



OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Fight Colorectal Cancer’s (Fight CRC) Catalyst State-by-State Advocacy Program aims to accelerate progress toward turning aspirational colorectal cancer (CRC) screening goals into reality (80% screened) by increasing access and reducing barriers to CRC screening. Fight CRC provides funding and technical assistance to support grassroots activities and coalition-building at the state level that will lead to state-level legislative and policy changes to advance screening.

In year one this included:

- Ensuring CRC screening coverage for insured populations to include 45-49-year olds, as is now recommended through American Cancer Society guidelines and draft United States Preventive Services Task Force guidelines
- Removing patient cost-sharing for follow-up colonoscopies following a positive first-line CRC screening exam for insured populations

Starting in January 2020, we awarded grant funding to Arkansas, California, Colorado, and Louisiana to work to advance the above goals through both “big P” policy such as legislation or regulatory change or “small p” policy such as administrative change. Grantees received eight hours of action planning with a strategic planner to develop their strategy for carrying out the goals of the program in their state and a plan for implementation.

Fight CRC also provides resources such as state fact sheets, draft action alerts, model legislation, and other supporting materials through our [Advocacy Portal](#). We work to foster a community of CRC champions across states to troubleshoot challenges and share best practices.

Figure 1. Catalyst State-by-State Advocacy Program grantee information, funding and goals for the 2020 grant cycle.

2020 CATALYST STATE	STATE CRC MORTALITY RATE RANK	FUNDING	FOLLOW-UP COLONOSCOPY	LOWERING SCREENING AGE TO 45	OTHER GOALS
Arkansas	5th	\$25,000	X	X	Increased funding for state CRC screening program
California	40th	\$40,000	X		Adding CRC screening to the CMS Adult Quality Care Measures
Colorado	48th	\$40,000	X	X	Funding for CRC through state cancer screening program
Louisiana	4th	\$25,000	X		

COVID-19. COVID-19 caused considerable delays and changes for our grantees in their first year. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being completely changed), states rated the average effect COVID-19 had on their original grant plans as a 7. Grantees bills were pulled from consideration, normal channels for communicating with legislators were gone, and momentum was stalled with partners. States pursuing legislative policy noted that COVID-19 created an even stronger need to work on increasing CRC screening and they reported a need to contextualize the legislation and messaging to leverage COVID-19. Despite these challenges, grantees were still able to make great progress in 2020.

LEGISLATIVE POLICY: ARKANSAS, CALIFORNIA, + COLORADO

ARKANSAS

Arkansas will introduce legislation in the 2021 legislative session to remove out-of-pocket costs for colonoscopy following a positive non-invasive screening test, codify coverage for CRC screening beginning at age 45, and secure additional dollars for Arkansas's CRC screening program. They used this year to lay the groundwork and educate policymakers. The grantees in Arkansas met with policymakers across the state including a meeting in early March with Governor Asa Hutchinson. They leveraged Fight CRC's State Proclamations campaign to speak with him and gain support for changing the screening age to 45. Arkansas also met with seven state senators and representatives to discuss the topic and work to develop champions and they received very positive responses. Arkansas worked to convene a coalition to help them advance their legislation including health systems, providers, and public health entities focused on cancer screening as well as health disparities.



“I am grateful for the support of the Fight CRC team. While our efforts have been delayed, the funding we've received is extremely important and I am confident that our team will be successful in the 2021 legislative session.”

MICHAEL KECK, Government Relations Director,
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Arkansas & Catalyst Grantee

COLORADO

Colorado was able to make great progress in 2020. They identified bipartisan and bicameral sponsors to introduce legislation to ensure coverage for CRC screening beginning at age 45 and to remove out-of-pocket costs for colonoscopy following a positive non-invasive screening test. [Their bill](#) was introduced on January 14th, 2020 and shortly after was heard in both the House Health and Insurance Committee and the Appropriations Committee where Catalyst grantees had the opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of the legislation. The House Health and Insurance Committee ultimately approved the legislation unanimously, while the Appropriations Committee approved the bill 10-1. From there the bill went to the House floor where it passed with a strong bipartisan vote of 52 to 11. The bill was set to be considered by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, but the Colorado legislature shut down due to COVID-19 before that could occur.

Colorado held 21 meetings with their four key legislative champions over the first three and half months of 2020. During that time they also had three meetings with the Colorado Cancer Caucus and four days at the legislature lobbying members directly. They also met multiple times with the Lieutenant Governor of Colorado who is a CRC survivor.

Colorado brought together an active coalition that included the Colorado Department of Health and Environment, the University of Colorado Cancer Center, and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, among others. They did experience opposition to their legislation from the Colorado Association of Health Plans and also received some pushback from the Governor over concerns that the legislation would lead to additional costs for the state. In an effort to overcome those challenges, Colorado joined the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative and the Chronic Care Collaborative, both of which are influential policy groups in the state. They also worked closely with patient advocates to illustrate the need for their legislation. They are continuing to work with stakeholders in the state to gather data to respond to the concerns of insurers and the governor.



“The Catalyst grant came at the perfect time to help boost our resources and create an even stronger aligned cancer front to draw bipartisan support. We are very excited to reflect on lessons learned from our own legislative session in 2020 and from other states, so we can continue to garner momentum to increase CRC screening in Colorado.”

CHRISTI CAHILL, Executive Director, Colorado Cancer Coalition & Catalyst Grantee

CALIFORNIA

California identified a legislative champion who introduced legislation to remove out-of-pocket costs for colonoscopy following a positive non-invasive screening test on January 23rd, 2020. The legislation was set to be considered by the Committee on Health, but was pulled from committee before a hearing could take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the request of Assemblymember Mike Gipson, the bill sponsor. California met with three members of the State Assembly and Senate in February to garner support for their legislation. They also had the opportunity to meet with an aide to Governor Gavin Newsom. California did not report any opposition to their materials or the issue and their bill was excellently received upon introduction.



“The Catalyst grant has served to help us approach our goals in a more systematic fashion, while recruiting more of our board expertise in these efforts. As we move beyond the planning stages of our efforts to the implementation phase, this allows us to broaden our reach into professional societies that may share a similar interest in achieving these advocacy goals, which should further promote our success.”

MARGARET HITCHCOCK, Executive Vice President, California CRC Coalition (C4) & Catalyst Grantee

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY: LOUISIANA

LOUISIANA

Louisiana is pursuing a “small p” policy approach to address structural barriers and institutional policy that create challenges to accessing CRC screening, specifically cost-sharing after a positive non-invasive test. They are working with the Louisiana Payors Council, a group that was formed as an initiative of Taking Aim at Cancer in Louisiana (TACL), in partnership with the Louisiana Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (LCCRT), in October 2019. The Council has 21 stakeholders from various state entities, including several of the largest health insurers that cover a total of 78% of the lives in Louisiana. Our grantees in Louisiana have worked this year to organize and align the various stakeholders on the Council as well as develop strategies for engaging the payors. They have identified the best points of contact within the payors and are identifying patient advocates who can help illustrate the importance of screening.



“The Fight CRC Catalyst program is of immense value to a state like Louisiana, as we rank at the top of the list in CRC deaths. Their technical assistance has helped grow our team’s capacity to strategically address systems-level changes to advance CRC screening. Thanks to Fight CRC’s Catalyst program, Louisiana is on an even stronger path to save and improve lives.”

MICHELLE KENDALL, Policy Coordinator, Louisiana Cancer Prevention and Control Program & Catalyst Grantee

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES

In addition to funding, Fight CRC provides Catalyst grantees with various resources and technical assistance to help advance their efforts. We asked our grantees to rank the helpfulness of our resources and technical assistance during their first year.

Figure 2. Grantee evaluation of Catalyst program components

PROGRAM COMPONENT	AVERAGE SCORE (1-5, 5 BEING EXTREMELY HELPFUL)
Monetary Grant Funding	5
Webinars	4.33
One-Pagers	4.5
Call-on Congress Kickoff Meeting	4
Action Alerts	5
Social Media	4.33
Fight CRC Advocacy Portal	4.5
Technical Assistance from Fight CRC Staff	4.75
Action Planning with Ryan Soisson	4.5
Learning from Other Grantees and States	3.67

THE FUTURE OF THE CATALYST PROGRAM

It was clear from our evaluation that grantees were interested in having more opportunities to connect and collaborate with those working on CRC policy in other states. In year two, Fight CRC plans to host quarterly calls where grantees can hear from subject matter experts on topics such as the economic case for CRC screening, state-specific data, social media and other contemporary topics. They will also have time to discuss challenges in their states and share best practices.

While the first year of the Catalyst Program had some unforeseen challenges, grantees were still able to successfully advance their efforts towards increasing access to CRC screening. Fight CRC looks forward to continuing this great work with our first cohort of grantees in 2021 as well as expanding the Catalyst Program to new states. To learn more about the Catalyst Program, visit fightcolorectalcaner.org/advocacy/catalyst-program/.