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CO4F METRICS

As of March 2020

\$8,300,000

Total Capitalization

\$1,641,307

Funds Available

\$6,658,693

Total Funded and Committed

Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) improves access to healthy food in underserved Colorado communities by financing grocery stores and other forms of healthy

CO4F Supports Development of New Grocery Store

The Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) recently provided \$1.2 million in financing to support the development of LaGree’s Food Store in Poncha Springs.



Commercial property developer, Sam Mick, owns the building and leases it to the store owners.

For Poncha Springs residents, the opening of LaGree’s in September 2019 has helped ease the strain of limited full-service grocery retail in the area.

“Customers always find things at LaGree’s they can’t find anywhere else. Everybody’s super happy about it,” said Mick. He added that to meet increasing local needs, the store is vital.

“The whole community is really growing; several subdivisions are being built. I bought the property from the Town of Poncha Springs, and the promise was to build a grocery store. They are growing this community and want the amenities to go with it,” he said.

food retail.

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LaGree's is a 20,000 square-foot store, with a 12,000 square-foot True Value hardware store attached. Customers may purchase items from either section and pay at one checkout station, providing added convenience. LaGree's offers fresh produce, meat, dairy, and dry goods. The store supports 30 jobs.

In the future, Mick plans to develop a town center at the LaGree's site to further provide amenities to community residents.

Grocery Feasibility Study Conducted for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

By Bree Davies, P.U.M.A. Associate

CO4F has grown and evolved to fit the fresh food access needs of unique communities across the state. Most recently, this allowed CO4F to assist in conducting a grocery feasibility study for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT) in Southern Colorado.

Upon visiting southwest Colorado, outreach and technical assistance provider for CO4F, P.U.M.A., learned about the food access needs of the UMUT. Region 9 Economic Development Director, Laura Lewis Marchino, facilitated a meeting with P.U.M.A. and the UMUT's Director of Planning and Development, Bernadette Cuthair. The UMUT's population center is Towaoc, Colorado, approximately 25 minutes south of Cortez. Bernadette shared the community's food access concerns, including the far distance needed to travel for groceries, lack of community gathering spaces, poverty, and health disparities.

CO4F partnered with local grocery retail expert, Eric Kornacki, at THRIVE Partners to conduct a grocery feasibility study that included market research and in-person outreach to the Tribe. CO4F administrator, CHFA, helped support the study with a \$2,500 Corporate Giving contribution.

Community outreach was essential to the feasibility study, as it supplemented market data with an understanding of the Tribe's unique social, cultural, and economic needs. Through in-person dialogue and an online survey, the project team learned about the community's food-access challenges, desire for new job opportunities, and priorities for improved health outcomes.

A series of focus-group meetings in October 2019 gave community members a platform to share personal accounts of the importance of a gathering place to socialize and pass on generational and cultural knowledge around nourishment. Elders told stories of a long-gone "trading post" that acted as both a place for tribal members to buy groceries, eat together, and connect intergenerationally. The outreach also allowed the team to meet with business leaders in the community to brainstorm ways that tribal enterprises could share resources to improve healthy food options.

The final draft of the feasibility study was delivered to the Tribe in February 2020. The study offered several recommendations and alternative scenarios, including a short-term option of retrofitting the existing travel center with more fresh food inventory. Ultimately, the feasibility study found that there is

adequate demand for a new grocery store located along highway US-160, which could serve residents, tourists, and employees alike.

The core of CO4F's mission is to increase fresh food access in under-resourced communities. The flexibility of this program allowed CO4F to do just that to help serve the UMUT community. CO4F's established collaboration with CHFA, regional partners, and grocery experts, allowed us to provide technical assistance needed to fulfill the mission of expanding fresh food access. Our hope is that this process helped lay the foundation for the Tribe to take next steps to improve grocery access in the near future.

CHFA Supports Nonprofits Providing Food Assistance as Needs Soar

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, CO4F administrator, CHFA, focused its Corporate Giving efforts on organizations supporting critical needs. One of CHFA's main areas of focus has been on organizations providing food resources and meal delivery. Feeding America, estimates the number of food insecure individuals nationwide could increase by 17.1 million (up 46 percent) as a result of COVID-19.

In response, CHFA has donated \$251,500 to 31 organizations* across Colorado providing hunger relief. These organizations are seeing vast increases in the need for their services, mixed with a decrease in donations and volunteers, all while fundamentally changing their operations to adhere to social distancing guidelines to keep their clients, staff, and volunteers safe.

Among the nonprofits supported is La Puente's Food Bank Network of the San Luis Valley. The organization works to address the immediacy of hunger and access to nutritious food in the San Luis Valley through a network of 15 food banks. They have seen a 50 percent increase in requests for food since the pandemic began. This is especially significant considering one in four residents already utilized the network at least once a year. CHFA donated \$5,000 to purchase food and supplies to support their efforts.

**As of June 24, 2020*

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