COLORADO
Safety Net Collaborative

Strategic Framework

2027–2029

Helping Colorado's safety net clinics to thrive.

Colorado Safety Net Collaborative
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Adopted by the CSNC Board of Directors

Overview

The Colorado Safety Net Collaborative (CSNC) is a collection of community-grown health care clinics across Colorado that provide care for those who can't afford it. Our members are independent, community-based providers with the flexibility to shape care around what their communities actually need — primary care broadly understood, including pediatrics, oral health, women's health, public health, and prevention — and to deliver it in a culturally responsive way. Since 2019, the Collaborative has helped clinics access funding and other resources to provide critical care in their communities.

CSNC exists to ensure that clinics are not alone in facing these pressures. By convening clinic leaders, amplifying their voices, and providing tailored supports, CSNC strengthens the collective resilience of Colorado's safety net. The next three years represent a critical window for CSNC to grow strategically, deepen partnerships, and position CSNC to meet this moment.

Current Context and Insights for CSNC's Future

In preparation for the development of this strategic plan, CSNC engaged in an in-depth situational analysis with support from a third-party strategic planning partner. Insights from this process, which included engaging more than 60 stakeholders, as well as secondary research into current dynamics likely to impact safety net clinics in Colorado, created a foundation of knowledge from which to build a strategic future. From this, CSNC confirms it plays a vital role in strengthening and sustaining community-grown health safety net clinics that serve uninsured and Medicaid populations.

With approximately 40 member clinics across the state, CSNC helps fill critical gaps in access to care for the nearly 700,000 Coloradans without insurance. Rising insurance costs and Medicaid redeterminations are projected to further increase the uninsured population, with rural, low-income, and immigrant communities most affected. At the same time, clinics face growing financial strain, workforce shortages, and threats to long-term viability, particularly in rural areas.

Stakeholders affirm that CSNC's advocacy, backbone role, and policy visibility are highly valued by clinics, funders, and partners. Clinics identify pressing needs in operational funding, workforce retention, Medicaid reform, shared services, and leadership succession. Funders respect CSNC's alignment with equity goals and advocacy leadership, but are looking for clearer impact metrics, stronger communications, and sustainability planning. Partners recognize CSNC as a unique voice and connector, while encouraging clearer role definition and a more unified sector message. Collectively, the takeaway is clear: CSNC is a trusted convener and advocate but must grow its organizational capacity, communications, and role clarity to maximize impact.

Strengths

CSNC has important organizational strengths, including strong advocacy and entrepreneurial leadership, trusted relationships, systems credibility, and near-term financial security supported by a lean structure. Growing leadership beyond one individual will help ensure stability over time. Becoming more visible, showing impact more clearly, and sharpening how CSNC describes its value will strengthen how others see and support the work. Building up

infrastructure, diversifying funding, and engaging and developing the capacity of the board will give CSNC the staying power it needs.

Opportunities

CSNC has opportunities to expand shared services like training, staffing support, and pooled funds that could ease pressures on clinics while multiplying impact across the network. Stronger communications and storytelling would help shine a light on the critical role clinics play, making their contributions more visible to funders, policymakers, and communities. By bringing clinics and partners together more intentionally, CSNC can reduce fragmentation in the field and help build a stronger, unified voice. Deepening relationships with funders and diversifying revenue sources will also set the organization up for long-term sustainability.

Risks to navigate

Continued reliance on a single leader requires CSNC to be thoughtful and intentional about transition strategy for any changes in leadership. Limited infrastructure can make it harder to attract investment and engagement, and CSNC may not align with funder priorities in Colorado. Clinics themselves are stretched thin, which may affect their ability to participate fully in CSNC's efforts. And with many types of providers serving similar populations, competitive dynamics in the field could complicate collaboration.

The operating environment

CSNC member clinics are operating in an environment where:

- Health care costs remain high and operating pressures on clinics have intensified.
- Member clinics reported a significant increase in uninsured patients from 2023 to 2024.
- Some of this demand appears to be driven by patients being redirected from other systems that cannot meet their needs.
- The impacts of subsidy loss and Medicaid revalidation may still be unfolding.
- Many communities face access barriers. In particular, immigrant and LGBTQIA+ communities are facing heightened barriers and vulnerability under federal policy.
- Member clinics are often among the few places where patients can access care safely and without exclusion.
- Geographic gaps remain across the state, and identification of these areas is critical so the safety net can better understand where care access remains fragile or incomplete.

To address these dynamics, CSNC has identified several potential pathways: serving as an intermediary to pool and redistribute funds, expanding programming and capacity-building services, acting as a fiscal sponsor to support clinic capacity, enhancing media presence and storytelling, and moving toward a bold, well-resourced vision for the state's safety net.

Where this leaves CSNC

CSNC stands at a pivotal moment. Its respected role as a coalition-builder positions it to expand its impact, but long-term sustainability will depend on clarifying its unique value, strengthening organizational infrastructure and leadership succession, diversifying funding with multi-year commitments, and balancing fierce advocacy with collaborative sector leadership.

It is clear that CSNC has helped improve understanding of member clinics' place in the ecosystem, including through policy and advocacy-related work. At the same time, CSNC

operates without the scale or infrastructure of larger policy organizations, which makes clarity of role and focus especially important for this period.

Additionally, maintaining collaboration across the safety-net system and avoiding fragmentation or competition that weakens the collective ability to ensure access for people who need care will be another priority. CSNC recognizes that:

- CSNC has increased its visibility and value as a representative voice for member clinics.
- Efforts such as Save Our Safety Net have helped policymakers and partners better understand the role of these clinics.
- Member clinics continue to occupy an important but sometimes under-recognized space in the health care ecosystem.
- CSNC's role should continue to be sharpened and clearly communicated, particularly in relation to larger safety-net institutions.
- The collaborative foundation of the safety net remains essential and should continue to guide CSNC's posture and partnerships.

CSNC is seen as essential to Colorado's health safety net. To meet growing needs, it must evolve from a lean, leader-dependent organization into a well-resourced, strategically positioned coalition capable of delivering lasting, systems-level impact. CSNC's goals for the next three years reflect CSNC's need to strategically meet the needs of Colorado's safety net clinics.

Guiding Principles

Vision

High-quality healthcare is available and accessible to everyone living in Colorado.

Mission

CSNC advocates for and convenes Colorado's safety net clinics, amplifying their collective voice, shaping policy, and building partnerships that improve healthcare availability, access, and quality for the people who need it most and where no one is turned away.

Values

Value	What it means
Equity	We believe every Coloradan deserves high-quality healthcare, regardless of income or insurance. Equity for CSNC means helping clinics center communities most affected by barriers to care and working to remove those barriers.
Collaboration	We know the safety net is stronger when we work together. Collaboration means building trust, sharing knowledge, and convening clinics and partners as a unified voice.
Patient and Community Voice	We honor clinics and the communities they serve. Supporting community and patient voices means amplifying lived experience, elevating culturally relevant care, and ensuring local strengths guide solutions.
Advocacy	We stand with and for safety net clinics. Advocacy means amplifying their collective voice, influencing policy, and securing the resources needed to sustain care across Colorado.
Stewardship	We take seriously our responsibility to sustain the safety net for the long term. Stewardship means using resources wisely, diversifying funding, and strengthening the systems and structures that support our clinics.
Trust	We create spaces where safety net clinics and partners feel welcomed, respected, and safe to engage. Trust means building relationships through transparency, consistency, and shared commitment to the communities we serve.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Orientation (2027–2029)

Over the next three years, CSNC will focus first on sustaining its core activities in support of member clinics, while also building a thoughtful pathway for intentional growth. This growth will be pursued sustainably, collaboratively, and in close alignment with the needs and voices of Colorado's safety net clinics. The impact we seek is building a stronger and more sustainable safety net clinic network that is a vital part of health care delivery.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Build a Sustainable Staffing, Governance, and Funding Model for CSNC

Vision of impact. *CSNC is a financially stable, well-resourced hub with the staff capacity, systems, data and partnerships needed to deliver high-quality services over time.*

Objectives

- Diversify revenue streams through a mix of member contributions, philanthropy, government contracts, and fee-for-service options.
- Grow the CSNC staff team to support core functions (program delivery, communications, data/evaluation, and development) while maintaining a nimble, collaborative culture.
- Develop and implement a three-year fundraising strategy aligned with CSNC's growth and sustainability needs.
- Build internal systems for financial management, HR, and data collection that reflect nonprofit best practices and enable scalability.

Goal 2. Build and Deliver High-Value Services and Programming for Colorado's Safety Net Clinics

Vision of impact. *Safety net clinics across Colorado are equipped with the tools, knowledge, and peer connections to strengthen operations, improve care delivery, and advance equity for the communities they serve.*

Objectives

- Design and deliver a core suite of clinic-facing services (capacity-building workshops, technical assistance, peer learning networks, shared tools and resources).
- Pilot and evaluate two to three new service offerings each year in response to emerging clinic needs (e.g., workforce development, data and IT supports, integrated care models).
- Establish a regular feedback loop with clinics to assess satisfaction, capture unmet needs, and inform service refinements.
- Expand participation across urban, rural, and frontier regions to ensure programming reaches a majority of safety net clinics statewide.

Goal 3. Engage in Advocacy and Collaborative Efforts to Strengthen Colorado's Safety Net Clinics in a Challenging Funding Environment

Vision of impact. *CSNC amplifies the collective voice of safety net clinics to secure resources, influence policy, and build collaborative solutions that safeguard clinics' ability to serve patients, particularly in times of financial uncertainty. CSNC uses improved data capacity to more effectively validate clinic experiences, support advocacy, improve fundraising, and make a more compelling case to funders and partners, ensuring that data is more central to both communications and strategy.*

Objectives

- Develop a unified advocacy agenda, shaped by clinic priorities, that addresses reimbursement, workforce, and operational sustainability.
- Build relationships with policymakers, payers, and allied organizations to advance policies and funding that support safety net clinics.
- Convene clinics regularly to share timely updates, coordinate collective responses, and strengthen collaboration.
- Produce data and stories that demonstrate the value and impact of safety net clinics for Colorado communities and leverage them in advocacy efforts.

Goal 4. Strengthen Strategic Partnerships to Benefit Colorado's Safety Net Clinics and the Communities They Serve

Vision of impact. *CSNC's partnerships increase the visibility, capacity, and influence of Colorado's safety net clinics. Funders, policymakers, health systems, and community partners understand the essential role clinics play and work with CSNC to expand resources, remove barriers, and improve care for people who need it most.*

Objectives

- Partner with organizations and communities (e.g., associations, public health entities, academic partners, trusted community partners) to expand services and supports available to clinics.
- Explore shared initiatives with partners to address workforce shortages, data capacity, behavioral health integration, and other pressing system needs.
- Position CSNC as a bridge organization that brings clinics together with funders, policymakers, and community stakeholders for collective problem-solving.
- Regularly assess the ecosystem of support for safety net clinics and identify gaps CSNC is best positioned to fill through partnership rather than duplication.

Strategic Plan Implementation and Learning

To keep this a living guide, we will monitor progress, revisit priorities as needed, and create space for reflection and learning. That means tracking implementation milestones, engaging staff and board in regular review, and adjusting our approach as conditions evolve — so the plan stays relevant, actionable, and aligned with our mission.

Key actions

- Monitor progress through regular check-ins and milestone tracking.
- Engage staff and board in annual reflection and plan updates.
- Hold to our goals while adapting strategies to emerging needs.