In response to the COVID-19 emergency, City of Boulder staff launched a team of Emergency Response Connectors in March 2020 to share accurate and updated COVID-19 information, educate community members about basic needs resources, center lived experience, and document concerns and issues raised by community members.

This program brought together two existing city programs, Community Connectors – natural leaders who are trusted voices within their neighborhoods and who strengthen the relationship between the city and the community – and Better Together – a series of disaster resilience classes designed to increase collective capacities through disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Currently, 14 Emergency Response Connectors (ERCs) are involved who live or work within underrepresented communities or hard-to-reach neighborhoods and receive a stipend for their time and expertise ($20/hr for 4hrs/wk). An additional 23 ERCs from across the city serve as volunteers. The ERC program will continue as needed to respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis on a month-by-month basis.

**Social Distancing**

The health and safety of ERCs, their families, and their communities is of highest priority. ERCs strictly follow public health guidelines and maintain social distance while conducting their work. Ordinarily, nearly all of this work may take place in-person – through gatherings, canvassing, or house meetings. During this COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all this work needs to occur by phone, text, social media, app, or email. Some communities have found that communicating via flyers on bulletin boards in community utility spaces (e.g., mailboxes, dumpsters) works very well to share info and introduce themselves as ERCs, available to share updates, resources, and avenues for addressing neighborhood issues.
Recruitment

For stipend-based ERC positions, city staff heavily relied on outreach and nomination support from community organizations (e.g., partner nonprofits, manufactured home community HOAs) to identify well-qualified candidates. Prioritization was given to candidates who were residents of specific low-income or manufactured home communities as well as who served as bilingual cultural brokers within their communities (e.g., Latino, Nepali). Staff also leveraged the city’s Rapid Response Racial Equity Assessment to be more intentional and strategic about recruiting for stipend-based positions.

Interviews for stipend-based ERC positions include a review of program structure, role responsibilities, and commitment as well as a few of the following sample questions:

- Please tell us a bit about your community.
- What experience or skills or characteristics of yours would help you be a great ERC?
• In the context of educating community members, how could you expand your reach by building relationships or connecting with more community members – while maintaining social distance – during this COVID emergency?

Eval Rubric (scale of 1-5)
• Sense of community-building
• Communication skills
• Relevant experience and background

For volunteer-based ERC positions, city staff shared the opportunity with Better Together disaster resiliency course graduates, recent participants in civic programming, neighborhood associations or HOAs, and neighborhood-based social media networks.

Orientation

A 90 minute orientation was designed for ERCs beginning in this role (view slides here) and included:

• Welcome & Intros
• Background & Context
  o Emergency Operations Center, Emergency Support Function 23 (Community Engagement)
  o 2013 Floods
  o COVID-19
• Emergency Response Connectors Program
  o Overview
  o Values
  o Responsibilities
  o Circles of Support
• Assessment of Availability of COVID-19 Info and Resources
• Priority Messaging
• Connecting with Community Members and Expanding Networks
• ERC Resources
• Immediate Next Steps

Team Check-ins

Weekly bilingual check-ins as an Emergency Response Connector team are hosted via Zoom so community members can join via computer, smartphone, or calling in. ERCs have the option to participate in one of two sessions, morning or afternoon, with one option featuring simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish. Our agenda has usually included:
• Welcome and Deep Breathing Practice
• One Words Activity – each ERC shares one word that captures their past week and one word that captures their energy coming into this specific check-in
• Bright Spots Activity – ERCs share what is working well or what progress they’re seeing in their communities
• Challenges Activity – ERCs share what issues or concerns or additional resources are needed to support their communities
• Support Discussion – often ERCs supporting one another with ideas, recommendations, and actions they have tried in their own communities
• Updates – staff and ERCs share the latest info and resources

ERCs take turns facilitating Team Check-one each week and bring their own facilitation flavor into the meeting.

Team Updates

Each week, staff compile a brief list of the 3-4 most urgent updates or resources to share with communities, broken down into bite-size nuggets (e.g., graphic images, flyers, sentence or two with link to more detail) for easy sharing via text, email list-serv, or social media. A few examples are included below:
Updates and resources are sourced through city, county, state, and national coordinating committees, organizations, public health centers, and community partners as well as ERCs themselves.

**Professional Development**

In addition to building their skill sets in strengthening relationships, communicating updates, actively listening, and expanding their outreach networks, staff have been able to provide ongoing professional development opportunities. This includes bilingual Group Crisis Intervention sessions, facilitated by Victim’s Advocates, that provide space for sharing about reactions and experiences as well as professional and peer validation, education about trauma response, affirmation of hope for the future, and help to begin to repair social fabric after a trauma. Sessions also explore different coping strategies to help us moving forward and discuss the crisis response.

In addition, ERCs have the opportunity to reflect on their role and share their advice for newer ERCs beginning in the program. Select ERCs have also shared ERC work through sessions designed to educate on the ERC model and efforts with staff and local government practitioners.

**Staff Capacity**

Three to four City of Boulder staff are intimately involved in the Emergency Response Connectors program each week, from 5-15% of their FTE. This includes communicating with ERCs individually and sharing group updates, compiling and translating update content, designing update graphics, and coordinating logistics.
Featuring Emergency Response Connectors

- What Works Cities panel (Emergency Response Connector and staff – “Communicating in a pandemic: How cities can better reach non-English speakers” – 

- Interview with Emergency Response Connector Jesús Salazar on KGNU’s Pasa La Voz program, conducted by Rossana Longo, KGNU Equity Reporter (minutes 6:40-15:09) -


- Thank you image shared with volunteer mask makers throughout Boulder County who have constructed masks that ERCs have delivered to underrepresented community members without access to masks (over 1,800 to date)

![Thank You Mask Makers](image-url)

Emergency Response Connectors educating about COVID-19 and distributing masks in:

Boulder Meadows, EFAA transitional housing, Mapleton, Orchard Grove, Ponderosa, San Juan del Centro, San Lazaro, Vista Village
Emergency response connectors build bridges across Boulder community

The City of Boulder helped assemble a team of community members in April to share COVID-19 information, educate their neighbors about community resources, and document concerns and issues raised by members of our community.

The Emergency Response Connectors program is meant to provide equitable information distribution across the diverse cultures within Boulder through community members who are trusted voices within their neighborhoods.

They help neighbors empower each other in various ways during this difficult and unique time, while prioritizing their health and the health of the community by strictly following public health guidelines and maintaining physical distance.

"If something happened to my community because of a natural disaster, that’s my responsibility to them," said Dinesh Kumar Karki, an Emergency Response Connector. "Now I can guide and help them...I help to talk in Nepali with my community and try to solve problems."

One example of this is within the San Juan del Centro community. A bilingual and bicultural connector relied on her relationships with neighbors to provide culturally relevant education about the stay-at-home order. When some community members continued to gather, posing a public health risk, she worked with city staff to distribute 150 educational flyers and dozens of masks.

In another neighborhood, one connector converted their Free Little Library into a food pantry to share groceries and supplies, and this inspired two other connectors to do the same. These are just some examples of the ways the connectors have been working to develop creative ways to keep their neighbors informed. They also provide opportunities for two-way communication between residents and local government.

"These connectors focus on outreach to peers and neighbors, and this program is an effort to center lived experiences," said Brenda Rivenou, the city’s neighborhood liaison. "We want to fully hear and respond to community needs and concerns."

About the Pilot

The project team is conducting this pilot as a new model for supporting disaster response in the City of Boulder and Boulder County. Some stipend-based Emergency Response Connectors live or work within hard-to-reach or underrepresented communities, providing information in more accessible and trusted ways. Other connectors are volunteers who have either led community-building efforts in their neighborhood previously or attended the Better Together disaster preparedness classes hosted by the City of Boulder and Boulder County.

This guidance is designed to be iterative – if clarification or additional points would be helpful, please don’t hesitate to reach out to Ryan Hanschen, Engagement Specialist, hanschenr@bouldercolorado.gov. Thank you!

Appendix

- Position description
- Partnership agreement
- Example of weekly ERC priorities update
- Flyer introducing ERC to community
- Press release
Emergency Response Connector
Position Description

Community Connectors are natural relationship builders who are trusted voices within their own neighborhoods or communities. In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the city is building a team of Emergency Response Connectors who are able to share COVID-19 and public health information, educate about community resources, and document concerns and issues that community members have – while maintaining physical distance from others.

Emergency Response Connector responsibilities for this work may include:

- Prioritizing their health and the health of community members by strictly following public health guidelines (e.g., washing hands) and maintaining social distance (e.g., keeping six feet from others)
- Co-developing effective outreach strategies (e.g., social media, texting, calling) that safely connect community members to COVID-19 public health information and community resources
- Outreaching to peers, neighbors, and community members to center lived experience and hear community needs/concerns/issues and pass details along to city staff
- Developing and maintaining contact list; expanding network of community member contacts
- Participating in a weekly call with fellow Emergency Response Connectors and city staff to coordinate this work

Ideal Emergency Response Connector candidates will be bilingual, bring lived experience as part of an underrepresented community, be a natural relationship builder with community members of diverse backgrounds, and wholly dedicated to providing productive feedback, great attention to detail, and excellent communication skills throughout the length of this work.

Stipend

Emergency Response Connectors will receive a stipend of $20 per hour. Payment is issued by check or direct deposit and individuals will need to submit a W-9, City of Boulder Vendor Form, and Affidavit of Legal Residency to receive stipend payment.

Scope of Work

Approximately 4 hours of work per week (16 hours per month). Work beginning in March 2020 and continuing on month-by-month basis as necessitated by COVID-19 response.

Training

The city project team will provide training, overview of work, and guidance and support for activities.
Emergency Response Connector
Partnership Agreement

This Partnership Agreement, between _________________________ (name of Emergency Response Connector) and the City of Boulder Project Team, is committed to meeting the following expectations:

• Emergency Response Connectors will represent the aims of this project faithfully and accurately.
• Emergency Response Connectors will actively and regularly coordinate with the Project Team staff to plan for and act on conducting outreach in their respective neighborhoods, and let the Project Team Staff know of any issues preventing them from completing the full scope of work, as described in position description.
• Community Connectors will work with Project Team staff to ensure timely outreach, communication, and feedback.
• Community Connectors grant permission to be included in project photos for report or outreach purposes.
• In order to receive their stipend, Community Connectors will need to complete a W-9, Affidavit of Legal Residency, city Vendor Form, and include a valid photo ID.

City of Boulder Project Team Staff
Staff will provide training and guidance (June 8 or soon after), and ongoing support to Emergency Response Connectors. This project will continue on a month-to-month basis, pending emergency response and budget.

Ryan Hanschen, City of Boulder Engagement Specialist, will serve as the primary point of contact for Emergency Response Connectors and may be reached at 720.527.8847 (mobile) or hanscherr@bouldercolorado.gov. He will regularly check-in with Emergency Response Connectors to provide resources or address issues as needed.

Once Emergency Response Connectors have submitted their paperwork and met their commitments as detailed in the position description, the Project Team Staff will help ensure that monthly stipends (4 hours per week, $20 per hour) are dispersed throughout the length of the project.

Community Connector Name

___________________________________________________________

Community Connector Signature

___________________________________________________________

Project Team Staff Name

___________________________________________________________

Project Team Staff Signature

___________________________________________________________
Thank you so much, Emergency Response Connectors, for your perseverance this week – we’re tremendously grateful for your efforts to educate and support our community. And a reminder that this work is a marathon, not a sprint, so please find time for taking care of yourself.

Our highest priorities to share with communities:

- **Boulder County Stay-At-Home Order Extends Through May 8** - Boulder County Public Health’s current Stay-At-Home order extends through May 8 in order to develop clear strategies and guidelines for preventing a surge of COVID-19 cases when our community moves to the “safer-at-home” phase.
- **Boulder requires all individuals to wear a face covering or mask inside businesses that operate any public accommodation.** (Details in English) (Video in English) (Video in Spanish) Thank you for your efforts to distribute masks (over 560 to date!) - please remind community members to wash before use, wash between uses, wear anytime they’re outside their own home, and continue to stay six feet from others. Bilingual guide for wearing and making masks.
- **Bilingual information for tenants and landlords regarding COVID-19 and bilingual Community Mediation Services** and rent assistance

Further updates:

- Hear City Council Members Mary Young and Junie Joseph address our community’s COVID-19 questions in Spanish during a Virtual Council Chat with Rossana Longo on KGNU’s Pasa La Voz.
- RTD Rider Feedback Survey - share feedback on changes RTD has made in light of COVID-19
  - English: RTD Rider Feedback Survey During COVID-19
  - Español: Encuesta de feedback a RTD-COVID
- Updated EFAA food and financial assistance flyers (attached as JPEG for easy texting/sharing)
- **Internet hotspots on loan from the library** – final pick up option this Saturday, 10am-noon at NoBo Corner Library – 4600 Broadway (flyers attached as JPEG for easy texting/sharing)

For the “Latest News,” please see this on-going document in our Google Drive.

We will continue to upload information/message tools/resources on our Google Drive.

See you soon for our weekly check-in – 3pm on Wednesdays or 9:30am on Thursdays. Zoom details coming soon.
As always, please don’t hesitate to contact me or Brenda with any questions or urgent community matters.

Thank you and take care.

Muchas gracias Emergency Response Connectors por su perseverancia esta semana. Estamos tremendamente agradecidos por sus esfuerzos para educar y apoyar a nuestra comunidad. Y un recordatorio de que este trabajo es una maratón, no una carrera de velocidad, así que por favor encuentre tiempo para dedicarse a usted mismo/a y cuidarse.

Nuestras principales prioridades en este momento, para compartir con las comunidades:

- **Boulder County extiende la orden de permanencia en el hogar hasta el 8 de mayo**
  - El Departamento de Salud Pública del Condado de Boulder extiende la orden actual de quedarse en casa hasta el 8 de mayo (traducción disponible en la esquina superior izquierda) para desarrollar estrategias y pautas claras para prevenir un aumento de los casos de COVID-19 cuando nuestra comunidad pase a la fase de "seguridad en el hogar."

- **Boulder requiere que todas las personas usen protección facial o una máscara cuando ingresen a algún negocio que opera con atención al público.** (Detalles en inglés) (Video en español) Gracias por sus esfuerzos para distribuir máscaras (¡más de 560 hasta la fecha)! Recuerde a los miembros de la comunidad que se laven antes de usar, que se laven entre usos, que usen en cualquier momento que estén fuera de su propia casa y que se mantengan a seis pies de distancia de los demás. Guía bilingüe para usar y hacer máscaras.
Información bilingüe para inquilinos y propietarios sobre COVID-19 y servicios bilingües de mediación comunitaria y asistencia de alquiler

Más actualizaciones:

- Escuche a los miembros del Consejo de la Ciudad Mary Young y Junie Joseph abordar las preguntas COVID-19 de nuestra comunidad en español durante una charla del Consejo Virtual con Rossana Longo en la radio KGUN's Pasa La Voz.
- Encuesta RTD Rider Feedback: comparta comentarios sobre los cambios que RTD ha realizado a la luz de COVID-19
  - English: RTD Rider Feedback Survey During COVID-19
  - Español: Encuesta de feedback a RTD-COVID
- Folletos actualizados de asistencia alimentaria y financiera de EFAA (adjuntos como JPEG para enviar mensajes de texto / compartir fácilmente)
- Puntos de acceso a Internet prestados por la biblioteca – opción de recogida final este sábado, 10 de la mañana en la Biblioteca NoBo Corner - 4600 Broadway (folletos adjuntos como JPEG para enviar mensajes de texto / facil de compartir)

Para las "Últimas noticias", consulte este documento en curso en nuestro Google Drive.

Continuaremos cargando información / herramientas de mensajes / recursos en nuestro Google Drive.

Nos vemos pronto para nuestro check-in semanal: 3 p.m. los miércoles o 9:30 a.m. los jueves. Detalles de Zoom le enviaremos próximamente.

Como siempre, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo o con Brenda con cualquier pregunta o asunto urgente de la comunidad.

Gracias de nuevo y cuídate.
Emergency Response Connector
Intro Flyer and Mask Outreach

MI CUBREBOCAS TE PROTEGE,
TU CUBREBOCAS ME PROTEGE.
MY MASK PROTECTS YOU,
YOUR MASK PROTECTS ME.

El Centro AMISTAD con apoyo del Fondo
de Equidad en la Salud de la Ciudad de
Boulder, tiene disponibles cubrebocas
reusables de tela de algodón para los
residentes de San Juan del Centro.

El Centro Amistad with funds from the
City of Boulder's Health Equity Fund, has
reusable cotton mask available for the
residents of San Juan del Centro.

Emergency Response Connector
Press Release

• In English – https://bouldercolorado.gov/newsroom/city-of-boulder-launches-emergency-response-connectors-program

• En español – https://bouldercolorado.gov/newsroom/la-ciudad-de-boulder-lanza-el-programa-conectores-de-respuesta-de-emergencias