



Health Equity Task Force Funding

Success Stories 2024

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MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Rural Health
Area Health
Education Center

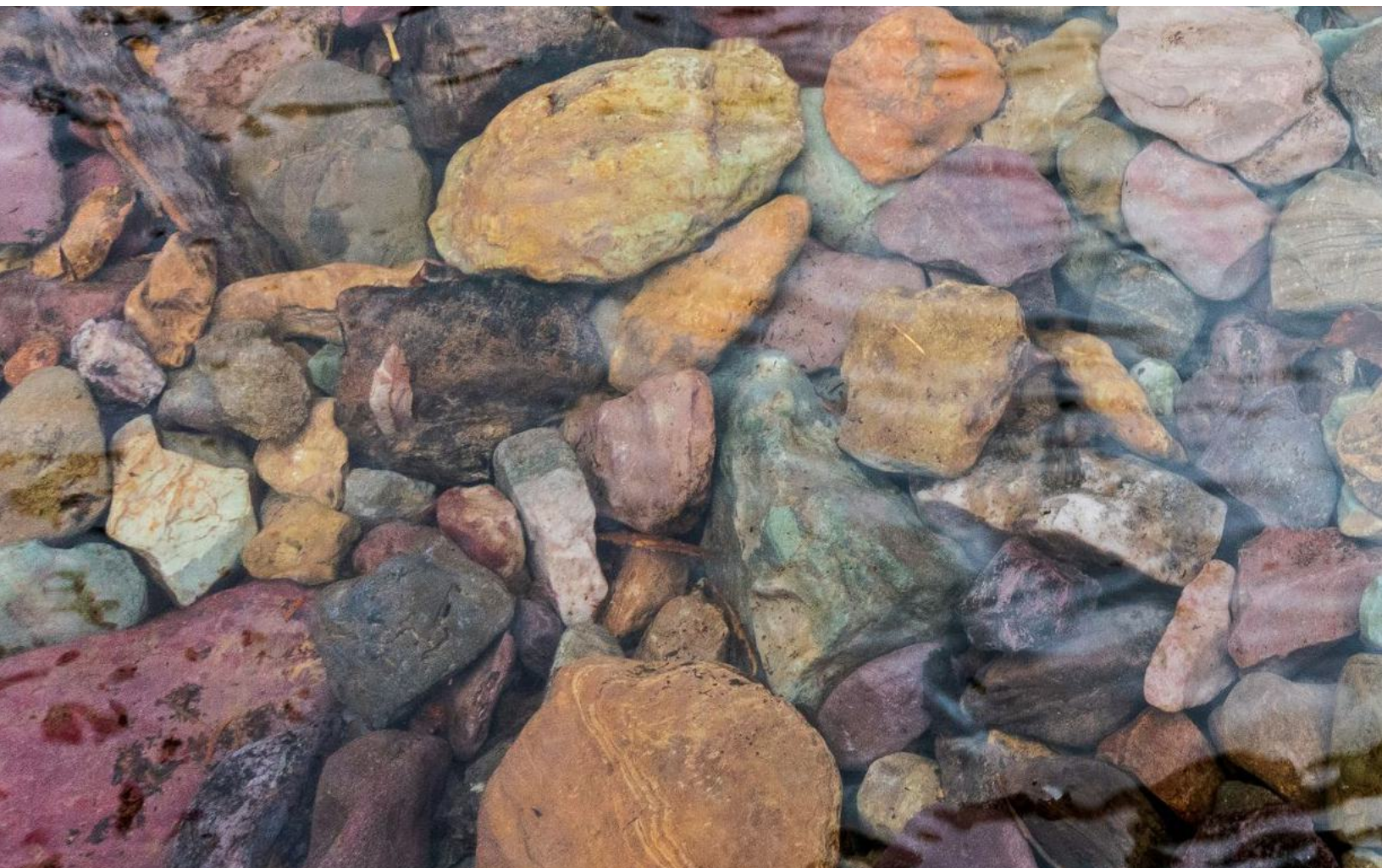
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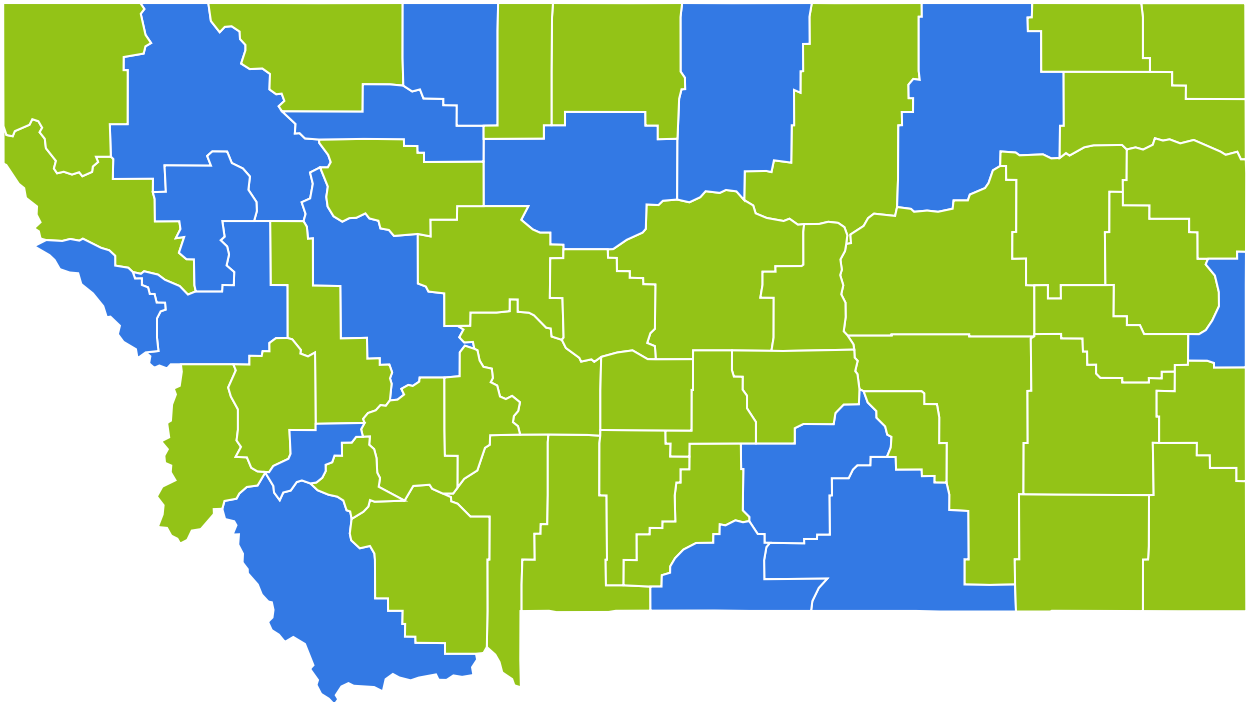
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FUNDING

MORH/AHEC was able to provide funding to participants in three ways:

- Mini grants for organizations interested in implementing or supporting a project rooted in health equity.
- Training funds for organizations seeking additional staff education around a health equity topic of their choice.
- Honorariums for people who shared their lived experience with the task force.



In May 2023, MORH/AHEC funded 26 entities across 16 counties (blue) totaling \$155,000.

Hover over the map to explore.

In the summer of 2024, MORH/AHEC requested funded entities to share their triumphs and highlights. The following pages contain their inspiring works.

MINI GRANT - HIGHLIGHTS

Mineral County Health Department

"MCHD was able to utilize the funds from the Health Equity Mini Grant, in addition to other generous grant funds, to purchase tests for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis C, and HIV. These tests are provided free to anyone regardless of health insurance coverage. MCHD partnered with Primary Health to create this STI testing pilot program. We distributed flyers about the program throughout the county, posted to social media, and published an article in our local newspaper. This discreet, confidential, and free service was identified as a need from our community through the community needs assessment. We are beyond grateful that our community trusts us to provide this service, and walk them through the process of testing, results, and treatment."

Toole County Health Department

Toole County used their mini grant to purchase recreation equipment for youth in their community to encourage the community to get active and use their skate park. "We bought bike helmets and gave them all, but I think 6 away. We had over 100 people attend the event. Partners include Logan Health- Shelby Trauma Program, CoreCivic (privately run prison), and Sheriff's Office deputies."



Valley County Health Department

"We were able to purchase several food cards for individuals at crucial times without food; predominantly those who had applied for mcd and food stamps but had not heard back yet, missed paperwork or forgotten items to turn in created situations where large families were without their food stamps for quite some time. The food cards helped alleviate stress several times in those instances.

Thanks to the donations at the food bank all of Valley County is able to benefit; the increased storage and freezers purchased now allow the food bank to take donations of dry goods such as diapers, formula, small children's supplies, hygiene items and other miscellaneous items. Additionally, the freezer space has allowed for increased donations of meat or frozen products.

Several bus passes (nearly 35) have been purchased for people needing transportation to and from school, appointments, work/home and to the grocery store. In several instances these bus passes were purchased for families with children needing support getting to and from social activities after school, to home, therapy, or the hospital. Having the bus passes go towards youth accessing resources in the community was a big win.

We printed, handed out and have had wonderful feedback on the 988 crisis resources; they go over well at health fairs, fair, and educational booth opportunities.

Gas cards helped to create access to larger hospitals and services outside of our community; Several individuals were referred to Billings for comprehensive care and could not attend due to financial difficulties. With us being able to offer gas cards to help mediate that cost and allow people to tend to their comprehensive healthcare needs.

The main point of the entire grant was that we could have a comprehensive conversation with people about sustainable help; it's nice to give out gas cards but **even more impactful to create a conversation about how they can meet that need independently moving forward and offer support there.** Most of the people we assisted, we did not do so on a repeat basis; this made the grant feel like you were actually making change and offering support. I think I made up around 10 resumes for people, and referred several to either a pastor, women's advocate, youth dynamics, hi line homes or job service."

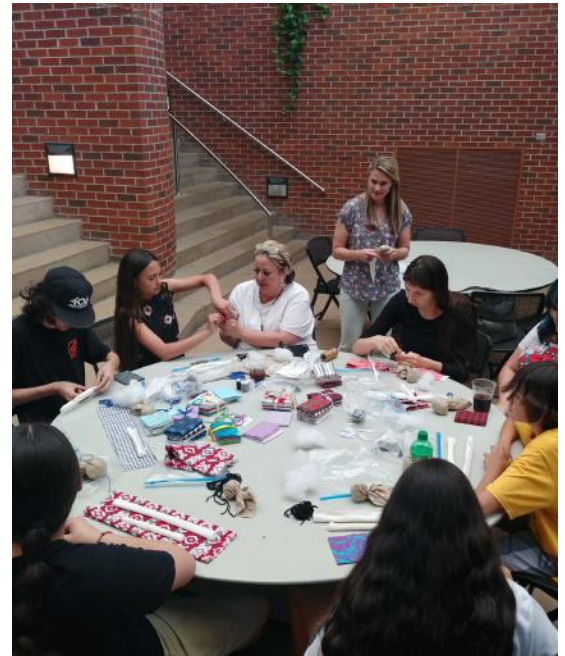


All Nations Health Center

All Nations Health Center used its mini grant to supplement its Tobacco Warrior Summit. The goal of the yearly summit is to address the abuse and prevention of commercial tobacco in tribal communities and take into consideration other community needs like mental health and suicide prevention. The mini grant paid for professional consultants to promote wellness and discourage the abuse of commercial Tobacco and other substances.

Topics included:

- Traditional games demonstrations
- Traditional uses of tobacco
- Sweat lodge ceremony protocol and process
- Traditional arts tying in prevention messaging x4 classes
- Peer inspiration through music
- QPR Gatekeeper training for suicide prevention training
- Traditional Tobacco and smudging
- Respiratory Therapist for lung cancer education



Beaverhead County Resource Assistance Center

"The main part of our grant application was to help people get to out of town appointments and also to help with hotel bills if they needed to spend the night. We recruited some volunteer drivers to help those who did not have another option. Some people did have family and friends to get them to their appointments. We provided a small stipend for drivers, whether volunteers or family/friends. The decision of when help was given was made by case workers at the Community Health Center and Barrett Hospital. A few examples of community members we assisted:

- A 5yr old boy needed brain surgery in Salt Lake but the whole family had to go. The little boy had to have his skull separated into parts so that his brain could grow normally. The first surgery was successful but part of the skull failed to attach, so had to go back a second time. Each surgery took 9-1/2 hours. We helped with gas and motel rooms until the Ronald McDonald opened up for them. They were there a total of 6 weeks.
- A woman who had a leak in a brain vessel and a clot in the back of her brain. She had to go to Spokane. Her daughter purchased a van so that her mother could have a place to plug her oxygen into, as she has two trips planned. One was her pre-op which has already, and the other will be for the actual surgery next month. We gave her gas cards and motel cards which so far have covered her first trip.
- A man who had a metal heart valve that was failing. He needed to get to Missoula for the surgery, so we supplied gas and motel cards, so that the driver had a place to stay until the gentleman was ready to go home. During the surgery, they replaced the valve but also found 2 other clots, thereby saving the man's life.
- A 12yo boy with a learning disability was born with a plate missing out of his brain and needed to see a specialist in Kalispell, so we provided cards for a Motel room and gas so that he could see the specialist.
- A woman needed to see a specialist in Billings because she has a clot in her brain and it affected her hearing. Gas cards were provided and her family drove her.

The total tally for separate encounters that we've helped with this grant is 35. Six from the Barrett Hospital Clinic and the rest from the Community Health Center.

All in all, we think we demonstrated a need for this kind of service in our area. We are grateful to have received the grant as it allowed us to help many individuals who desperately needed the assistance."



Meagher County

"The mini grant that was awarded to the Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCSP) of Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH) facilitated relationship building and covered advertising that the program was previously unable to afford.

During the first phase of the project, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program Health Educator, Melissa Baker, conducted an assessment of the resources available in or to Meagher County that could help reach women with health care messaging. The Meagher County Chamber of Commerce turned out to be a wonderful source of information and support. Their website has a list of most area businesses as well as some non-profit agencies. Through them, Melissa learned about the White Sulphur Springs Christmas Stroll and was able to request booth space during the stroll in order to distribute information about the BCCSP and offer enrollment opportunities to women as they stopped by the booth. This was the first time that the program was represented at this annual event. The Stroll attracted many people from not only White Sulphur Springs but also outlying areas in Meagher and Broadwater counties.

A couple months later, Melissa attended a meeting of the Meagher County Chamber of Commerce and met representatives from some area businesses as well as some volunteers who offered to help distribute posters for the program. During this meeting Melissa was able to discuss the mini grant and ask for input on how to best reach out to area agencies and how to reach women directly.

Once resources and partners were identified, the project progressed to creating a comprehensive and cohesive media campaign. The Communications Specialist at LCPH, Amber Johnson, designed an image that was used for posters, newspaper advertising, Facebook posts, and YouTube advertisements. The YouTube ad was seen over four thousand times. Amber and Melissa took a day to travel to White Sulphur Springs and meet face to face with local business owners and agency representatives and ask for their assistance in getting the word out about the BCCSP. Posters were distributed all around town on that day. Melissa was able to speak to staff at the local medical clinic, Mountainview Medical Center while she was in town. Mountainview sent a referral the very next week after Melissa spoke to them.

While not many new referrals were received during the time period of the grant, new relationships were forged and can continue to be built upon. Some of the grant money was used to purchase a non-profit membership to the Meagher County Chamber of Commerce. A representative of the MCCoC contacted Melissa this summer and invited her to represent the BCCSC as a featured agency at the White Sulphur Springs Farmer's Market on August 8th. Melissa will use this day to also revisit Mountainview Medical Center to give them updated enrollment forms and also to circle back to some of the businesses visited previously to see if they need more flyers. Melissa can use the knowledge she gained about Meagher County and its resources to provide more effective outreach going forward."

Meagher County

TRAINING FUNDS - HIGHLIGHTS

Wibaux County Health Department

"The Wibaux County Health Department collaborated with McCone and Prairie County Health Departments to purchase and provide an evidence-based web platform for mental health referrals. We utilized the NACCHO approved platform, CredibleMind's Behavioral Health360. This platform allows those trained to make mental health referrals when a need is identified. So far, we have trained:

- 6 public health employees
- 12 Board of Health members
- 16 High School Teachers and staff
- 16 Senior Citizens and staff

We are now working to create community wide access via social media, flyers sent home with school children and newspaper ads. We are in the process of training the Library staff on how to access the platform and how to train interested patrons"

St. Peter's Health Foundation

St. Peter's used their funds to offer training to the complex care team and primary care team on the impact of trauma, particularly those in rural health settings, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+, disability, people 65+, and people with low socioeconomic status. "The trainings have been emotional and eye opening. The trainer has helped our Population Health team at St. Peter's gain a greater understanding and appreciation for how peoples' histories and stories affect how they move about the world, how they interact with other people, and their healthcare is impacted by their situations, their experiences and by social determinants of health. An unexpected bonus has been the trainer's ability to help our team understand that WE ourselves have histories and stories that impact how we provide care. This has allowed us to have ongoing discussions about the grace we should give ourselves as well as others in this challenging world we call healthcare. Our Population Health team is also discussing how we can facilitate getting some of this education for our broader organization. You don't have to be a provider of clinical care to benefit from a better standing of human beings and health equity."



St. Peter's Health
FOUNDATION

Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate

The Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate used their training funds to assist in providing trainings to health related workers across the state on the various intersections between climate and health and how climate does not impact everyone equally

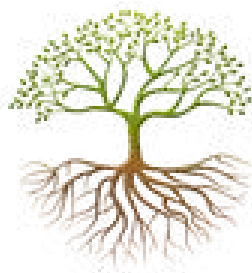
"Eighty-eight total attendees participated in our webinar series, and added to lively discussion in the second half of every webinar. We were pleased to have input from health professionals in areas such as Hardin, Big Sandy, Libby, and Dillion – more remote and conservative areas where connections are valuable and can be difficult to make. In this case, webinars proved to be a format that worked well to connect health professionals across our large rural state.

Professionals from these areas shared resources and comments on issues such as mental health stigma, drought, extreme temperatures, and emergency preparedness. Their perspectives offered insight into the unique challenges faced by rural areas, such as the dispersion of resources over large distances, and how these challenges might be overcome.

We were also pleased to note participants from the MSU nursing program, who can now bring resources and perspectives back to students. In addition, fifteen people received Continuing Education credits in the nursing or sanitation professions.

Many participants voiced areas where more knowledge or resources are needed, including: patient education on avoiding and treating heat illnesses, plans for effective warnings preceding natural disasters, dispersed energy generation and dispersed areas for sheltering from heat, and how to organize an effective awareness campaign. These topics will inform future webinar efforts.

Anyone now wishing to view the webinars may do so through our [YouTube](#) playlist. We are pleased to present this information free of charge to anyone who is interested. We hope to continue the discussion of challenges and resources online by posting short-form clips of the webinars to encourage engagement with the material. We are thankful to AHEC for this partnership and the results it achieved."



**MONTANA HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS
FOR A
HEALTHY CLIMATE**

Seeley Lake Community Foundation

"A lot of our grant request was for staff training revolved around increasing fundraising. From the coaching on Community Centric Programming, I learned about the importance of incorporating program theory into grant applications, which **resulted in us getting 30% more in grant funding for our I Ride program than we have in the past!** Our I Ride service serves at-risk populations in rural Missoula County at the most basic level of medical care: getting to their appointments!

Access to safe and reliable transportation impacts the health and well-being of rural populations. Rural residents experience greater travel burdens when accessing healthcare, including distance and time, particularly for subspecialist services. Barriers to medical services cause some rural residents to delay healthcare or miss appointments, resulting in poorly managed care, a need for emergency care, and preventable hospitalizations. "



HONORARIUMS IMPACT

Montana Disability and Health Program

"Disability Advisors are people with disability that also have experience or expertise in an area of public health or chronic disease prevention. For example, a person who has a neurological disability and an expertise in active transportation and physical activity. Disability Advisors serve on statewide public health committees, coalitions, and advisory boards to amplify the voices of the disability community and remove the stigma that disability means unhealthy. The three Disability Advisors who served on the Western, North Central, and South Central Health Equity Regional Task Forces did just that. They spoke up when disability inclusion was not considered in public health planning, they shared widely of the negative impact that COVID and COVID emergency policies had on the disability community, they highlighted the unique needs of the disability community when it came to transportation, housing, and healthcare access, and they became a trusted partner to all. Because of the participation of Disability Advisors, AHEC staff and their community partners on the Regional Health Equity Taskforces increased their cultural humility, identified gaps and improved their own work around disability inclusion and accessibility, and learned about state disability resources, including the Montana Disability Health Program and the Centers for Independent Living. Having a Disability Advisor involved on the Taskforces led to richer conversations and a greater understanding of our Montana communities."

"In addition, AHEC was able to provide a \$50 honorarium to the Disability Advisors for every monthly meeting that they attended. The compensation encouraged the Disability Advisors to show up every month and give voice to the needs of the disability community. It is important to provide a stipend or honorarium to Disability Advisors because their time and knowledge is valuable and they may not be associated with an organization that is compensating them for their time on the committee."

Quote from Kelly Murray - Disability Advisor " I think the meetings are great because it teaches me to be more outgoing and to share the information I learn with others. I like that I get to share my ideas with the group and I think it's good for them to learn."





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