This work focuses on supporting the development of thriving rural communities in Colorado. Using research-based leadership development training, storytelling workshops that celebrate shared regional heritage, and events designed to engage residents in community dialogue, our work builds greater local civic capacity and strengthens community resilience.

**VIBRANT COMMUNITIES FOCUS AREAS**

**Increased Civic Engagement and Inclusive Leadership**

Activities in this category support the development and implementation of community-based programming and opportunities to support new and emerging leaders from all backgrounds and engage local voices in public participation. Programs achieving these goals include:

- Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI)
- Civic Learning Labs

**TIMELINE OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES ACTIVITIES IN FY 2022-2023**

**SUMMER 2022**

- Positions posted for regional Vibrant Communities Specialists
- Planning and program development begins for launching Rural Action Project pilot

**FALL 2022**

- Outreach to rural communities about hosting locally sponsored Rural Action Projects begins
- Vibrant Communities Specialist hired and onboarded for Mountain region
- Local cohorts of FLTI begin in Eagle County, Morgan County, and San Luis Valley
- Onboarding training provided for Rural Action Project Host Organizations

Photo provided by Ty Coleman, Alamosa Mayor

San Luis Valley: Emerging community leaders gain access to and learn the importance of connecting with their local and state elected officials as part of their FLTI training.
**Bridging Rural and Urban Communities**

Activities in this category focus on fostering connections between rural and urban communities through programming focused on public issues commonly experienced throughout Colorado. Programs working toward these goals include:

- Statewide FLTI Facilitator Certification Training
- Day at the Capitol Events

**Extended Humanities**

Activities in this category use the art of storytelling and conversation to strengthen sense of connection and belonging throughout communities, spread awareness regarding community activities, future connections, and opportunities for change. Programs achieving these goals include:

- Rural Action Projects
- The Art of Ranching Storytelling Project

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**WINTER 2023**

- Three-part Community Conversations phase of Rural Action Project begins
- Individual civic projects are implemented by 31 FLTI participants in 3 rural areas

**SPRING 2023**

- Over 30 individuals from rural FLTI cohorts attend Day at the Capitol events
- Community-driven local projects implemented in 10 participating Rural Action Project areas
- Three rural cohorts of FLTI graduate 31 new community leaders
- Vibrant Communities regional specialists hired for Western and Eastern regions
Differences in Civic Knowledge

All FLTI participants are surveyed regarding their levels of public participation, civic knowledge, social connectedness, and sense of belonging in their community before they begin FLTI and then again at the end of their cohorts. Gains in civic knowledge shown here are the degree of change between pre- and post-surveys for all rural participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre:</th>
<th>Post:</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know how state budgets are made</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1,043%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know who their local elected officials are</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>183%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know who their state elected officials are</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>85%*</td>
<td>325%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Since 2009, FLTI of Colorado has made accessible leadership development opportunities available in partnership with community organizations and local CSU Extension offices, using the nationally renowned Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) curriculum.

During the 2022-2023 FY, three rural FLTI cohorts completed their 20-session journeys: Eagle County, Morgan County, and San Luis Valley (Alamosa). A total of 31 participants completed FLTI in these communities.

Across the board, FLT uses several key practices that make it accessible to diverse members from each community, making critical progress toward Extension’s goals for achieving USDA-NIFA’s REG parity requirements. Such practices include:

- **Affordability** - Every applicant selected into an FLTI cohort receives 100% tuition scholarship.
- **Child Care Assistance** - Child care is either provided on-site or via childcare stipend depending on the needs of each cohort.
- **Language Justice** - As resources permit, simultaneous interpretation is provided for participants with Limited English Proficiency. Two of the three rural sites were able to offer these services in this year’s cohorts. All printed materials are available in English and Spanish.
- **Shared meals** - At every session of FLTI, cohort participants, facilitators, site coordinator and invited members of the community come together to share a meal, fostering community connectedness and supplemental nutrition to individuals and families who may be struggling with food insecurity.
In partnership with CSU’s Center for Public Deliberation, CSU Extension collaborated with 10 rural communities to pilot the RAP initiative.

The RAP model featured the following components in its first iteration:

**Onboarding and Training**
Ongoing training and materials were provided for rural community partners to local residents in their community conversations.

**Distributed Conference Model**
For each of the 3 community conversations, all RAP hosts across the state livestreamed a guest speaker presentation. After each presentation, communities then participated in facilitated conversations with others from their area only.

**Targeted Topics**
The three topics that all RAP sites covered included:

1. Identifying Community Needs & Goals
2. Telling Community Stories
3. Developing Community Projects

**Locally Designed and Driven Community Projects**
Using the data collected at each community conversation, RAP hosts worked with their community members to design and implement a project that would strengthen their community.

**Funding to Support Project Implementation**
Rural Initiative funds were provided to support the projects proposed by RAP Hosts.

Nine of the ten initial RAP Hosts proposed projects for implementation. One of these was a consolidation of two efforts in the same area (Garfield County). Projects were designed and implemented through the end of FY 2022-2023 and final reports have captured some promising data about the impact of this pilot.

A second round is scheduled to begin in Fall 2023 and will continue through June 2024.

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**RAP COMMUNITY PROJECTS BY CATEGORY**

**HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

- **Garfield County**
  - Health Equity & Resource Fairs

- **Sedgwick County**
  - 55+ Forever Young

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

- **Logan County**
  - Cinco de Mayo Kermes

- **Cheyenne County**
  - Cheyenne County Heritage Trail

- **Prowers County**
  - Stories of Our People

- **San Luis Valley**
  - Adobe Clay Oven Exhibition

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

- **Morgan County**
  - ESL & Textile Production Classes

- **Huerfano County**
  - Community Tree Planting

- **Kit Carson County**
  - Improved Library Communications