

Eric Ishiwata

ABOUT

Eric is an Academic-based PACT Council Member and an Associate Professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies, and DEI Specialist for the Office of Engagement and Extension at Colorado State University (CSU). His work focuses on foreign born workers in Colorado's agriculture, tourism, and service industries. He places a particular emphasis on rural communities in Northern Colorado, and while on the CSU campus, he also works to provide support for undocumented students.

CCTSI ENGAGEMENT

- Academic-based PACT Council Member

PROJECT INVOLVEMENT

Eric's work primarily involves community engagement efforts within immigrant and refugee communities. He is currently working on a project with the Colorado Health Foundation that provides social determinants of health curriculum to adult learners. This project is particularly useful for community members as the material is presented in the learner's primary language, something not always offered in this work. This project included Somali and Spanish-speaking participants, in separate cohorts. This project has allowed the Somali community to obtain funding for a Somali-founded and operated daycare center that is not only culturally and linguistically accessible but aligns with the shift work schedule of many parents. During the pandemic, Eric was also able to utilize his longstanding community partnerships to help minimize the impact COVID-19 had on the Fort Morgan area through the activation of relationships and communication channels, as well as partnering with local direct service providers.

OUTLOOK

Eric's work with newcomer communities is extremely important to him, as it reflects a lot of his own family's experience. His work allows him to lessen the load of integration for these communities and allows him to pay back the debt he feels he owes to his own family and community for the opportunities they have afforded him. He is looking forward to helping newcomers achieve economic self-sustainability and have their entire experience recognized as assets. He hopes to create pathways that allow skilled individuals to be recognized for everything they bring to the workforce, rather than solely for manual labor. He is continuously working to learn more about the Council and how he can better leverage his partnership to benefit communities.

“Through my work, I am able to pay back the debts I owe to my own family members who worked so hard to provide my generation with opportunities.”

