

# POLICY PLATFORM FOR 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REGENERATIVE RECOVERY COALITION

DECEMBER, 2021



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COLORADO'S  
REGENERATIVE  
RECOVERY



# INTRODUCTION

This report represents the voices of the Regenerative Recovery Coalition (RRC), a coalition that is 341 members strong, represents 28,432 members of the Colorado workforce, and \$2.8 billion in managed revenue. Earlier this year, we asked Coalition members to share their bold, transformational policy ideas, which resulted in this recommended Policy Platform for lawmakers. The group ranked and prioritized these ideas to identify areas with the strongest support, potential to catalyze a regenerative future and align with the State’s recovery goals.

The policies contained within will strengthen the state’s economy, contribute to creating the workforce of the future, build resilient communities, prepare Colorado for a changing climate and support biodiversity and human health. Many ideas were weaved together to create “policy packages” with multiple elements. Project alignment with the eight fundamentals of a regenerative recovery is indicated throughout the report with iconography (labeled below). Where possible, further notes and comments on policies are provided, along with possible non-profit (NGO) and agency partners. Much of the actual work is being done by NGOs across the state, and we believe that it is important that funding be made available to NGOs who can work with the Administration to build Colorado forward.

The American Rescue Plan (ARPA) has earmarked over \$3.8 billion for the State of Colorado’s efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. ARPA funds have four allowable uses determined by the Office of Legislative Legal Services (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts; (2) Premium pay for eligible workers; (3) For government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue; (4) Investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Additionally, the state may transfer money to certain nonprofits, Tribal organizations, public benefit corporations involved in the transportation of passengers or cargo or a special-purpose unit of state or local government. The funds may not be deposited into a pension fund or be used to offset a net tax revenue loss directly or indirectly. The Colorado General Assembly has also created their own guidelines for allocating ARPA dollars [which may be found here](#). This report will include an ARPA compliance argument for the top priority policy proposals that meet the criteria. When vetting ARPA compliance, workforce development, job creation, and economic recovery were the main lenses with which determinations were made.

The goal of the RRC is to move the state toward a robust, localized economy that meets human needs equitably and abundantly. It will provide clean water, air, energy, food, and all of the services we need. Such a regenerative economy will deliver shared prosperity in a state leading the charge for a healthy planet.

A Regenerative Recovery Policy framework rests on eight fundamentals of a new operating system:

1. Transition rapidly to renewable, distributed, reliable energy
2. Strengthen and increase our regenerative food systems
3. Provide equitable access and opportunities
4. Build the industries and the workforce of the future
5. Invest in natural and built infrastructure
6. Build Colorado's circular economy
7. Preserve and strengthen democratic institutions
8. Leverage diverse partnerships to demonstrate regeneration in action



## POLICY CATEGORIES











This report presents three project categories in separate sections outlined below. The policy ideas contained in each section are on equal footing and should be considered as the same level of priority.

**Top Priority:** These ideas represent the top priorities of RRC members to be addressed through legislation.

**Good Idea:** These are ideas that have been shared by members but were not ranked as top priorities of the Coalition.

**Needs Further Development:** These represent ideas that need more information, and organization identification, etc.

Each fundamental can be identified in the following sections by the icons below:

				
Energy & Climate Change	Workforce Development	Democracy	Circular Economy	Funding
				
Regenerative Agriculture	Natural & Built Infrastructure	Leverage Partnerships	Equity	ARPA Compliant

# TOP PRIORITY PROPOSALS



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# 1. COLORADO PUBLIC BANK

Establish a large state public bank in Colorado that is owned by and serves Colorado citizens and can provide economic recovery during a time of financial recession. The public bank will create substantial revenue without raising taxes and increasing financing for essential services and projects that will benefit present and future generations.

- a. The bank would be controlled by Bank of the State of Colorado board and will work in concert with community banks and credit unions.
- b. A public bank would allow for a reduction or elimination of interest costs and enable government agencies to operate more efficiently. The bank would also prevent recessions or reduce their severity through counter-cyclical lending.
- c. The bank could follow North Dakota's model where the bank would have a separate set of statutes and regulations.
- d. The Bank would be set up as an Enterprise so that revenue generated would not count against the TABOR cap but still allow revolving funding and impactful investment in Colorado businesses.
- e. The Bank would start out small, requiring marginal investment from the State up front. \$500 million could kick start a Bank that would be transformational to the state economy.
- f. Colorado could pay off or refinance Certificates of Participation making the public bank profitable in the first year and save taxpayers money or fund it with taxes collected on polluting industries.

## **Additional Resources:**

[White Paper: Establishing Public Banks in Colorado – Rocky Mountain Public Banking Institute](#)

[Proposed Bill on Colorado Public Banking](#)

**ARPA Compliance:** (2) Address Negative Economic Impacts (3) Replace Lost Public Sector Revenue





## 2. JUST TRANSITION FOR FOSSIL FUEL DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

Colorado has a stated goal of 100% renewable energy by 2040 yet has yet to develop a comprehensive plan to transition the oil and gas workforce. We must work with all extraction-based economies (oil, gas, coal, mining) in rural Colorado to transition the workforce and diversify economies. Colorado can be a leader in a just transition for workers and communities during supply-side managed decline in fossil fuel production. Investing in a just transition for workers will position Colorado to lead in the new clean energy economy and protect the state's taxpayers from the projected \$8 billion liability of orphaned and abandoned wells. There are only 1,118 coal jobs in Colorado and approximately 21,800 direct jobs in the oil and gas sector. To date, funds have been disproportionately allocated to the coal communities of Colorado, but no funds have been allocated for oil and gas communities, who will need to rapidly transition out of fossil fuel production immediately if Colorado plans to meet its climate goals.

- a. Provide sufficient funding to the Office of Just Transition to expand the office's support to oil and gas industry workers to assist them in the re-training and other support needed as this industry goes through a managed phase-out.
  - i. Include oil and gas into the scope of the Office of the Just Transition. Colorado must implement a managed phase-out of oil and gas production while investing in a just transition for oil and gas workers and their communities. This approach would align our state's economy with a climate-safe future while proactively helping individuals and communities navigate the unavoidable and necessary decline of Colorado's fossil fuel-based economy.
- b. Commission economic diversifications studies for each region to identify the most viable, and climate resilient economies for each region. The studies would need to interview 60% of the transitioning workforce in each region to elevate the voice and concerns of the workers.
- c. While the studies are taking place, extraction-based workers and employers are given several options funded by the state. Provide opportunities for the workforce to be reskilled:
  - i. Plug abandoned mines, clean up orphaned wells and oil field sites, both legacy and contemporary infrastructure preparing for imminent shutdown
  - ii. Lay fiber for broadband
  - iii. Forest health and wildfire mitigation
  - iv. Renewable energy deployment
  - v. Consider upfront funding to ensure that wages are similar to prior jobs.
- d. Offer to pension off any worker over 47 years old.
- e. Provide entrepreneurial grants for each region. The focus will be on a workforce transition that enables economic diversification of the region through community driven entrepreneurship.
- f. The final phase of this policy package would be offering the participating communities \$5-10 million one-time funds to diversify their local economies.
  - i. Year one is the economic diversification studies and organizing for the workforce transition to the five options listed above.

- ii. Year two the workforce transitions based on what they pick from the four options listed above.
  - iii. Year three the communities who participate through year one and year two are all awarded a set amount of funding determined by their economic diversification study to launch into their new diversified and climate resilient economy.
- g. Where appropriate, retrain coal, oil & gas, and other fossil fuel industry technical workers to manufacture solar panels, wind turbines and associated components.
- i. State- and local-level tax incentives and low-interest loans to incentivize the conversion of abandoned power plants, fracking wells and mining sites into modular solar panel or wind turbine manufacturing facilities.
  - ii. Utilize existing rail infrastructure for transportation, possibly between modular sites (e.g., a delocalized assembly-line).
  - iii. Incentivize companies and trade associations to provide affordable, subsidized or free job and skills retraining for affected technical workers, and disseminate affirmative marketing campaigns for families and communities of affected workers.
  - iv. Create new statewide small- and large-business incentives to attract solar and wind manufacturers to create jobs and establish new manufacturing sites and retraining programs in these affected communities.
  - v. Where appropriate, enable coal, oil and gas communities to become renewable energy owners and centers, having and retaining that income stream going forward.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) Responding to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts (4) Invest in Water, Sewer & Broadband Infrastructure



## 3. THE ELECTRIFICATION OF BUILDINGS

### Building Efficiency

Incentivize the electrification of all current buildings and new construction. For existing infrastructure, provide rebates for homeowners, building owners to modernize their buildings through electrification. For new buildings, establish a phase-in for all new construction to be 100% electric by 2025. All commercial infrastructure must provide a minimum of 50% EV charging per parking lot capacity and create a state refundable tax rebate to do so. Create additional incentives for onsite distributed renewable energy generation and storage.

- a. Require gas utilities to develop and implement a plan to phase out over the next two years all natural gas hookups for new and remodeled buildings greater than 10,000 sq ft.
- b. End permits for natural gas hot water, natural gas building heat, and natural gas in new construction (including cooking) by 2023.
- c. Require net zero carbon criteria for any housing or construction receiving state funding. At a minimum, any housing projects receiving funds must meet three criteria:
  - i. Highly energy efficient (modeled to exceed the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code by at least 10 percent, regardless of less-stringent local codes in place)
  - ii. Powered by a minimum of 75% renewable energy. This will ensure new builds are slightly ahead of science-based targets and will push the market aggressively forward.
  - iii. All-electric space and water heating
- d. Implement energy retrofits on public schools, including dynamic LED lighting upgrades.

### Rebates/Credits

Boost existing utility and local municipal rebate offerings to replace older models of electric and gas equipment with high efficiency alternatives like tankless water heaters and cooling-only DX equipment with heat pump versions.

- a. Provide funding for LED lighting replacement.
- b. Provide user information in multiple languages and distribute in rural and mountain areas.
- c. Implement permanent solar and wind tax credits.
- d. Incentives for builders who focus on efficiency and/or include rooftop solar and/or community solar gardens.
- e. Offer heat pump rebates to homeowners. Similar to how EV rebates are helping accelerate the market, zero-emission and ultra-efficient heat pumps need a catalyst to overcome contractor and homeowner unfamiliarity.

### Equity

- a. Pay for customer-sited solar so low-income families can own, or access, in multifamily buildings to cut utility bills. Subsidize one or more solar co-ops (bulk purchase of rooftop solar) for low income or non-profit building owners at \$5,000 per building.
- b. Increase weatherization. Use a systematic, house-by-house approach that explicitly starts with the zip codes with the highest number of households living below the poverty line.



- c. Work with local utility providers to identify high energy consumption outliers and incentivize them specifically to increase efficiency and weatherization.

**HVAC training**

- a. Statewide grants & investment in HVAC technician training on mini-splits, air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, electric water heaters, etc.

Notes: Task DOLA with setting and enforcing building codes (or at least the energy code) for jurisdictions without any (DOLA has existing authority over codes for factory-built housing as well hotels, motels, and multifamily in areas without any codes). Ensure that there are energy standards in place and code enforcement: Emission standards for furnaces and water heaters (the biggest energy users in houses and the second and third biggest (after lighting) in commercial buildings).

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) Responding to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts





## 4. OUTDOOR AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY

It is widely studied and known that air pollution can cause health problems, like heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure, that have been identified as the pre-existing medical conditions that raise the chances of death from COVID-19 infection. Both indoor and outdoor air quality are of the utmost importance as the battle against COVID rages on. Fund stringent air quality control measures through the rapid decarbonization of all sectors of our economy through investments in renewable energy, transitioning away fossil fuel production, and implementing strict regulations on polluting industries.

- a. Continue to fund investments in the clean energy sector to support transportation electrification, building efficiency, and decarbonization of our aviation industry.
- b. Put into place more stringent regulations on polluting industries such as power plants and oil & gas operations.
- c. Provide funding to support fire management and controlled burns in areas of increased wildfire risk.
  - i. Where possible, engage with local Indigenous tribes (Cheyenne, Ute, Arapahoe and others) who have fire tending wisdom to inform Colorado Fire management.
- d. Install air purifying technology in all state and public buildings in Colorado, provide funding for small businesses to install these systems as well.
- e. Ensure that there is an added credit for likewise installing renewable energy systems alongside the air filtration systems; encourage the creation of microgrids.
- f. Study the impacts of air disinfection devices on ambient air quality to inform scale.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) Responding to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 5. RACIAL EQUITY

### Upward Mobility

Establish a state commitment that federal dollars will go preferentially to low-income communities. Start with the recently signed small business stimulus bill. Have the business community provide support, resources and a scholarship fund focused on BIPOC students.

- a. Engage the business community to provide support for the students of color to navigate the educational and training systems, especially for first-generation students.
- b. Free community college for two years for all students graduating from a Colorado high school.
- c. Ensure that documents containing post-high school information are available in languages including Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish to eliminate the language barrier.
- d. Set up an auto-sealing program (or auto-expungement) program to seal/expunge records of convicted persons of now legal drug-related crimes as well as other low-level non-violent offenses.

### Workplace

Work with NGOs such as Focus Points, Project Voyce, Colorado Inclusive Economy, Jobs with Justice and The Equity Project to advance racial equity in communities and workplaces.

- a. Establish equity and inclusion standards in the trades.
- b. Incentivize or offer training in equity, diversity and inclusion to employers so they can familiarize themselves with the obstacles of diversifying their workforce.
- c. Establish standards for worker safety that protect our most vulnerable populations from toxics in the workplace.

### Board Representation

Fund review of “State Blue Book” of Boards and Commissions to make board member selection inclusive, resulting in more racially and ethnically diverse appointees.

- a. Increase the stipend for members from marginalized communities to serve.
- b. Encourage members of boards and commissions to nominate BIPOC community members to replace them once their terms are over.

### Voting Access

Fund more voting centers and ballot boxes in underserved communities across the state.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) Relief efforts for unmet needs, especially for communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic



## 6. IMPROVING COLORADO'S CIRCULAR ECONOMY

### **Extended Polluter Responsibility (EPR)**

Implement Extended Polluter Responsibility (EPR) legislation for plastics. Zero Waste (recycling, composting, reuse, and reducing waste) helps create green jobs, reduces the destruction of natural resources used for manufacturing and lowers greenhouse gas emissions. For example, in 2020, recycling and composting in Colorado reduced carbon pollution equivalent to taking 400,000 cars off the road each year. If our diversion rate were at the state's 2021 goal of 28%, we would reduce carbon emissions equivalent to taking nearly 750,000 cars off the road annually. However, according to [Eco-Cycle and CoPIRG's fifth annual State of Recycling & Composting in Colorado Report](#), Colorado's 2020 waste diversion rate of 15.3% has failed to improve over the last few years and remains well below the national average of 32%. One of the greatest challenges we face in Colorado is a lack of funding which has resulted in inconsistent, inequitable, and inconvenient access to recycling and composting programs.

A Producer Responsibility policy for containers, packaging, and printed paper would make significant progress toward improving Colorado's dismal recycling rate and could eliminate unnecessary packaging and expand resources and support for recycling. Under such a system, companies pay into a fund based on the packaging (e.g., boxes, cans, bottles) around their products. The dues paid would fund an expansion of recycling infrastructure so that everyone in Colorado would have easy access to recycling at no additional cost to them or taxpayers. The fund would be administered by a new nonprofit association made up of the companies that pay into the system. The dues would not only expand recycling access and infrastructure in Colorado but would provide an incentive for companies to cut out some of the unnecessary packaging that wraps their items, thereby significantly improving Colorado's recycling rate and reducing plastic pollution. Over 40 countries already have mandatory Producer Responsibility policies and Maine and Oregon adopted the first US policies this year. Producer Responsibility policies are gaining momentum and Colorado would be the first non-coastal state to pass such legislation.

### **Market waste materials**

Work with developers across the state of Colorado to create a market for waste materials that cannot be recycled to be converted for use in the built environment, modeled after the Sustainable Materials Research & Technology (SMaRT) program at the University of New South Wales, which uses a variety of waste materials to produce a range of 'green' materials and products.

- a. Waste streams that can be used to create green ceramics include waste wood (including beetle kill), glass, and plastics.

### **Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity Program**

- a. Direct more funding to RREO as they get more applications for funding.
- b. Fund an end-market center to use recycled materials in Colorado.
- c. Research the possibility of universal curbside recycling bins and infrastructure for all communities.

### **Education**

- a. Create a Colorado-centric communication campaign to bring awareness to recycling and composting that is easy to understand and targets Colorado residents and tourists.
- b. Standardize communication across the state so it is easy to understand and is translated into different languages for all of Colorado's residents.

**ARPA Compliance:** (2) Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency



## 7. HOUSING EQUITY & AFFORDABILITY

### Housing Affordability

Address housing affordability, particularly for first time home buyers. Housing is a human right, and should not be left to investors or speculators so that people can get rich putting starter homes out of reach for young Coloradans.

- a. Fund housing innovation technologies ([like 3D printing](#)) to support affordable housing starts that are high quality in every county.
- b. Create an escalating property tax or investment fee on each successive single-family property owned by an individual or corporation that they are not living in or using for more than a certain amount of time per year, i.e., a premium of 5% on property 2, 8% on property 3, and so on.
- c. Take the money generated from this fee and put it into a fund for first-time homebuyers to help them compete with the cash offers pushing them out of the market.
- d. Fund affordable housing starts across the state but with attention to what each individual community needs. Promote [sustainable development](#) practices that improve the resilience of each community.
- e. Provide funding for energy efficiency improvements for existing and new housing construction to increase savings on energy bills and meet emission goals.

### Construction Shortages

There are not enough construction workers to meet the level of demand for housing. These labor shortages contribute to skyrocketing housing prices.

- a. Dedicate resources into apprenticeship programs to get more workers into the construction industry.
- b. Create tax incentives for builders to help them mitigate the rising and swinging cost of construction.

**Notes:** First time homebuyers have very little supply to choose from, and they're often outbid by investors with cash offers who have no intention of living in the house, but want to remodel it and "flip" it for profit.

**ARPA Compliance:** (§24-75-229) To respond to COVID-19, the general assembly may appropriate or transfer money for programs or services that benefit populations, households, or geographic areas disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency to attain affordable housing.



## 8. REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

### Infrastructure

Invest in infrastructure and equipment at our agricultural experiment stations throughout the state so they can convert to all regenerative practices and serve as models for local communities to learn and emulate.

- a. Create 1:1 matching funds for: purchases of precision irrigation equipment or to repair/replace ditches and pipelines; no-till planters or other equipment enabling regenerative agriculture practices.
- b. Support subsidized soil health testing to farmers and homeowners; support expansion of CSU soil testing laboratory to SPUR campus in Denver.

### Economic Development

Support economic development opportunities related to soil-based carbon sequestration through CSU's Soil Carbon Solutions Center.

- a. Define Agriculture as an Advanced Industry and create new funding programs through OEDIT to make Colorado a global hub for innovation in Regenerative Agriculture.

**Notes:** The sequestration of carbon in the soil is one of the best solutions to tackling the climate crisis. [Research](#) shows that agricultural soils have the potential to sequester 250 million metric tons of GHGs annually.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts; (4) Necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure



## 9. WATER CONSERVATION

### Colorado River Basin

Fund the ten strategies listed in the [report](#) to increase the resiliency of the Colorado Basin and adapt to climate change. The basin is at risk due to long-term rising temperatures, high variability in precipitation patterns and increased drying, all of which are projected to occur even if efforts to limit climate change are taken seriously over the next few decades.

- a. More specifically these are areas that can be funded to advance the concepts in the report: watershed/forest restoration (\$2B in the SENR infrastructure package, Title VIII), water conservation and reuse, and upgrading aging ag infrastructure (\$3.2B in the SENR package).
- b. At the state level, infrastructure and stimulus dollars coming to the state can and should be used to fund the Colorado Water Plan (estimated at \$100 million a year) and to increase climate resiliency and water availability.

### Built Environment

- a. Fund water utilities efforts to conserve water by providing incentives and subsidies to water users throughout the State to remove turf for xeriscape comprised of native plants that are best suited to the local landscape and other water conservation initiatives.
- b. Funding and facilitation to conserve residential water use through replacement of old fixtures and appliances to water saving technology.
- c. Implement paving alternatives to not use impermeable paving in parking lots if there are nature-based solutions like wetlands that offer water catchment and support the natural environment.

### Colorado Rivers

Redefine rivers as a public good. Ensure that Colorado has the clean water necessary for urban resilience, agriculture, recreation, industry and ecosystem viability.

### Colorado Water Plan

Use Water for Colorado's list of projects when seeking infrastructure funding and ensure that the funding from sport betting money remains in use for the Water Plan.

**Notes:** Colorado River Basin: The ten strategies explored in the report range from well-demonstrated, to emerging, to theoretical but largely untested concepts and all represent bold ideas to increase resiliency of the water systems in the Colorado River Basin.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts; (4) Necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure





## 10. WORKFORCE

There currently exists a stigma around many skilled industry trades such as construction and electrical wiring. At the same time, we are seeing a shortage in labor for these trades. Couple this with the massive amounts of student debt that come along with attending most 4-year universities. We need to communicate the benefits of working in the skilled trades, particularly for youth who are recently graduating high-school.

- a. Run Public Education Campaign on: “Career opportunities in renewable energy” and “Returning to Work: The best time to transition to a career.” Focus the campaign to destigmatize the skilled trades, certificate programs and vocational training.
- b. Fund the study to align the 2020/2021 talent pipeline report with regenerative jobs, then create and fund the certificate programs to support the skills transition.
- c. Expand automatic record sealing for nonviolent offenses to ensure the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of every Coloradan who has been involved with the criminal legal system does not have a record that prevents them from gainful employment.
- d. Commission a study by OEDIT of all existing state workforce programs and measure their effectiveness with a rigorous evidence standard, so dollars go to programs that either have (or are in the process of showing) rigorously measured impacts on learner earnings over time.
- e. Employ a sectoral employment and work-based learning model, so dollars go to programs with a strong alignment to skills and credentials high growth, high wage Colorado employers need, and can also support work-based learning.
- f. Ensure workforce programs have a strong equity focus, so the majority of dollars go to learners in poverty, learners of color, learners with barriers to employment, learners in rural communities, or learners on SNAP or TANF.
- g. Workforce programs should follow a repayment and sustainability model, so the fund is revolving, with learners making modest future capped payments back into it, (conditional on earning above a given threshold), and their employers make retention payments, so an ARPA seeded fund can stretch beyond 2024.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 11. SUNCOR TRANSITION

Permanently shut down Suncor Energy refineries. Suncor's outdated permits allow emissions of 866,100 tons per year of GHGs and toxic compounds such as sulfur dioxide, benzene, and hydrogen cyanide. The refinery has malfunctioned numerous times which causes pollutants to increase. Suncor's refineries are placed in low-income communities and contributes to a legacy of environmental injustice and further burdens those who are already disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

- a. Increase support for existing just transition efforts to ensure Suncor workforce can transition into clean energy jobs or other carbon negative/neutral industries and close remaining Suncor plants.
- b. Upskill workers to do biochar remediation in the area and install agrivoltaics and community solar.
- c. Identify the cost to pension out workers over 50 years old.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 12. COLORADO GROWING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS ACT

Introduce a Colorado version of the Growing Climate Solutions Act, a bill currently under consideration by the US Senate and co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of more than 30 Senators to address land equity and access to environmental credits. The bill, which would start the process of allowing USDA, in this case the Colorado Department of Agriculture to certify entities that pay farmers for carbon sequestration and reduce barriers to “historically underserved, socially disadvantaged, or limited resource farmers.”

- a. Start a state land trust that would buy land from retiring farmers and set it aside for farmers of color, specifically Black and Indigenous farmers, who could buy in at a subsidized rate.
- b. Provide a capital gains tax exclusion for farmers who sell to young farmers and farmers of color. It might mean limiting the amount of farmland available to non-operator investors, or increasing funds for conservation programs that incentivize a reduction of acres planted, or increasing access to long-term loans and forms of ‘patient capital.’
- c. Provide grants to aspiring BIPOC farmers and ranchers (individuals, families, and co-ops) to buy and build sustainable farms and ranches. Give subsidies for land stewards in indigenous cultures who implement regenerative agriculture.
- d. Work with the CO Dept. of Corrections to pilot an agricultural training program for BIPOC.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts; disproportionately impacted communities



## 13. COMPOSTING

Increase funding for composting infrastructure with regional/ multicounty partnerships that have been working on infrastructure, but may not have all the resources they need to put in infrastructure. Focused on local utilization of end products.

- a. Fund gap infrastructure (e.g., for composting) identified through the pending statewide organics management study conducted by CDPHE and DOA.
- b. Provide composting services to all residents in phases, utilizing local rec centers to reduce the costs of transportation and provide hyper-local economic stimulus.
- c. Ensure programs are developed with the tools and abilities to measure the social and environmental impacts it will have.
- d. Provide funding for Regional industrial composting facilities, composting education to public and incentives for waste haulers to pick up and transport compost.
- e. Provide assistance for distribution of compost for agriculture and residential uses.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 14. FOOD DISTRIBUTION & PROCESSING

### **Distribution**

Explore and develop different regenerative ways to distribute food including direct to consumer delivery and incentivize farmers to implement these practices.

- a. Establish a program and purchase trucks and hire drivers to transport rural farm products to various locations in the urban corridor so that product can be efficiently moved to markets.
- b. Support the Denver Emergency Food Access Partners in developing a stakeholder-driven distribution and redistribution network across the Denver Metro and Front Range that supports the organizations ensuring that Coloradoans have access to fresh and nutritious food.
- c. Explore use of tax benefits to make local processing economically viable and seek ways to invest in local food processing.

### **Meat Processing**

Purchase mobile slaughter vehicles to service small ranches and farms, and train people to operate them to reduce overhead costs for small meat producers. USDA Assistance for Small Scale Meat Processing USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and Rural Development.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 15. FOOD EQUITY

### **Food Deserts**

Identify and address food deserts throughout the state, focusing on rural and urban parts of Colorado. Create partnerships with agencies and NGOs capable of creating food producing operations there.

- a. Fund community gardens in K-12 schools, prisons, mental health centers, municipal buildings, higher ed institutions, etc.
- b. Incentives for grocery stores to open locations in food desert/gap areas

### **WIC/SNAP**

Allow WIC/SNAP to be used at most food locations. Increase the eligibility for and benefits of WIC/SNAP.

### **School Food Programs**

Ensure that K-12 school food programs provide nutritious and wholesome food for students.

- a. Source food from Colorado producers as much as possible.
- b. Provide funding to offset food cost increases per student.
- c. Expand and make permanent federal COVID relief efforts to provide universal free breakfast and lunch to all students in all school districts.

### **Rural**

Provide funding for start-up costs and technical support to develop local and regional food markets in the mountains and rural communities.

- a. Include supporting support systems for distribution that go with these projects.

**Notes:** In Colorado, 555,440 people are facing hunger, and of them, 147,120 are children, according to [Feeding America](#).

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 16. REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN

State adopts [Colorado's Regenerative Food System Transition: Action Plan for Resilience](#). Support a transition to a Colorado food system that improves the health of the people, the diversity of the ecosystems, the vibrancy of local economies and sequesters carbon to mitigate climate change. Support the movement towards a regenerative food system where people, ecosystems and economies are supported to be vibrant, diverse, resilient, healthy and joyful.

- a. It is time to modernize the statewide food system to create multiple layers of resilience. Such resilience should be developed to protect us against global food system distribution disruptions that may result due to future global pandemics, natural disasters or political barriers.
- b. Resilience should be developed by cultivating diversity in soil, ecosystems, and production and distribution methods to protect us against the worst impacts of climate change, pollinator collapse, soil erosion and depletion, and to ensure ecosystem survival and food production capacity.
- c. Resilience should also be created to protect human health so that the people of Colorado have access to wholesome foods no matter where they live, and in schools.
- d. A resilient food system also includes economic resilience and requires robust small and midsize producers, processing, distribution and educational sectors.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts



## 17. CLIMATE RESILIENCE

### **Energy Impact Assistance Fund**

Restructure the Energy Impact Assistance Fund (from oil & gas severance) to prioritize climate mitigation. Funding could be used for the following:

- a. Renewable energy projects
- b. Net zero energy
- c. Energy efficiency upgrades in existing local government buildings
- d. Zero-emission heating, cooling, or water heating systems
- e. Climate action plans
- f. Just transition job training programs
- g. Water and wastewater projects
- h. Planting of native plants, shrubs and trees

### **Climate Action Plans**

Expand state funds for local communities to develop and implement Climate Action Plans where GHG reduction goals are set equal to or more stringent than the State's GHG Emissions Reduction Roadmap goals.

### **Rural**

Funding for rural recovery capacity training, strategy planning and implementation with a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation resilience. Leverage and align resources from state to local governments and staff this position.

### **Life-cycle Emission Inventory**

Expand HB19-1261 climate goals bill to address life-cycle/scope 3 emissions of fossil fuels so that our state takes responsibility for the enormous emissions of exported oil and gas. Scope 3 emissions account for 120% of the GHG emissions from all sectors in our state combined

- a. Make fossil fuel companies ineligible for all state tax incentives (including general ones related to employment, growth, relocation)

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts





## 18. ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

### Employment

- a. Offer job training programs for people experiencing homelessness in construction, restaurant industry, or other industries that have taken a hit during the pandemic.
- b. Pilot basic income with attention to our most vulnerable – children, expecting mothers, people with disabilities (mental and physical), parents, LGBTQIA+ people, and others experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- c. Create programs like [this](#) that hire people already on the streets to clean the streets. Have the trash be sorted into the most effective waste streams.
- d. Utilize and fully fund Colorado programs that are already serving the unhoused population
- e. Provide wraparound services such as transportation, childcare, and employment training for those at risk or already are homeless so they can have steady upward mobility.
- f. Ensure that all organizations created by these and auxiliary efforts are guided by staff, advisors, and boards that are made up of at least 50% by community members.

### Housing

Construct permanent supportive housing communities to create a “housing first” program modeled off of Salt Lake City, Utah’s efforts and refined in Denver’s Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond.

- a. Utilize empty hotels, abandoned buildings and single-family homes to house the homeless.
- b. Fund programs that support transitional and permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.
- c. Supportive Housing Social Impact Bonds
  - i. To address chronic homelessness, take the lessons learned from Denver’s Supportive Housing Social impact Bond and expand it to other communities facing increasing levels of people experiencing homelessness.
  - ii. Nearly all costs for the supportive housing program were offset by reductions in costs in the criminal justice and emergency healthcare systems for individuals who have historically been difficult to serve.
  - iii. 86% of participants remained in stable housing one year after entering housing. At two years, the housing retention rate for living participants was 81%. At year 3, the rate was 77%.

**Additional Resources:** [Breaking the Homelessness-Jail Cycle with Housing First: Results from the Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative](#)

### Mental Illness Support

Mental illness and substance use disorder are two of the core causes of homelessness, so aggressive investments in treating both must be made.

- a. Develop programs that provide mental health support for homeless individuals to receive treatment and rehabilitation.
- b. Improving the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP): The state auditor recently found that Colorado’s PDMP is currently ineffective in preventing people with drug-seeking behavior from “doctor shopping.”

- c. Enforce limits on opioid prescriptions; and add referrals to law enforcement or healthcare regulatory boards for those who don't comply.
- d. Focus law enforcement resources on fentanyl trafficking as overdose deaths due to fentanyl skyrocket.
- e. Continue smart decriminalization of personal possession of drugs by expanding on progress made during defelonization efforts including setting different limits for different substances based on their lethality and other factors.
- f. Decriminalize and medicalize the use of psilocybin to treat mental illnesses like Oregon's 2020 Measure 109.

**Notes:** Mental Health - While historic investments in mental health have been made (SB21-137 The Behavioral Health Recovery Act) were made last session, it's a drop in the bucket and more funding is needed to fully address this crisis.

**ARPA Compliance:** (1) To respond to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts





## 19. ELECTRIC TRANSPORTATION PACKAGE\*

### **EV Infrastructure**

Install electric car recharging stations across the state, particularly in areas of high population density.

- a. Make as many as possible powered by solar or wind + battery backup.
- b. Fund installation of Level 3 (rapid charging) and additional Level 2 EV charging stations at all state buildings to support the significant increase in electric vehicles and support state fleet electrification.
- c. Fund Level 3 rapid-charging EV charging stations at all rest stops and state parks in Colorado.
- d. Increase electric vehicle tax credit back to \$5,000 from current \$2,500.

### **Incentivize Public Transport**

Promote alternative transit development across Colorado such as light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, and local bus service, depending on local needs and conditions.

- a. Ban sale of new gasoline cars by 2035.
- b. Establish large employer SOV reduction mandates.
- c. Provide incentives to accelerate the consumer purchase of electric vehicles.
- d. Encourage transit supportive land uses that will recover the costs of investment.

### **School Buses**

Replace fleet of current school buses with electric buses. Old school buses can be repurposed as can transit buses replaced by EVs, which have much lower fuel and maintenance costs. Most buses run on diesel fuel which emit harmful compounds and particulate matter posing a risk to children.

### **Metro Transportation**

Require metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to assess per-capita costs and benefits and require a nexus between transportation plans (like Metro Vision) and transportation investments.

### **High Speed Rail**

Fund and execute the plans laid out by Rocky Mountain Rail, providing profitable passenger and cargo rail transportation. Designed to use renewable energy powering trains with motors, bringing modern class-5 and class-6 to Colorado using mostly existing rail lines.

\*While this proposal does not strictly meet the criteria for ARPA funds, we know that it will be transformational, especially for those disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

# GOOD IDEAS WORTH CONSIDERING



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## 20. BAN HYDROFLUOROCARBONS (HFCs)

Eliminate HFCs in all supermarkets & large format convenience stores in the state.

- a. Responsibly phase out all HFC based cooler systems & replace with natural refrigerant systems. Increase incentives for commercial cooler upgrades.
- b. Grants and investment in Technician Training on natural refrigerant systems, the importance of eliminating leaks and using only low global warming potential refrigerants, and disposing of all HFC refrigerants properly.
- c. Create HFC concierges who can walk independent grocers & convenience store owners through the process, with focus on low-income (including rural) communities first.
- d. Consider incentive (direct payments) take-back program for refrigerants and units with refrigerants that have high global warming potential.
- e. Increase consumer education on proper end-of-life handling for AC units & other items containing refrigerants.
- f. Ban or heavily tax the sale of HFC containing units in the state.



## 21. LAND RESTORATION & CONSERVATION

Invest in reforestation and vegetation management as a natural climate solution. This provides jobs and restores Colorado's ecological diversity.

- a. Dedicate all state-owned public lands to be carbon sinks, effectively becoming the first state program where available land is zoned for carbon sinks.
- b. Rehabilitate existing brownfields with biochar remediation and open lands to be dedicated as open space.
- c. Incentivize restoration and reclamation of degraded lands due to industrial operations.
- d. Invest sufficient funds into public lands to ensure their ecological integrity, including strengthening existing infrastructure.



## 22. WRAP-AROUND SERVICES FOR COLORADO WORKERS

Provide wraparound services for Colorado workforce that make below \$35,000 per year. This could come in the form of childcare support, housing stipends, transportation stipends and educational incentives to support upward mobility.



**Notes:** Providing these wraparound services would help to address the housing and poverty crisis by offsetting other costs as the housing market continues to skyrocket.



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## 23. INITIATIVE PETITION FAIRNESS

Getting an initiative on the ballot is a matter of how much money you have, not an initial show of support amongst potential voters. For big corporations and dark money groups, including oil and gas, getting on the ballot is a drop in the bucket. They hire paid signature gatherers, often from out of state. Environmental groups and other community-driven causes do not have those resources and getting on the ballot is near-insurmountable.

- a. Revise the initiative process by requiring at least half of signatures to be collected by unpaid, unreimbursed volunteers.
- b. Colorado residency requirement for paid signature gatherers.



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## 24. RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) at the State level. RCV has been used in the US for over 100 years and is proven to meet legal requirements. Voters are better able to hold office-holders accountable when they can securely vote their values.

- a. Small municipalities in Colorado have successfully used RCV since 2011. HB21-1071 (signed in June) supports counties and cities in running RCV elections for municipal races.
- b. Expand local-option to county races and school boards
- c. Modernize the primaries to RCV
- d. Legislatively-referring RCV initiatives to the ballot.

**Notes:** RCV can also be used for proportional representation, which fairly includes more viewpoints at the table.



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## 25. BIKE SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE

- a. Implement the [Colorado Safety Stop](#). The Safety Stop creates a safer way for people on bikes to cross at intersections when they have the right of way. The maneuver allows people riding bicycles to: treat stop signs as yield signs and treat stop lights as stop signs.
- b. Bike lanes on state roads. Add bike lanes to existing state roads that already have a wide paved shoulder (with exceptions), covering the state within 10 years.



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- c. Specify all state road resurfacing projects must add bike lanes if feasible (with criteria), and add public accountability and transparency.
- d. Transmission trail notifications and protections. Direct the Public Utilities Commission to notify local governments of the option for a bike path under planned transmission lines.
- e. Specify utility safety protections (e.g. utility can close path for repair without notice, they are not responsible for the path upkeep, they are not liable for accidents, they can specify minimum clearances and vegetation, etc.)
- f. Promote safe walkable, bikeable communities by closing streets, investing in last mile solutions and ensuring safe transit.



## 26. WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Prioritize investment into natural infrastructure including wildlife corridors per the governor’s Executive Order to safeguard wildlife while enhancing public safety.

- a. Maintenance of urban green spaces to support our outdoor industries and the health of our communities.
- b. Restore damaged natural infrastructure to support ecosystems
- c. Prioritize the use of pollinator plantings on state lands.



## 27. RUBBER SIDEWALKS

Work with Colorado recycling centers to source discarded tires and plastic to create [Rubber Sidewalks](#), theoretically reducing the cost found by [this commission](#) in 2017. Figure out the right-of-way and who pays for it across the state.

- a. Measure the emissions savings and track metrics for implementation.
- b. Create businesses around maintenance, repair, and replacement of sidewalks.

**Notes:** Rubber sidewalks are developed with recycled tire materials and plastic. They are more flexible than concrete, meaning nearby trees and roots do not damage the sidewalks and their design allows for more permeability of rainfall runoff.



## 28. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Provide information on how families can engage at the state and local levels, and how individuals can connect to their city, state and federal government.

- a. Establish a statewide civics education program for youth and college students, focusing on inclusive participation.

# PROPOSALS NEEDING FURTHER DEVELOPMENT



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## 29. BUS STOP POLLINATOR PLANTERS

Refurbish all CDOT bus stops to have pollinator planters on top of or around them (bus stops are generally placed about as far as apart as bees can fly in a go.)

- a. Create these stops/planters with recycled plastic that would otherwise be headed to the landfill.
- b. Capture and measure these impacts and add those metrics to the state Greenprint.



## 30. TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

Cost-effective transportation investment to achieve transportation for all. Widenings have now been conclusively shown to increase traffic and pollution, on a 1:1 basis with the extra space in years 5-10. They are an extraordinarily expensive short-term fix which continues to deprive and over-impact the 20-40% of people in each community who do not drive.

- a. Transit investments are not funded on par with highway investments. To even the playing field, the State should consider each investment in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and other statewide goals. (Complements 6.2 reference to MPO rule.)
- b. The State should allow transit agencies to increase revenue as they see fit, including redeveloping agency property to reduce fare fees.
- c. Provide free transit options for low-income residents whenever possible.



## 31. SUSPENSION OF TABOR

Support campaign to suspend and/or repeal TABOR to support investments in a regenerative recovery.



## 32. TRANSPORTATION EMISSION TARGETS

Re-evaluate evaluate transportation projects that have been programmed in the state transportation improvement program but not yet advertised for their anticipated greenhouse gas emission contributions. Require and ensure that any new construction helps CO meet 26% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 pollution reduction requirements.

- a. Require CDOT to adhere to science-based targets under the 1.5-degree scenario. Any infrastructure maintenance or new project that receiving funding should be net zero by 2040 and net negative by 2050.



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- b. This will speed adoption of many carbon-negative materials & technologies including CO2 sequestering concrete.
- c. Implement the adoption in the near term of better than average materials & technologies like recycled, cold application asphalt; low-emissions steel.




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## 33. CLEAN ENERGY CREDIT UNION

Strengthen the Clean Energy Credit Union, a new financial institution focused solely on providing loans that help people afford clean energy products and services such as solar electric systems, electric vehicles, home energy efficiency retrofits, electric-assist bicycles, and net-zero energy homes.




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## 34. PERMACULTURE EDUCATION FOR HOMEOWNERS

- a. Educate Homeowners on the importance of permaculture for boosting soil health and sequestering carbon.
- b. Educate the public on the harm glyphosate herbicides have towards pollinator & human health.




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## 35. STATEWIDE REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Colorado commits to transitioning to 100% regenerative agriculture.

- a. \$5M funding to roll out opt-in programs to build awareness and technical service provision network.
- b. Starting in 2024, opt-ins become opt-outs. 1% on restaurant bills provides \$100m per year and opt-out for \$5 per month on trash bill. Grow to \$200M per year, enough to implement practices on 2 million acres per year.
- c. Fund Restore Colorado (which is already set up to accept funds) to distribute to farmers and ranchers to support actions that create healthy soil and sequester carbon




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## 36. BIOCHAR REMEDIATION

Fund deployment of biochar for farmers, forestry management and fire mitigation, land reclamation, and biochar remediation. Biochar improves soil, increases crop yield, conserves water and also mitigates heavy metals, toxins



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and industrial agriculture chemicals. Fund mobile biochar pilot projects for forestry management and fire mitigation.



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## 37. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT VIA CSU

Fund agricultural workforce development through CSU's new RamSkiller non-credit online platform focused on agriculture and technology.



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## 38. RURAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Interview local food producers and purveyors in rural Colorado towns. Create promotional and marketing assets for local regenerative food organizations and systems.



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## 39. EDUCATION ON REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Increase farmers' understanding of the benefits, return on investment and practices of regenerative agriculture; promote the sharing of best practices and expertise.



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## 40. CARBON MARKETS

Create a Colorado carbon market focused on ranchland carbon sequestration.



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## 41. VALUE ADDED PRODUCTS

Explore vendor matching to find markets to produce value-added products, making use of "less than perfect" agricultural products and diverting food waste. E.g., peach growers connecting to a cider company.



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## 42. CDA BLOCK GRANT

Support the Department of Agriculture's block grant proposal. This could allow neighborhoods to design projects that could be replicated and used as educational tools.



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## 43. SNAP FUNDS

Provide additional money for SNAP to support regenerative farmers.



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## 44. HYDROPONICS FOR FOOD RESILIENCE

Create a network of converted Conex containers to grow hydroponic food in food deserts or areas with distressed soils. These can cut harvest variability due to changing conditions from climate change. Hybrids of traditional and hydroponic farming reduce risks from hail, temperature swings, drought and floods.



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## 45. AGRITOURISM

Encourage and promote agritourism and ecotourism for Colorado's mountain and rural locations.



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## 46. CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR AG EQUIPMENT

Create a trade marketplace for farmers/ranchers and construction workers to share and swap big equipment, thus reducing their overhead and increasing the sharing economy. Explore the creation of a sharing economy for farming capital equipment. Encourage cooperative structures. Empower farmers to build local coalitions.



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## 47. YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

Support young people getting involved in agriculture by classifying it as public service, and a method for repaying or forgiving loans and increasing the social status of agriculture work.



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## 48. LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Fund organic greenhouses and gardens on the roofs of grocery stores.

- a. Develop aquaponic food growing systems for increased sustainability and reduced water consumption.



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## 49. URBAN FOOD FORESETS

- a. Fund the use of a percentage of public green spaces as urban food forests and support the infrastructure that can collect data about carbon drawdown, soil health
- b. Teach current landscapers/landscape contractors to garden using known regenerative and permaculture practices.
- c. Fund interactive and immersive storytelling and education about the project and how to get involved.
- d. Ensure compost access and collection for the excess/anything rotten.
- e. Have Free Food Fridges adjacent to garden sites.
- f. Design the sites based on community observations and input
- g. Fully fund organizations who can and do support community driven food-entrepreneurship to work alongside the urban food forests to utilize produce and create economic development for members, neighborhood and the surrounding community, and Denver as a whole.



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## 50. FUND FARM & FOOD MOBILE WORKFORCE COLLABORATION

- a. Fund Uproot Colorado to expand their volunteer gleaning for food banks, and establish a worker-owned agricultural services cooperative.
- b. Link workers, producers and prospective farmers with the Farm & Food Mobile Workforce Collaborative (FFW).
- c. Fund the creation of a mobile workforce supplying producers and processors with on-demand labor so producers can sell more of what is now waste.
- d. Transition the mobile workforce pilot into an agricultural services cooperative to provide additional services to producers (e.g., a tool library with machine knowledge; marketing services; legal services; processing services)



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## 51. COLORADO GRAIN CHAIN

- a. Fund The Colorado Grain Chain to add value to Colorado-grown grains (heirloom, heritage and landrace) grown by family farms by connecting these grains to added value Colorado producers (distillers to home bakers.)
- b. Include a Colorado Grown logo, technical assistance, training and market info. CGC has received a small grant from the USDA to create this.



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## 52. ASPARAGOPSIS

Do more research on feed cattle seaweed to reduce methane emissions. Run a pilot program and get researchers involved to track data. See if this is a viable, large-scale solution to reduce GHG emissions.



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## 53. PRACTICAL DEMOCRACY

Practical democracy relies on the appropriate use of polling constituents to build better policies. Outside of representative democracy, there are modern polling tools available, and it is important to implement using best practices.

- a. RCV for Colorado Education Funds Guidebook for Practical Democracy builds upon lessons shared from its annual Polling Methods Symposium, which convenes political scientists and organization members who have administered polls to discuss best practices.



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## 54. CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Engage the chambers of commerce of the communities of color across the state.



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## 55. REMOTE ACCESS

Better enfranchise rural communities, enabling them to connect with their state government. Increase opportunities to participate in giving remote testimony.



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## 56. COUNTER DISINFORMATION

Encourage television networks to promote a website with public accountability that provides information about upcoming elections and counter disinformation



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## 57. TUITION INCREASE FREEZE

- a. Implement new scholarship/grant programs targeted to first generation college students.
- b. Make universities use their endowment funds to provide more opportunities for disadvantaged Colorado students.

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## COLLABORATORS

The policy ideas represented in this document have been crowd sourced from over 340 people. The names listed below contributed in an additional manner to further develop the ideas, rank and prioritize them.

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