

# VISTA COHORT 2 SUMMARY

## 2021-2022

### Colorado Immunity Corps

#### Background

In February of 2020, Immunize Colorado received the opportunity from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to facilitate an AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program. This VISTA program, called the Colorado Immunity Corps, placed eight national service volunteers at six different community health sites across the state of Colorado. The AmeriCorps VISTA program is a national, federally-funded volunteer program that began in 1965 with the intention of building capacity within community organizations. Its overarching goal is to reduce poverty in vulnerable communities under one of four focus areas; Economic Opportunity, Veterans and Military Families, Education, and Healthy Futures. This largely involves taking on a leadership role by streamlining existing programs and services, recruiting volunteers, and developing new programs and events at these organizations.

The Colorado Immunity Corps operates under the “Healthy Futures” category by pursuing a goal of making vaccinations and immunizations more affordable, accessible, and acceptable within vulnerable communities in Colorado. This not only creates more touch-points with the medical system and creates opportunities to increase trust in the medical system, but it also directly impacts poverty in these areas by decreasing medical spending and preventing parents or caregivers from having to take sick days for either themselves or to care for a loved one. Healthcare costs related to vaccine-preventable diseases can add up – in fact, in 2019, healthcare costs for Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs) totaled 1.8 million in the state of Colorado alone. This figure does not include economic losses from lost wages from caring for ill individuals, nor the developmental costs of missing school or childcare for children. Thus, the Colorado Immunity Corps positions itself as a team that reduces poverty long-term within communities by increasing education about and access to preventative healthcare services, with a focus on immunizations across the lifespan.

Immunize Colorado’s role in facilitating this program involved providing training and technical support to each VISTA, training their supervisors at each host site for the specifics behind AmeriCorps supervision, providing training and opportunities for professional development, and handling all of the administrative work and communication with AmeriCorps State and National and the CNCS. Immunize Colorado also took on program recruitment by posting and disseminating the VISTA assignment description to job boards and relevant partnering organizations. Host sites took on the responsibility of directly supervising each VISTA member, providing them with resources to effectively complete tasks at the organization, reporting on their progress, and offering site-specific training to the members.

## Background (cont...)

For the 2021-2022 service year, 7 total members were recruited for their service year with the Colorado Immunity Corps.

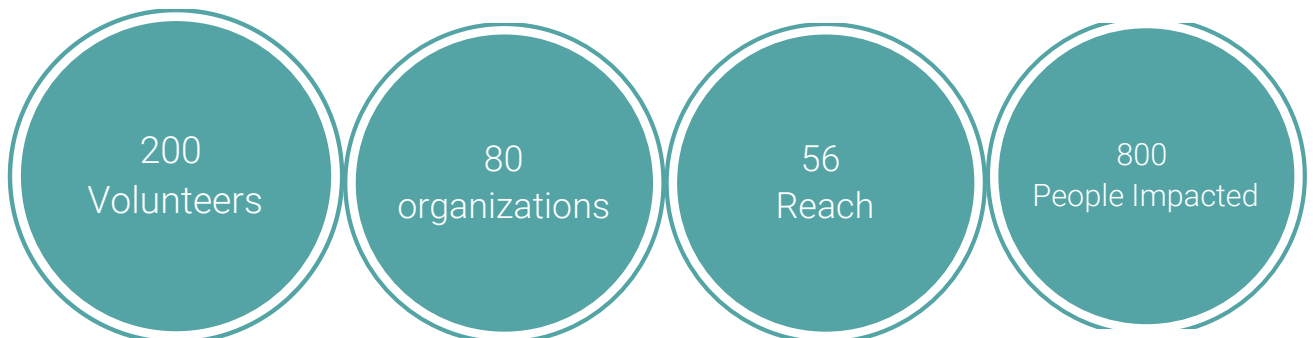
- Two at Jefferson County Health Department - October 2021
- One at Tri-County Health Department - October 2021
- One at Public Health Institute at Denver Health - August 2021
- One at Immunize Colorado (VISTA Leader) - July 2021
- One at Gunnison County Public Health - January 2022
- One at Garfield County Public Health - October 2021

## Program Goals

The Immunization Outreach and Education Coordinator VISTA member with the Colorado Immunity Corps builds the capacity of their host site by developing and implementing local activities which promote education and access to vaccinations and primary care services.

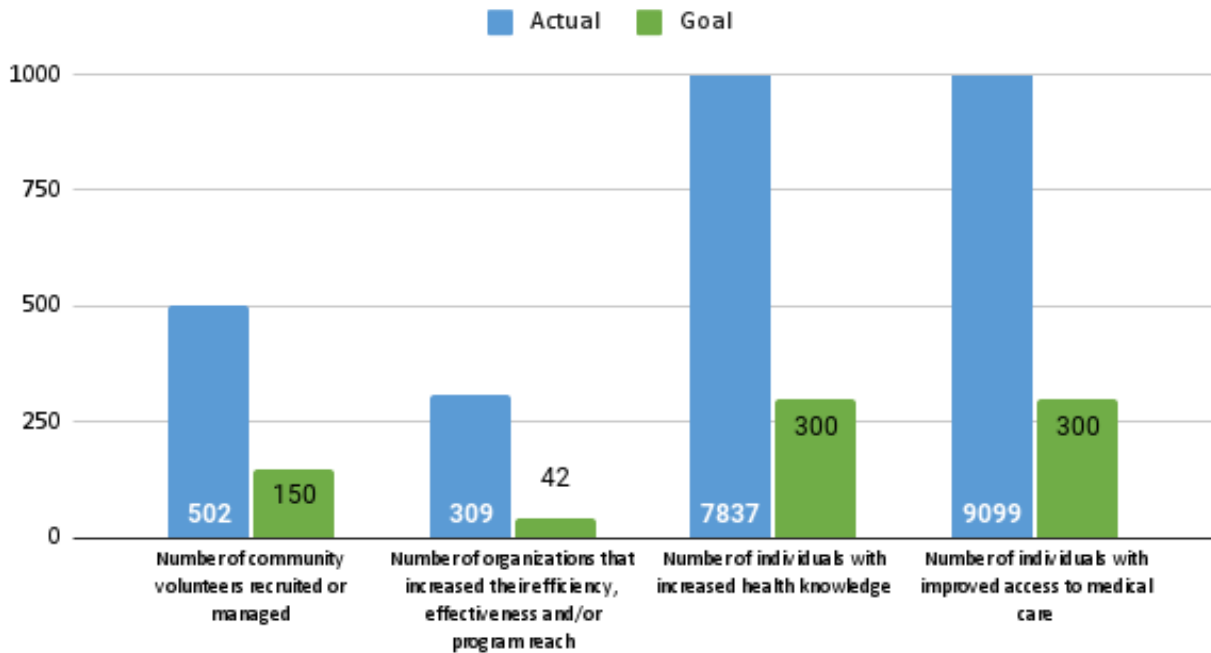
### All of our VISTA members had the same goals, which include:

- Recruit and/or manage 25 volunteers (150 across the cohort) - these could be recruited through any channel of communication, and could be involved in education, direct service, or organizational capacity building activities.
- Provide capacity building for 7 organizations (42 across the cohort) – this could involve recruiting volunteers for each organization, providing additional structure to their existing systems, creating sustainable programs and services, and providing training to other staff or volunteers to streamline program systems.
- Serve 100 individuals (700 across the cohort):
  - Increase health knowledge for 50 individuals – this can include 1-1 direct education with community members, giving presentations to individuals in the population of interest, and creating tailored educational materials via print, media, or social media to be disseminated on organizational channels.
  - Increase access to healthcare services for 50 individuals – This can involve either facilitating immunization events or creating programs and systems that connect individuals with or remove barriers to accessing healthcare services.



# Program Impact

## Colorado Immunity Corps Cohort 2 Progress



**Performance Measure #1** was to recruit and/or manage 25 volunteers through any channel of communication, and could be involved in education, direct service, or organizational capacity building activities. Overall, 502 volunteers were recruited/managed to help with vaccine-related services.

**Performance Measure #2** was to provide capacity building for 7 organizations (42 across the cohort), which could involve recruiting volunteers for each organization, providing additional structure to their existing systems, creating sustainable programs and services, and providing training to other staff or volunteers to streamline program systems. Overall, 309 organizations across Colorado received Capacity-building services.

**Performance Measure #3** was to Increase health knowledge for 50 individuals. This can include 1-1 direct education with community members, giving presentations to individuals in the population of interest, and creating tailored educational materials via print, media, or social media to be disseminated on organizational channels. Overall, 7837 individuals were able to increase their health knowledge through outreach and other events.

**Performance Measure #4** was to increase access to healthcare services for 50 individuals. This can involve be either through facilitating immunization events or creating programs and systems that connect individuals with or remove barriers to accessing healthcare services. Overall, 9099 individuals were able to increase their access to healthcare services through vaccine drives, far exceeding the programs metrics.

## Notable Projects/Interventions

As previously mentioned, VISTA members served a diverse array of populations by completing a variety of activities to increase their respective organization's reach, efficacy, and capacity. One VISTA member at the Public Health Institute at Denver Health has worked to expand the reach for the in-school immunization program (ISIP) and working with CDPHE to coordinate vaccine clinics for Afghan families. She was able to expand partnerships and clinics to twice as many schools and community partnerships for Fall 2022.

VISTA members at Jefferson County Public Health were also hard at work developing an Emergency Preparedness Module for JCPH volunteers in case there is a need for mass vaccination drives again, while the other Jeffco VISTA member offered vaccination drives for community organizations that didn't have the capacity themselves to host vaccine drives.

The VISTA member at Tri-County created educational fact sheets on HPV, Hep A & B, vaccinations for pregnancies, and more, developing consent forms for individuals with strained vision, and a volunteer manual for future volunteers. She finished her VISTA year by helping to organize a mobile vaccine clinic at a local school in Aurora, where the mobile clinic was able to vaccinate 41 individuals and administer 98 vaccinations (51 routine, 31 flu, and 16 COVID-19).

Our member at Garfield County joined the health equity committee that aims to identify and address health inequities within Garfield County. She also has been able to schedule and promote vaccine drives, answer phone calls for the vaccine hotline and has partaken in many outreach and education events for the school district in Glenwood Springs, Rifle and the surrounding communities.

Finally, our member in Gunnison County has been able to start and expand on a lot of projects. One project included a text reminder system to remind families about vaccine appointments. She also had been able to develop a community health service brochure outlining public health resources within Gunnison including contact information.

## Next Steps

The third cohort has officially begun their 2022-2023 VISTA Service with the Colorado Immunity Corps. Additional sites have been added including Tepeyac Community Health Center, Boulder County Public Health, Mesa County Public Health, & Immunize Colorado. We will continue to have a VISTA Leader with the cohort for the 2022-2023 service year.

For subsequent years, the Colorado Immunity Corps will continue to recruit additional host sites and will continue to evaluate member experience and capacity for VISTA hosting at current sites, with a goal of placing 10 VISTAs in cohort 3 during 2022-2023. Moving forward, goals will likely increase due to how goals were able to be surpassed in previous years.

# Conclusion

Immunize Colorado is pleased with the efforts of the second cohort of the Colorado Immunity Corps as they come to a close of their service year. We're excited to facilitate another year of service for these dedicated public health professionals, and look forward to growing the program and continuously evaluating not only its measurable outcomes, but also its member experience as well, in the coming years

# Acknowledgments

To the teams at our local health departments and host sites:

Thank you for facilitating such positive experiences for our VISTAs, and for fostering growth in the next generation of public health and healthcare professionals. Your dedication and hard work did not go unnoticed. A special thank you to the following individuals, without whom the second year of this program would not have been possible or as successful as it was - thanks you for your hard work, dedication, and passion for mobilizing, supporting, and advocating for your communities. We are so excited to see what you will be doing next!

## 2021-2022 Colorado Immunity Corps Members

**Riley Way** - VISTA Leader - Immunize Colorado

**Lucy Devaney** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Public Health Institute @ Denver Health

**Kaelan Bradley** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Jefferson County Public Health

**Erika Dunnon** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Jefferson County Public Health

**Paris Saenz** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Tri-County Public Health

**Abby Duff** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Garfield County Public Health

**Elaina Adams** - Immunization Outreach & Education Coordinator - Gunnison County Public Health

A special thank you to **Katie Waters**, who created an excellent foundation for the Colorado Immunity Corps. Thank you for your passion, dedication, and excitement regarding the conception and implementation of this program. Thank you to **Sarah Waraniak**, current program director of Immunize Colorado and continues to be supportive and build the foundation of the Colorado Immunity Corps.

