or talk through your idea

## Define the Project & Submit Application

- Back and forth process; may take 2-6 months
- Define learning questions, goals, project milestones, impact indicators
- Rolling deadlines (Feb., April, July, Oct.); time-sensitive proposals may be fast-tracked

## Gates Board Decision & Grant Agreement

- Decisions at meetings in April, June, September, December
- Notification, grant contracts signed, funds released
- Ongoing communication w/program officer
- Interim and final reports

# Capital Grants for Informed Communities

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*We invest in capital projects because we believe that land and facilities are long-term assets that can help nonprofit and community organizations serve Colorado communities.*

## **We support capital projects that:**

- Build, expand or renovate facilities for nonprofit organizations that support informed communities

## **Funding examples:**

- Construction of COLab Newsroom at Rocky Mountain Public Media
- Support for KSUT Radio media center and signal expansion to reach Ute Mountain Ute tribal land
- New FM signal for THE DROP
- Renovation of Denver Public Library
- Renovation of Denver Press Club building



# Capital Grants for Informed Communities

## Outreach to Program Officers (Melissa Davis or Lisa Rucker)

- Send an email
- Submit an inquiry via online form
- Call to talk through your idea

## Submit Application

- Use the Colorado Capital Common Grant Application
- Proposal deadlines: **March 15 and September 15**
- See full at details at: [www.gatesfamilyfoundation.org/how-to-apply](http://www.gatesfamilyfoundation.org/how-to-apply)

## Gates Board Decision & Grant Agreement

- Decisions at meetings in June and December
- Notification, grant contracts signed, funds released
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# Impact Investments for Informed Communities

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## **Program-Related Investments**

Specific to Colorado; align with strategic priorities; below-market commitments of capital (loans/ guarantees); need a clear source of repayment – ex: Colorado Sun, Colorado Community Media

## **Mission-Related Investments**

Investments within the Foundation's portfolio; market-rate returns; investing in innovation in the sector – ex: ed tech funds, impact funds focused on ranch and forest conservation, funds that advance tech and infrastructure that reduce carbon emissions

**Process:** PRIs often initiated through contact with program staff – contact Melissa  
MRIs are part of the investment management process – contact Sue or Tom



# Questions From The Community

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- How do Gates' funding priorities differ from or overlap with those of the Colorado Media Project?
- How are you supporting sustainable local journalism in rural areas?
- Will CMP's Informed Communities Fund have a continued focus on supporting outlets that reach communities of color and other underserved communities?
- Does Gates support gatherings or learning opportunities for media organizations?
- What does success look like in five years?

***Please view the last 10-15 minutes of the video for answers!***



# What's Next?

## Open Opportunities

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- We're searching for a new **Program Officer for Natural Resources**.
- Public officials can apply by **March 4** for a **Gates Fellowship** to attend Harvard this summer.
- Our next deadline to **apply for a capital grant** is **March 15**.





# What's Next? Learn More

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## NEXT WEBINAR:

- [Impact Investments \(March 14, Noon to 1 p.m. MT\)](#)

## QUESTIONS/INQUIRIES

Melissa Davis, Vice President

[mdavis@gatesfamilyfoundation.org](mailto:mdavis@gatesfamilyfoundation.org)



# Thank You

Let's keep the conversation going.  
With your partnership, we amplify our impact.