

FINDINGS SUMMARY

# Partner & Perception Survey

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Presented by Trailhead's External Exploration Team

May 2025





# External Exploration Team

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# Purpose

The External Exploration team disseminated the Partner & Perception Survey to gauge how our partners **perceive** us and whether they **understand** and are **satisfied** with our work.

The results of the survey, along with Barefoot PR's findings from their *community conversations* with a small selection of partners, will inform how we:

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## Brand & Position

Clearly communicate our role in Colorado's public health landscape and our work in alignment with our Theory of Change.

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## Function

Share programmatic successes and opportunities for deeper partner connections and clearer, more consistent processes across our work.

# The Survey at a Glance

16 questions

Open from March 14 - 31<sup>st</sup>

163 responses from 271 partners (60% response rate)

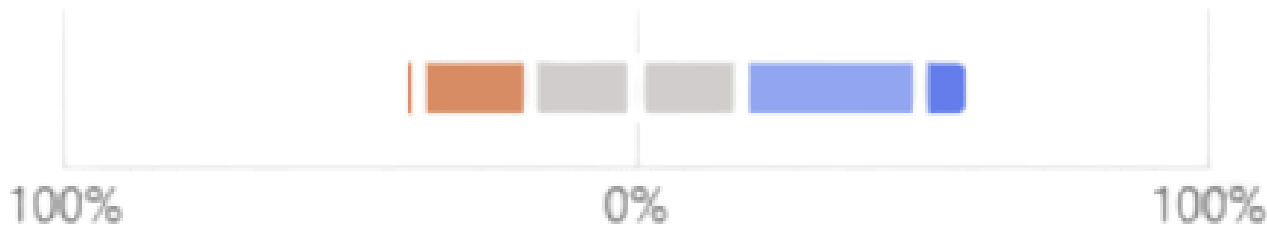
Most respondents were very familiar with Trailhead, and had varying familiarity with specific programs

72% of respondents had partnered with Trailhead in the past two years

## How familiar are you with Trailhead Institute?

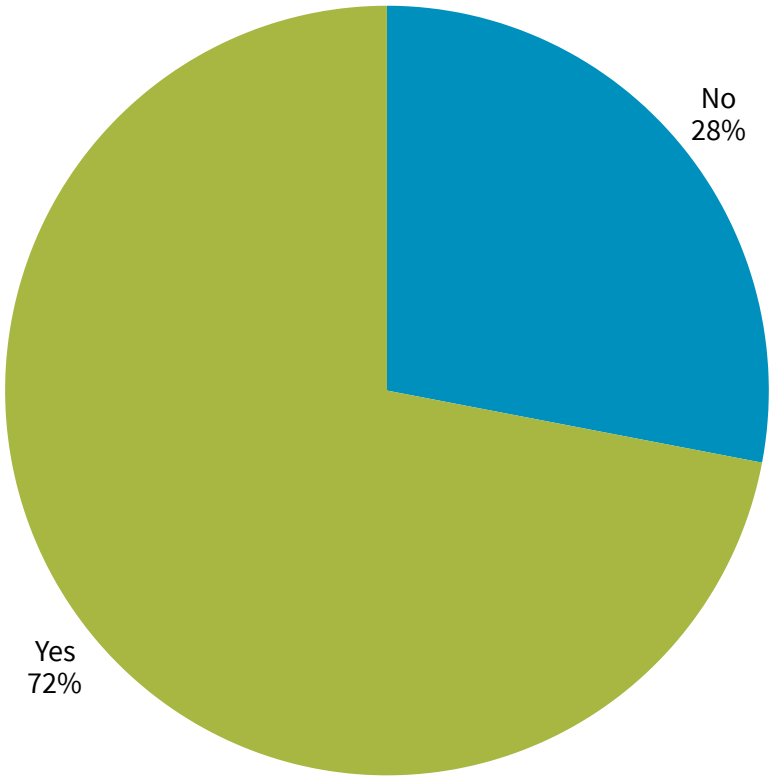
Not familiar at all   Slightly familiar   Moderately familiar   Very familiar   Extremely familiar

Level of familiarity:



## Are you currently, or have you partnered with Trailhead in the past two years?

No   Yes

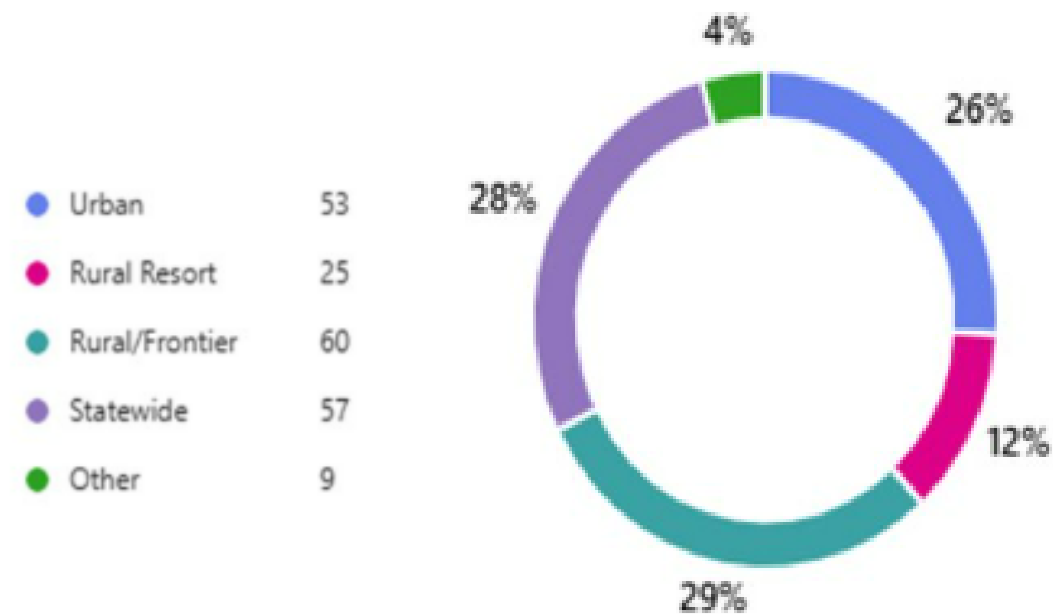




# Respondents

- Partners and prospective partners from 11 different types of organizations responded.
- The **most common** was local government (47 partners) and nonprofit (46)
- The **least common** was funder (1) and business (1).
- Respondents also served a **wide range of geographic regions** in the state.
  - The most common was statewide (55), followed by rural/frontier (36) and urban (34).

**What geographic communities do you primarily serve?**



# Why Now?

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This is a pivotal moment to clarify Trailhead's **unique value, deepen relationships**, and foster greater **cross-collaboration**.

Insights from Barefoot PR's community conversations reinforced the that **public health is at a crossroads**.

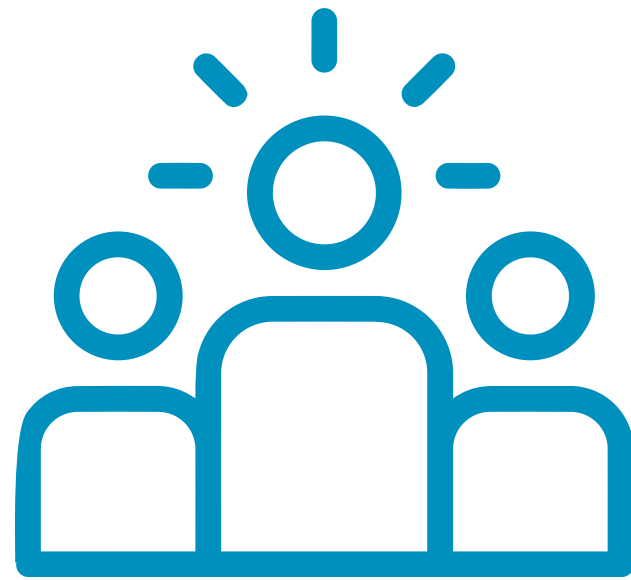
In the Partner and Perception Survey, partners echoed the present threats to public health, needs for strong system-level coordination, and the need for a strong voice for public health in Colorado.

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At a time where public health is under attack at the national level, I'd love to see Trailhead serve as a voice for public health in Colorado.



# Key Findings



## **Trailhead's people are its greatest asset.**

The majority of partners surveyed trust Trailhead as a valued partner to their work.



## **Trailhead is recognized for collaboration and relationship-building.**

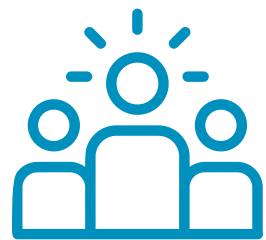
Improving administrative systems and strengthening the public health system is less understood.



## **Trailhead's broader role in the public health system isn't clear.**

Many partners have a localized understanding of Trailhead, limited to specific teams or programs.

## Key Finding 1



# Trailhead's people are its greatest asset.

The majority of partners surveyed trust Trailhead as a valued partner to their work.

## What Emerged

- **Partners have high expectations of Trailhead** to be supportive, reliable, transparent, collaborative, inclusive, and community centered.
  - The majority of respondents feel we meet these high expectations.
  - A small number of partners surveyed feel we meet these high expectations within specific programs, but inconsistently as an organization.
- **Familiarity drives trust.** Higher degrees of familiarity with Trailhead is strongly associated with trusting Trailhead to be a 'value-added partner' in the long term.

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Trailhead has been our most trusted partner! They are responsive, professional, and always willing and able to help us learn as we build capacity. We have recommended Trailhead to every small nonprofit that seeks to apply for bigger grants.

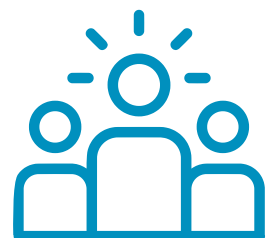
“

Su apoyo ante las situaciones siempre esta para apoyar y respaldar el trabajo que realizamos en la comunidad con altos estándares de transparencia y comunicación y guianza.

*Your support in situations is always there to support and back the work we do in the community with high standards of transparency, communication, and guidance.*



## Key Finding 1



**Trailhead's people are its greatest asset.**  
The majority of partners surveyed trust Trailhead as a valued partner to their work.

- People who trust Trailhead are **more likely to be interested in collaborating** in other areas and they **may lack awareness of available services** and opportunities for engagement.

“

I wrote somewhat unlikely because I am unaware that Trailhead offers specific trainings or meetings on those topics\*. If I looked at the website and it said "we can come to your agency and provide support on your interest in collaboration with communities through a one hour or half day facilitated training", then I would think of Trailhead for those activities. Right now, I wouldn't.

*\*Topics included capacity building, collaboration with communities, administrative support, facilitation, youth engagement, and fiscal sponsorship.*

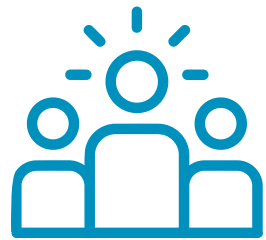
## How Competent is Trailhead?



## How Reliable is Trailhead?



## Key Finding 1



### Trailhead's people are its greatest asset.

The majority of partners surveyed trust Trailhead as a valued partner to their work.

- **Many partners look to Trailhead for resources to support their work.** Resources related to community engagement, youth sexual health, health equity, workforce development, and financial support were consistently cited.

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They check in with me once per month to provide support and provide resources as needed. I know I can always call on Trailhead for more training opportunities or ideas as needed.

“

I would like to use Trailhead to help us build community outreach skills.

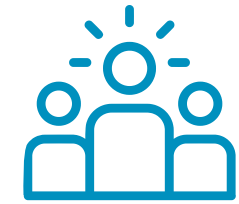
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We have tried for so many grants, but need help / strategic planning to drive other sources of sustainability. We need help building financial resilience by packaging our impact and financials into transparent financial reports and statements of impact that appeal to donors and sponsors. We don't have capacity to do that ourselves.

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Again, I don't know Trailhead as a whole, but the Youth Health space has been a fantastic resource and continues to be so throughout the state.





# Actionable Insights

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- Clearly articulate and raise awareness of services available through Trailhead.
- Design cross-programmatic learning and engagement opportunities.
- Build on current *and* past partnerships.

## Key Finding 2



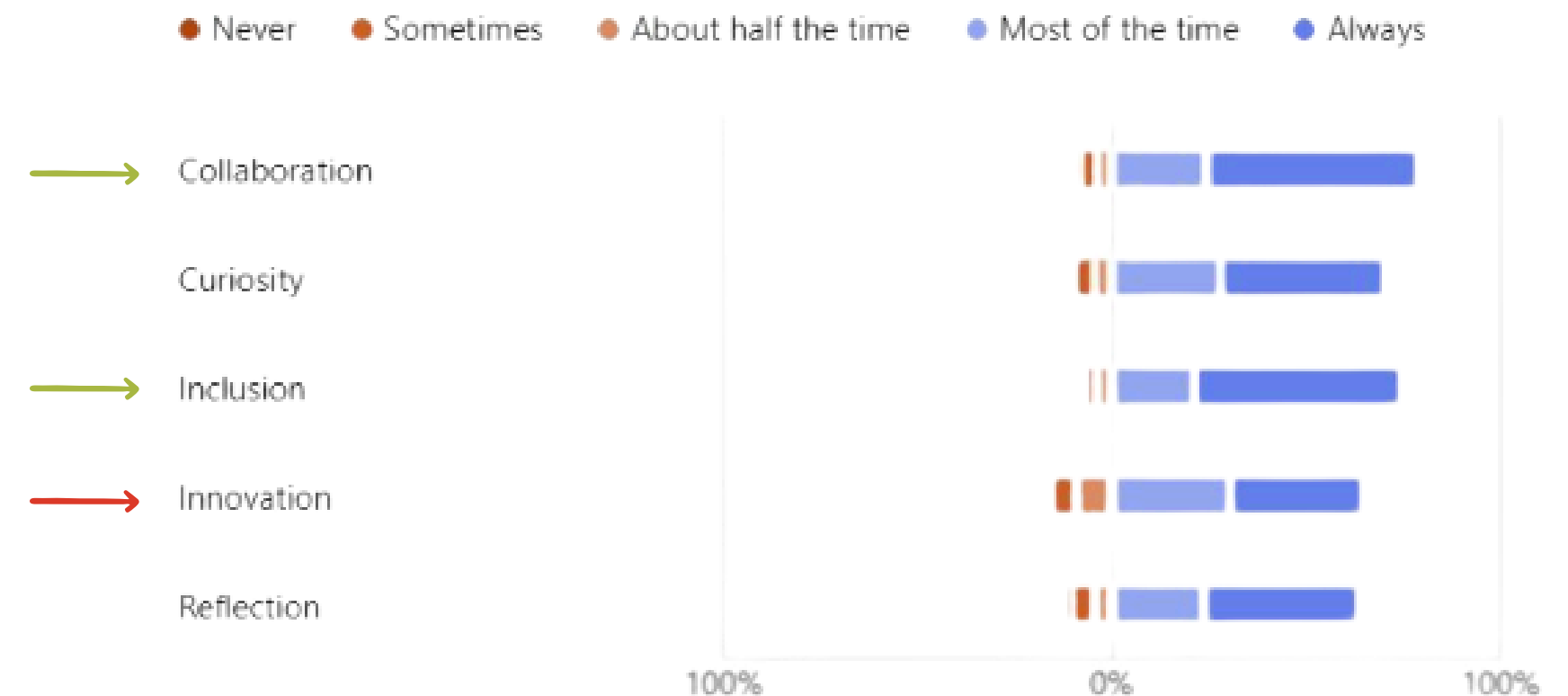
# Trailhead is recognized for collaboration and relationship-building.

Improving administrative systems and strengthening the public health system is less understood.

## What Emerged

- Of Trailhead's key strategies, partners are most familiar with Trailhead's ability to **build relationships**.
- 60% of respondents said Trailhead builds relationships across the public health field extremely well (26.25%) or very well (33.75%).
- **Innovation** was the **least experienced** value and **Collaboration** and Inclusion **ranked high**.

**In your experience with Trailhead, how consistently do we demonstrate the following values?**

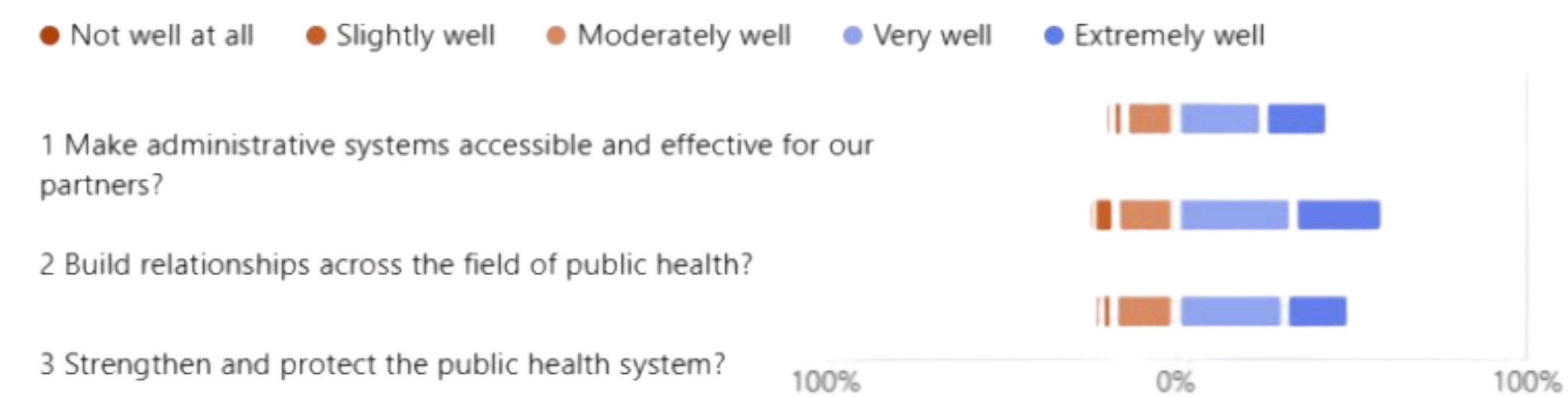






Trailhead is recognized for collaboration and relationship-building, while improving administrative systems and strengthening the public health system is less understood.

In your experience, how well does Trailhead:



We make administrative systems accessible and effective for our partners	2.14
We build relationships across the field of public health	2.07
We strengthen and protect the public health system	2.14

“

Trailhead has been a facilitator of connections. Bringing movers and shakers into a commons space where collaboration can happen.

“

I am presently not aware that Trailhead offers assistance in some of the areas listed above, specifically Administrative support (what does this even look like?).



# Actionable Insights

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- Define and demonstrate innovation at Trailhead.
- Build understanding for unclear terms such as *innovation*, *administrative systems*, and the *public health system* that are central to our Theory of Change.
- Utilize storytelling to show how Trailhead strengthens the public health system.



### Key Finding 3



## Trailhead's broader role in the public health system isn't clear.

Many partners have a localized understanding of Trailhead, limited to specific teams or programs.



Get more clear about your strategic priorities and what you do that is different from other orgs. It's not clear how you support local public health agencies.

### What Emerged

- The majority of open-ended feedback received was **neutral** and **suggestion-oriented**, with many partners seeking to better understand the unique role Trailhead plays within the public health system and clarity on the services Trailhead is able to provide.
- Terms and phrases such as innovation, strengthening the public health system, and administrative systems, are not consistently understood by partners.
- The majority of partners learn of Trailhead through personal referrals (e.g., word of mouth, colleagues, etc.).



I will say that I worked at the health department for many years and did not consider Trailhead as a resource or collaborative partner, which could have been a limitation on my end and/or a lack of understanding of Trailhead's role within the public health space.



If Trailhead strengthens and protects the public health system, it would be helpful to have some communication around that. I am not sure what this means or what it looks like, particularly in this political environment.

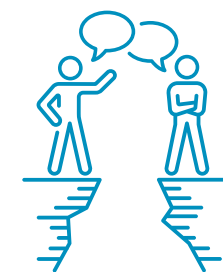


# Actionable Insights

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- Develop a clear organizational narrative internally and externally, supported by messaging resources, thought leadership, and content development.
- Clarify Trailhead's role as one of Colorado's two statewide public health institutes and its contribution to strengthening the public health system.





# Limitations

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- **Unequal representation** of partners across programs.
- **Non-response Bias:** Certain groups, such as partners with closer or more recent connections to Trailhead, may be more likely to respond to the survey than others.
- **Wording:** The way questions are phrased can influence respondents' answers, and terms may have varied meaning among partners.
- **Selection Bias:** Trailhead staff self-selected partners to participate in the survey. People who choose to respond may have different characteristics or opinions from those who do not, affecting the survey's representativeness.
- **Contextual Bias:** Current events are impacting many public health entities and community-based organizations, which can influence how respondents answer.

# Recap: Actionable Insights

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## Brand & Position

Clearly communicate our role in Colorado's public health landscape and our work in alignment with our Theory of Change.

- Develop a clear organizational narrative supported by messaging resources, thought leadership, and content development.
- Clarify Trailhead's role as one of Colorado's two statewide public health institutes and its contribution to strengthening the public health system.
- Clarify and build understanding for unclear terms such as *innovation*, *administrative systems*, and the *public health system* that are central to our Theory of Change.
- Clearly articulate and raise awareness of services available through Trailhead.

## Function

Share programmatic successes and opportunities for deeper partner connections and clearer, more consistent processes across our work.

- Design cross-programmatic learning and engagement opportunities for partners and prospective partners.
- Build on current *and* past partnerships.
- Create internal learning opportunities that unpack partner interactions that have and haven't gone well.
- Share tips across Programs for increasing equity, collaboration, and consistency across our work.





# What's Next

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- **Refine Messaging**
  - New **Messaging Platform** developed by Barefoot PR to be completed in August.
- **Brand Awareness Strategy**
  - Following completion of the Strategic Plan and messaging platform, Barefoot PR will produce a **Thought Leadership Roadmap** outlining strategies for brand awareness that build understanding for Trailhead's unique role in Colorado's public health ecosystem.
- **Resource Development & Implementation**
  - Identify, develop, and prioritize messaging resources and marketing strategies to build internal communication capacity and strengthen understanding of Trailhead's unique value proposition.